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1989
Pt 3

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INDIA TODAY

SEPTEMBER 15, 1989

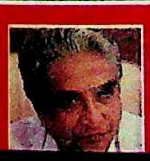
"I urged we should threaten to cancel the Bofors contract to extract the pay-off details."

GENERAL K. SUNDARJI *Former Chief of Army Staff*

L. Vol 14-1989
No. 17-24
Pt III

BOFORS
EXPLOSIVE REVELATIONS

Sundarji Speaks Out: Why Arun Singh Quit



CBI: PLAYING POLITICS

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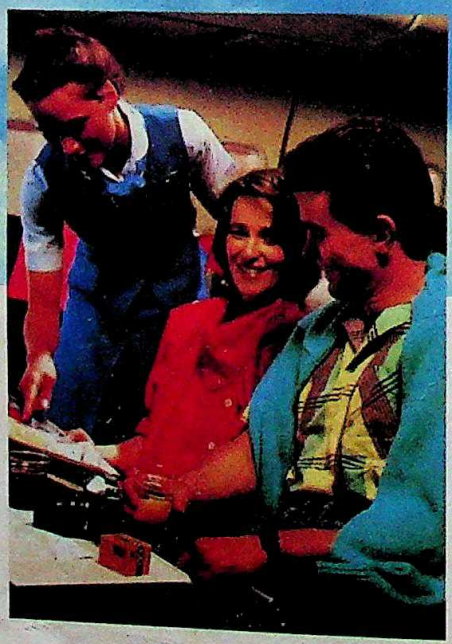

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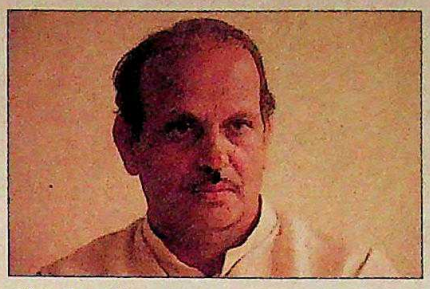
Getting Away

The Bofors controversy takes a new twist with the former army chief General K. Sundarji revealing in a startling interview that the Government did not heed his recommendation to cancel the contract. Plus an interview with Lt. Gen. H.Kaul who was in charge of the selection of the 155mm gun.

COVER STORY 22



Slush Slinging

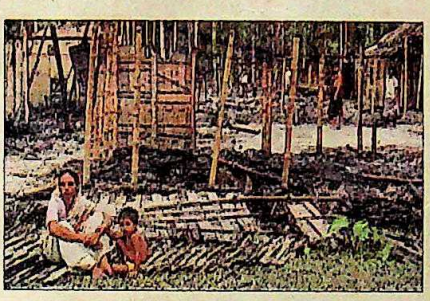
The newspaper reports alleging that Janata Dal President V.P. Singh had squirrelled away millions of dollars in a Caribbean account ought to have spelled the end of his political career. But the reports were so full of holes that they suggested that the ruling party's dirty tricks department was at work.

SPECIAL REPORT 42

Playing Politics

The recent media exposes establishing a link between CBI Director Mohan Katre's son, Umesh, and the Ambanis' Reliance Industries, have raised further questions about the propriety of the CBI investigating the conspiracy to murder Bombay Dyeing chief Nusli Wadia.

SPECIAL REPORT 32



A Bloody Price

Even as the stage was set for the first tripartite talks between the Bodos, the Assam Government and the Centre, parts of the state exploded in an orgy of violence between Bodos and non-Bodos. The gory incidents left 30 people dead, 40 villages gutted and countless others cowering in fear in relief camps.

SPECIAL REPORT 51

Misguided Missiles

Rajiv Gandhi's tour of Andhra Pradesh was clearly an election campaign—characterised by personal and wild allegations against Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao. While Rajiv used his vocal blunderbuss, his party continued to file cases against Rama Rao as part of its strategy to keep him off balance.

SPECIAL REPORT 56

Between Two Worlds

In less than three decades, the tiny mountain kingdom of Bhutan has come full circle. A mystery land, it launched into a hectic phase of modernisation in the '60s. The result was an erosion of the national culture. Now, the Government has set in motion a programme to rediscover its traditional values.

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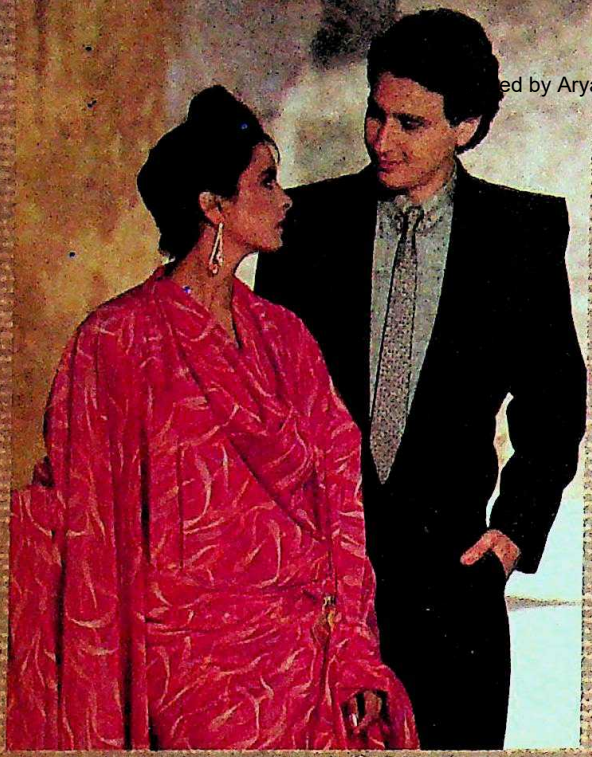

That unforgettable touch of class

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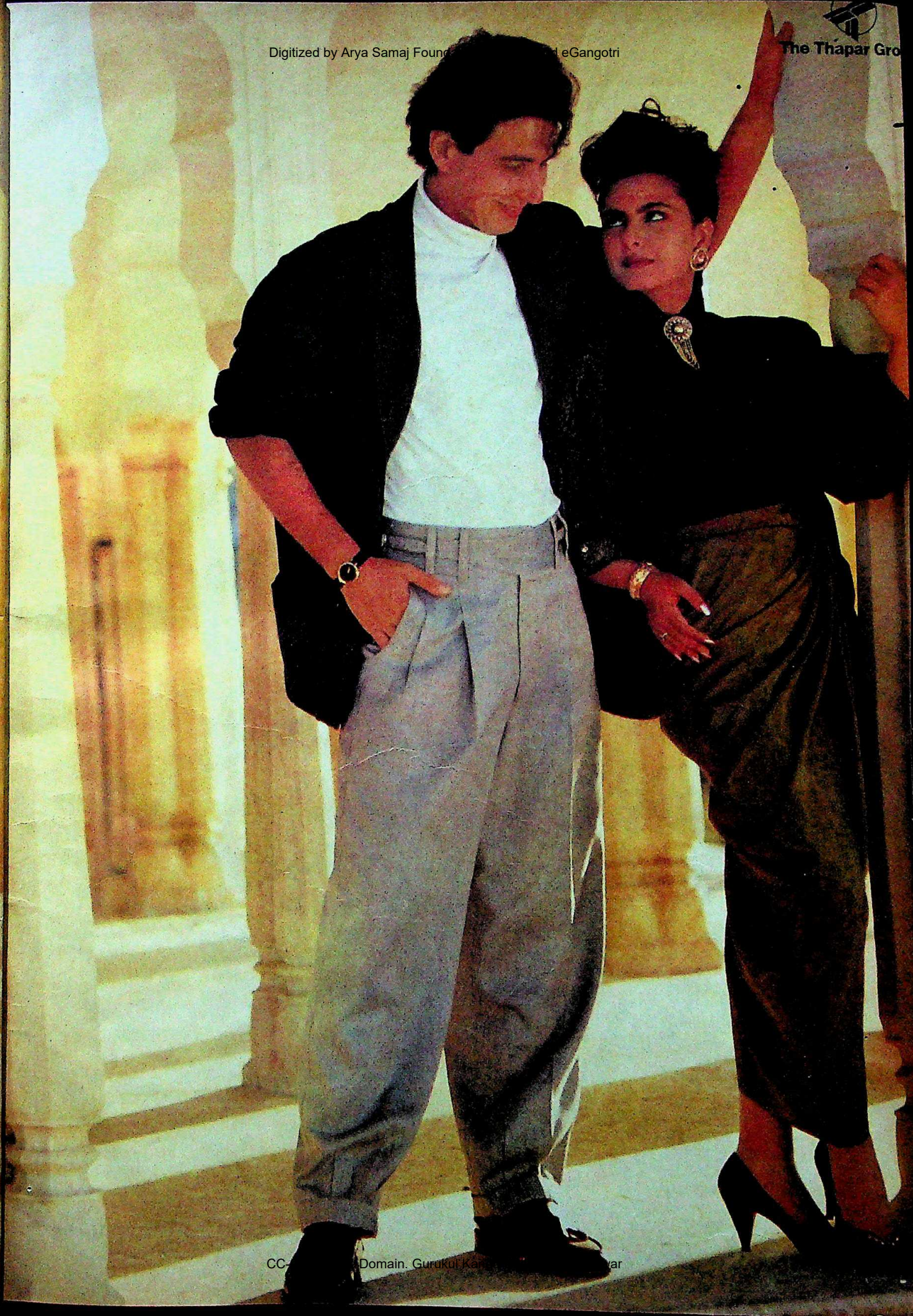

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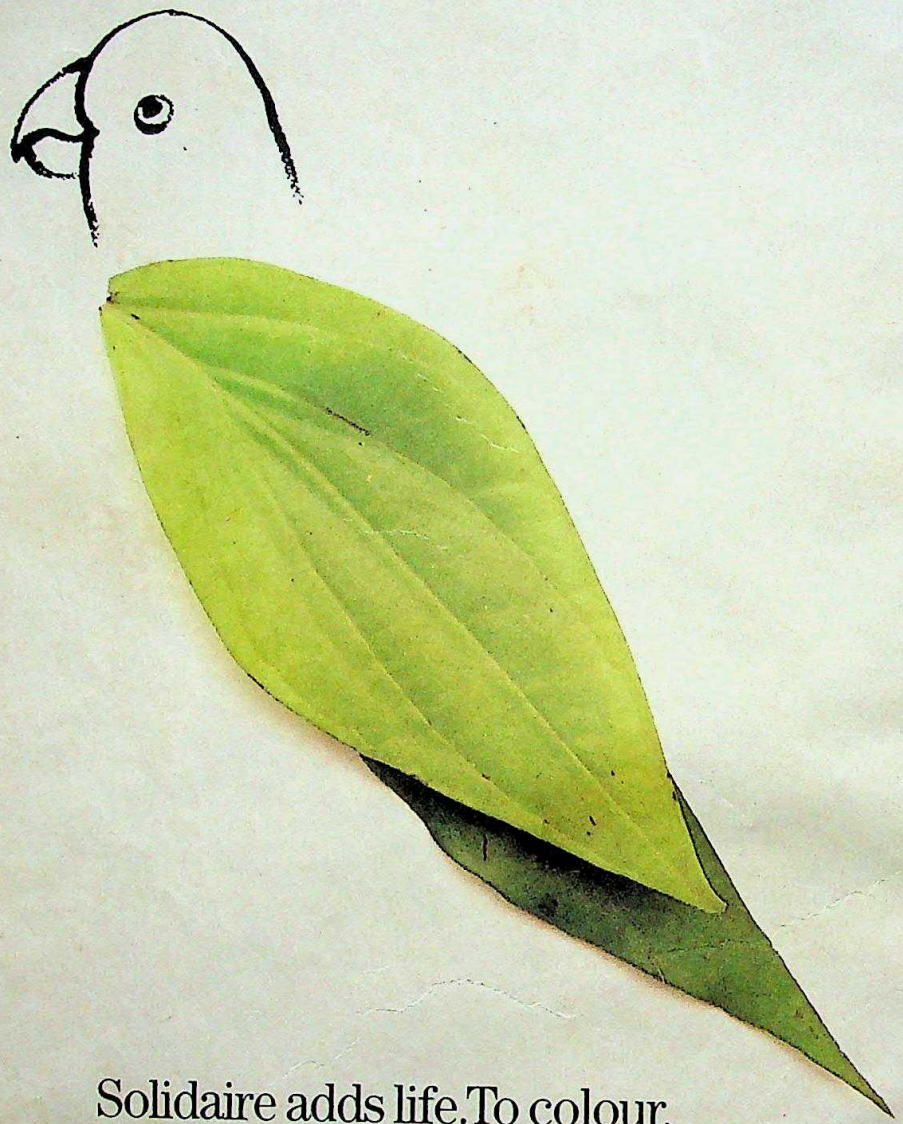

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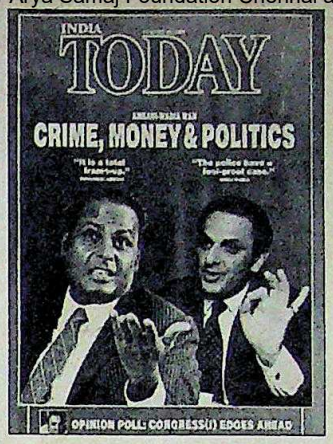

PEDDLING POWER

Your cover story ("Crime, Money and Politics", August 31) sent shivers down my spine. There is no doubt that the Ambanis have influence everywhere, especially where it matters—including the Prime Minister's Office. Bureaucrats do their bidding, politicians kow-tow to them, R.K. Dhawan is reportedly helping them in the Wadia assassination conspiracy, Mohan Katre is believed to be at their beck and call, and not to be left behind are opposition leaders who too are said to be on their payroll. While governmental institutions appear to be in their pockets, should not the Institute of Chartered Accountants or a group of auditors probe into the Ambanis' financial affairs.

New Delhi — **BHAGWAT GOEL**

OUTRAGEOUS MOVE

The suspension of six senior Indian cricketers ("Stumping the Stars", August 31) is simply outrageous. The cricketers are not full-time employees of the BCCI and what they do in their own time is their business. They came to North America to entertain Indian expatriates; they did not go to South Africa to support apartheid. BCCI must review its obsolete rules and help build up the game instead of feeling jealous of the cricketers' earnings.

California — **TAPAN K. DUTTA**

NOT SWITCHING

We're shocked to read the speculative references to us ("Head Hunting Season", August 31). The report is baseless: Had it not appeared in your magazine, we would not have bothered to even contradict it. Our presence in the Janata Dal is our personal, political and moral commitment to the people of Haryana and through them to our motherland. It is only over our dead bodies that the Congress(I) can hope to get at the popular government of Haryana which the people of the state have elected and given to themselves.

Chandigarh — **OM PRAKASH CHAUTALA**
RANJIT SINGH

DRAMATIC RESIGNATIONS

The mass resignations by the Opposition from the Lok Sabha have pushed the ebullient Rajiv Gandhi on the defensive ("Stunning Manoeuvre", August 15). But the Opposition's show of unity seems too good to last. Instead of labelling the action a "stunning manoeuvre", it would be better to call it a "surprise stunt". For the leaders who have come together will not hesitate to split at the slightest provocation. And in this lies the edge of Rajiv's Congress (I).

Calcutta — **C.V. ARAVIND**

■ The opposition parties have taught the ruling party a good lesson. The nation has witnessed a priceless show of protest which is indispensable for a healthy democracy.

Amarapur — **SHAHAJI B. MORE**

■ You have rightly analysed the current *Mahabharata* going on between Rajiv's and V.P. Singh's armies. The forthcoming elections are definitely going to be like a Hitchcock thriller. But what of the mockery of Parliament and the destruction of other reverred institutions? Who will make amends for that?

Bhopal — **RAMESH NARAYANAN**

■ The CAG report is the last nail in the coffin of the Congress(I). It is shameful that they are still ruling the country despite committing such a heinous crime.

Bhopal — **RAKESH AWASTHI**

■ The CAG report on Bofors will certainly be the Opposition's main plank for the election campaign.

Chandigarh — **SANJAY CHOPRA**

■ The Opposition has embarked on a shameful journey of betrayal. The united Opposition is only a concept, not a fact.

Patna — **SYED SIBTE A. RIZVI**

MAN OF INTEGRITY

N.K.P. Salve's utterances in the Rajya Sabha ("Firm and Fair", August 15) display the abysmal depths to which our politicians have sunk. Instead of congratulating the CAG for having done an excellent and impartial job, the syco-

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phants of our erstwhile Mr Clean have targeted T.N. Chaturvedi for abuse.

Trivandrum MANI P. MENON

■ To know that there still are men of integrity as T.N. Chaturvedi, makes one proud to be an Indian.

Chandigarh R.S. PATHANIA

A POLITICAL SOLUTION

A political solution seems to be the only answer to the Sri Lankan problem ("Back from the Brink", August 15). Every effort should be made to promote an "accord" between the various Tamil groups demanding a Tamil Eelam. Only then will we be able to protect our Tamil brothers in Sri Lanka.

Deoghar, Bihar KAMAL PRASOON

■ The cold-blooded murder of two Tamil moderate leaders has shocked all civilised people. The killings are examples of the extent to which violence and the law of the gun have overtaken rational discussion and debate.

Anand SHAILESH KUMAR SINGH

MALE MANIA

It would seem as if there is a move on to ("Male Order Service", August 15) systematically eliminate females from Indian society. It is ironical that the only person conducting this test and operation in the country is a female.

Meerut ANU SHARMA

■ Though the sex-selection procedure is nauseating, I will not advocate a ban. Those who consider daughters as garbage to be sent off with a disposal fee called dowry, will anyway make their daughter's life miserable. No girl should be born to such parents.

Calcutta SUSMITA BHATTACHARYA

ONTO THE FAST TRACK

Godrej is perhaps the slowest moving group in the country ("Changing Gear", August 15). In its existence of almost a century, its turnover has touched a mere Rs 800 crore. Other recent entrants in the Indian market scene are enjoying a much higher turnover. The problem lies in the group's mania about close control and family management which prevents it from going public.

Jabalpur ADIL FEROZ

UNVEILING THE UNKNOWN

Revealing the Hill Marias ("Last of the Unknowns", August 15) to the outside world is a necessary evil, as they will be more benefited than harmed. The fruits of such an exercise are already visible in the form of Maria children topping their district primary certificate examinations.

Allahabad AQUEEL AHMED SIDDIQUI

■ The efforts of the Ramakrishna Mission to uplift the tribals in Bastar are commendable. It shows how a few whole-hearted and sincere men can do more in a year's time than the Government could in more than four decades.

Siliguri SONTOO PALCHOWDHURY

■ The success of the integrating approach among the Hill Marias is a tribute to Nehru, a strong protagonist of such an approach. But the fact that the mission workers are denouncing the existence of ghotuls, causes concern. Such tribal institutions have a role to play in their social life, and our approach towards development should be in line with their life-style.

Patna SANJEEV KUMAR SINHA

BITING SATIRE

I did not know I was a surrogate jholawala till I read "The Jholawala Syndrome" (August 15). I have not only seen Battleship Potemkin and Roshomon a number of times, but I also do not mind a sneak preview of the latest *Playboy* whenever I can lay my hands on it. I have read Kafka, Sartre and Camus and I am the proud owner of *The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer and of Simon De Beauvior's memoirs. I have attended study circles at Madras Hotel sitting on the floor and discussing dialectical materialism. I love my rum and water when listening to that fabulous song *Ek, Do, Teen, Char* on video. Goldie Hawn and Dimple Kapadia are my favourite actresses. Now should I get hold of a jhola—with a hole!

New Delhi P.V. NAIR

■ Thought should not be divorced from action, but it is better to be a thinking and concerned person, than not being concerned at all. A group of well-read intelligent people who care about social issues and work hard to create consciousness about such things need serious attention, not cursory reporting and ridicule.

Patna KRISHNA

■ The article came as a refreshing breeze of humour in an otherwise heavily loaded political issue.

Bhopal BRIJESH PANWAR

WRONG APPROACH

The sudden demise and reincarnation of the National Wasteland and Development Board ("Changing Face of Failure", August 15) must have demoralised the members of its board. In India, a centralised approach is not workable. The NDWB should be operated as an agent to coordinate wasteland development activities in the country.

Pune PRASHANT KOTHADIYA

A CLARIFICATION

There was a typographical error in the opinion poll ('Congress(I) Edges Ahead', August 31). In the table 'Who would make a better prime minister?', V.P. Singh's rating in the last row should have read as 43 per cent and not 3 per cent.

—Editor

A QUESTIONABLE HONOUR

There is much girlish excitement in Lady Shri Ram College at being featured in "Top of the Pops" (July 31). As we mince glamorously down the corridors to attend our classes on grooming, we titter happily about the recognition our Miss Indias and "scandals" have now received. Being the only women's college on your list, we shudder delicately at the thought that we could have been identified—as the other colleges have so crassly been—by our high standards of selection, our toppers and our contribution to academics, journalism, the fine arts; by Uma Sharma, Chitra Subramaniam, Aung San Suu Kyi, rather than by pretty Pamella. We must ultimately be judged by our looks, mustn't we?

New Delhi NIVEDITA MENON

NO PHYSICS PHILOSOPHER

In your story on Gandhi's descendants ("Living the Gandhi Legacy", May 15), you attribute a double doctorate to me in physics and philosophy. At the risk of inviting further unnecessary attention to myself, but in the interest of truth, I must inform you that I do have two doctorates in philosophy, but I have only a B.Sc. (honours) degree in physics and that too in third division. I mention this disillusioning fact about myself in the hope that readers of your magazine will not write to me seeking enlightenment on abstruse questions in the philosophy of physics. I have lost much privacy because of your story, but thank you for its generosity.

New Delhi RAMCHANDRA GANDHI

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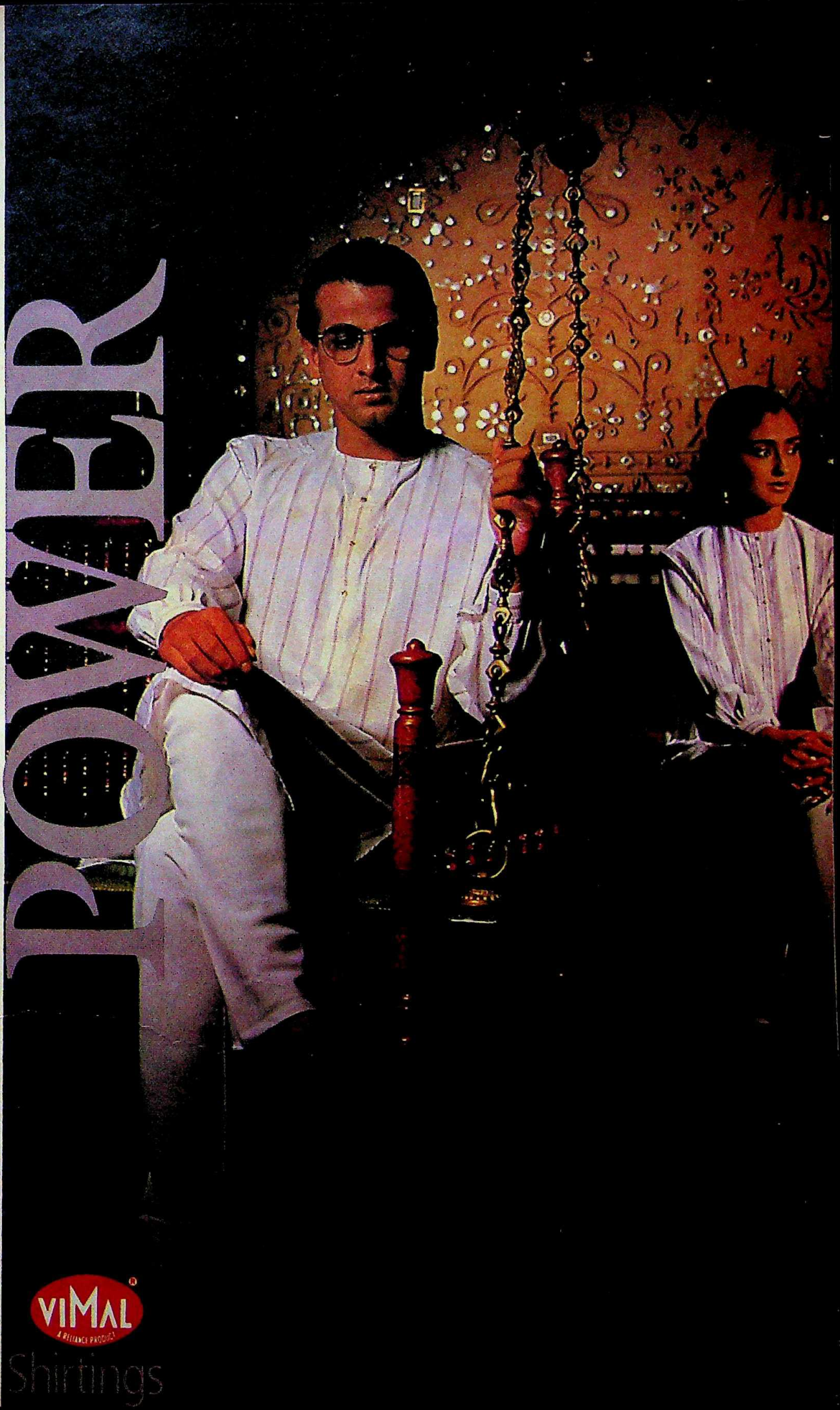
PERSONAL POWER



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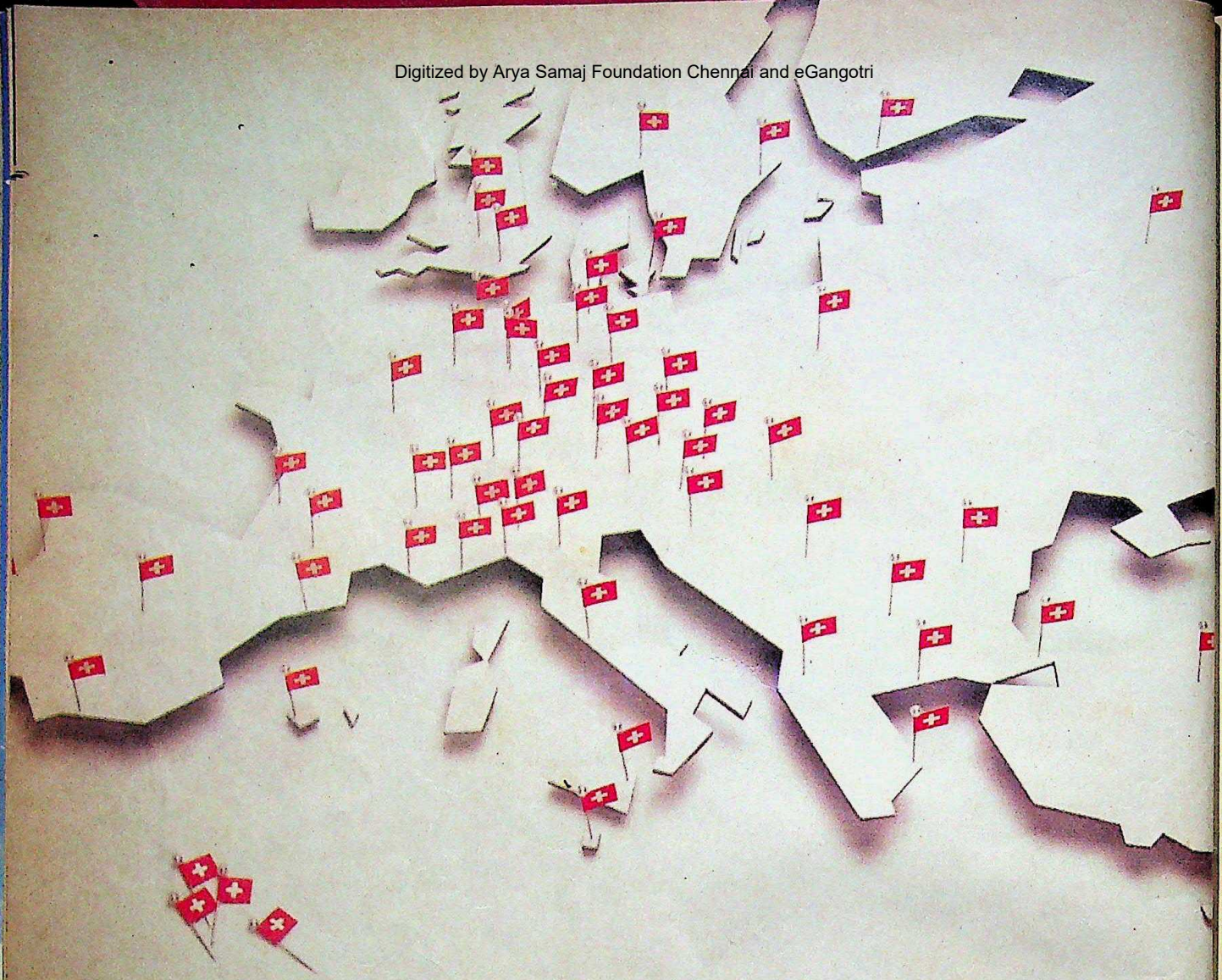

To those out to conquer European business there's one flag worth flying.

The map of Europe up there flags our more than 50 destinations on the Continent where business prospects seldom flag. For instance, nine in Germany: Bonn/Cologne, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Hanover, Leipzig, Munich, Nuremburg and Stuttgart. Seven in France: Bordeaux, Lyons, Marseilles, Mulhouse, Nice, Paris and Toulouse. Six in Italy: Bologna, Catania, Genoa, Milan, Rome and Turin. And, three in the UK: Birmingham, London and Manchester. With our daily non-stop Bombay-Zurich connection, brief transfers in Switzerland and punctual departures and arrivals, you can meet your business engagements on the dot every time you fly with us.

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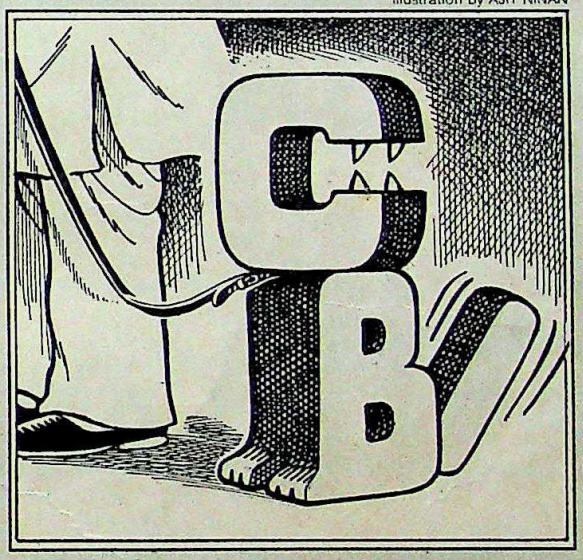
The Authoritarian Arm

In the early '70s, following the arrest of the politically-connected financial swindler Dr Dharam Teja, the CBI emerged in the public's eye as an organisation of hard-working, committed, and dedicated super sleuths. A few good men that the nation could count on. And this was good news, indeed, for a country already immersed in the post-Nehruvian cynicism about the efficacy of its governmental institutions.

The CBI's charter was formidable, embracing in its ambit the detection of economic crimes, inter-state investigations, and corruption among top bureaucrats and politicians. Since law and order is a state subject, the Centre was required to seek a state government's approval before assigning the CBI to investigate. But time was when even non-Congress state governments would willingly seek the assistance of the CBI, so meritorious was its reputation. But like many good things in this country, that too was once upon a time.

The recent Mohan Katre episode suggesting a conflict-of-interest with Reliance Industries, whose senior management official is a prime murder suspect in a case now being handled by the CBI, is but one more pointer to the rapid degeneration of its image and operation. It is today a handmaiden of the ruling party, its political jackboot. And the rot started in the '70s when Mrs Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi began to use the agency during the Emergency to harass and intimidate political opponents.

Illustration by AJIT NINAN



Not that the Janata Party was any cleaner. It, too, blatantly misused the CBI for hounding its opponents, particularly Mrs Gandhi whom the super sleuths of yester year tried to arrest in a hamhanded fashion. And the CBI has never seemed to recover. During Mrs Gandhi's second coming her opponents were once again at the receiving end. Especially in the non-Congress(I) states. When Sikkim's Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari was in the Opposition the CBI slapped a whole bunch of corruption charges against him only to let the files gather dust once he came into the ruling party's pen.

The examples are endless. When the Bofors controversy surfaced, CBI's Katre travelled halfway across the world ostensibly to investigate accounts into which illegal payments have been made but his findings—if there were any—remain the Government's best kept secret. And when the *Indian Express* began its investigative assaults on Reliance Industries and the Government's favours to the company, the CBI went to the extent of producing a forged letter in order to implicate the newspaper's adviser S. Gurumurthy in a criminal conspiracy involving the Official Secrets Act.

In like vein, the murder charge involving the Janata Dal's Sanjay Singh was quickly handed over to the agency. And the tell-tale political twist came into prominent evidence when the CBI—the first time it has ever done this—invited camera crews from Doordarshan, the ruling party's agitprop outfit, to film live the CBI's raid on Sanjay Singh's residence in Lucknow. And the event received several minutes of publicity on the evening news. The chargesheet was filed eight months later by the bureau.

While charges against members of the ruling party are filed in the rarest of cases, people on the political hit-list are routinely harassed. Most of the cases are simply left hanging and the targets of the investigation, unable to disprove allegations against them, are left in limbo—confined to a bureaucratic Siberia.

THE unbecoming alacrity with which the CBI was brought into the Nusli Wadia murder case is a testament to the fact that the Centre now no longer even trusts its own chief ministers to investigate cases they seem perfectly willing and able to handle. Non-Congress(I) governments have already begun to indicate that they will no longer allow the CBI to conduct investigations in their states. In fact, seven opposition-ruled states have yet to give the CBI the green signal to take up cases under the Prevention of Corruption Act amended last year. This is a development that damages the federal structure so carefully crafted by the founding fathers of the Constitution. Institutions like the CBI, after all, were meant to be symbols of a healthy Centre-state relationship.

And the ruling party threatens even further damage to this delicate equation. Minister of State for Home Affairs P. Chidambaram has been threatening to introduce a bill in Parliament that would amend the Constitution to allow the CBI to investigate without the consent of the state involved.

And it is not just a question of the destruction of the equilibrium governing Centre-state relations. The ultimate result of these machinations could be far graver. The misuse of investigative agencies to cover up wrongdoing or punish enemies is one of the surest pointers to the encroachment of authoritarianism in a democratic state.

The CBI occupies a critical niche in the Government. It comes under the Home Ministry but also reports directly to the prime minister through the Department of Personnel. As such it is wide open for manipulation from the very top from where it can be used as a private police force accountable only to those wielding political power. This is not to suggest that the CBI is yet like Papa Doc's Ton Ton Macoute or Iran's Savak. But the intimations are there. What is clear is that the agency's integrity and credibility are now shadowed by a persistent question mark. And it is imperative that people—especially politicians from the ruling party—wake up to the danger this institutional defilement poses to democracy. For the next midnight knock could come at their own door.

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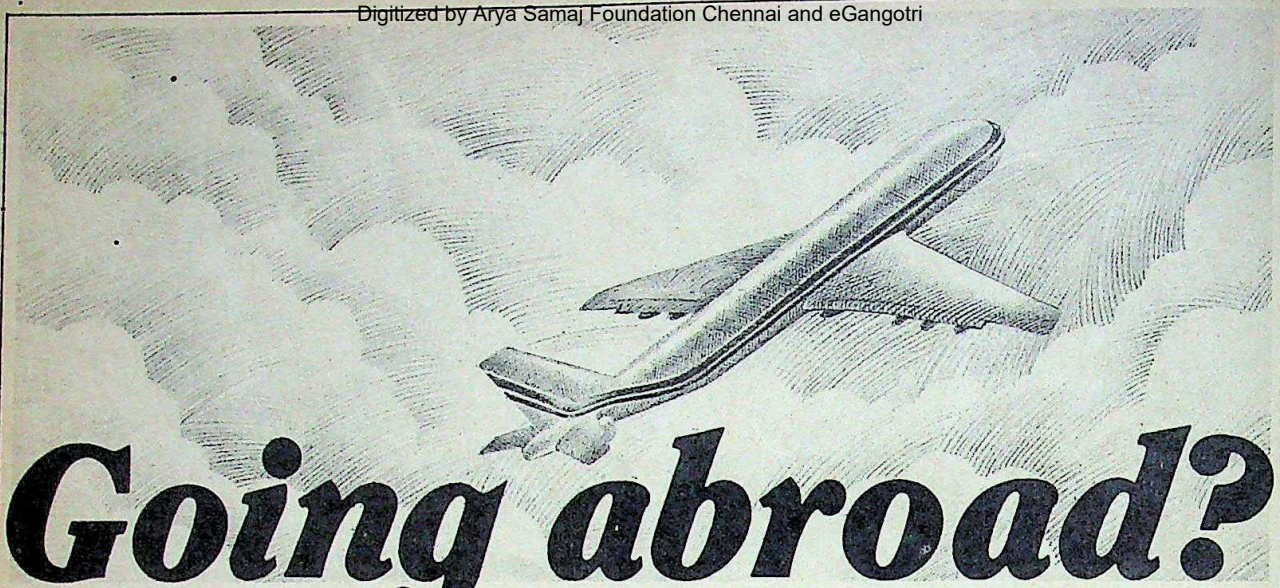

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1 – 14 days	274	274	329	324	392	464
48 – 60 days	559	559	671	948	1172	1400
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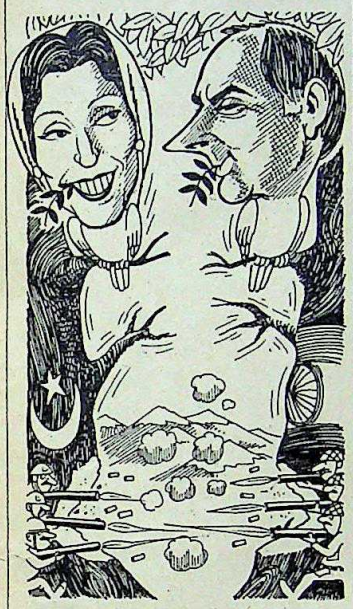
Gunning for Peace

● Notwithstanding the bilateral cooing that has been going on between Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto, the situation on the international border in the Jammu sector has been anything but dovish during the last several weeks. This is thanks to some hawkish military posturing in-



dulged in by both sides.

One of the best kept secrets in South Block is that of a recent day-long skirmish on the border near R.S. Pura, involving India's Border Security Force and Pakistan's Rangers. The skirmish is noteworthy because it took place under the active guidance of regular army officers. Pakistan was worsted with about six soldiers killed, while there were no losses on the Indian side. There are also reports that a Pakistani helicopter with a lieutenant-general aboard was shot down.

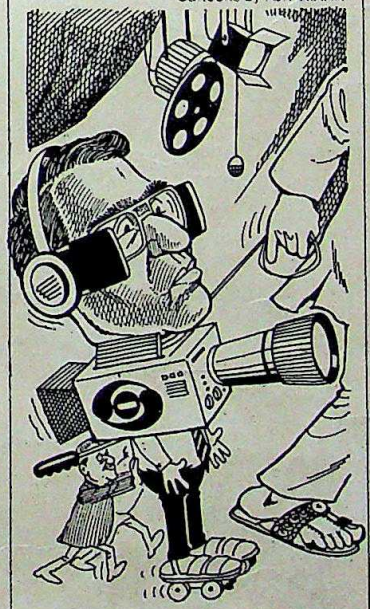
That both the countries have decided to keep a lid on the incident—prompted, each side claims, by encroachments across No Man's Land—shows how dramatically diplomatic relations between the two countries have improved. Enough to spawn the realisation that skirmishes do not have to lead to wars. While the soldiers have exchanged fire at Poonch, Uri, and Siachen on the actual line of control before, this was the first incident on the international border since the Simla accord.

New Adviser

● K.K. Tewary, Bob Murari, Suman Dubey, and now Karan Thapar. It seems as if the prime minister can never have enough when it comes to media and television advisers. Thapar, a Doon School alumnus like Rajiv Gandhi and Dubey, will be the latest in the star-studded galaxy of politicians and bureaucrats to whom Rajiv lends his ears on matters concerning the Government, politics, and the operation of his pet monopoly—Doordarshan.

Thapar, who is expected to arrive in the capital shortly on a contract to help improve Doordarshan's programming and quality, is an unusual catch. He has spent most of his professional career in London hosting public affairs shows on British television's Channel 4, the most popular one

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



being Eastern Eye. And as a freelance journalist, Thapar has contributed articles for major international newspapers. What people are wondering about is how, and how long, this journalist, a creature of untrammelled western-style press freedom, will last in the suffocating world of Doordarshan's newspeak.

Pressing Passion

● AICC(I) General Secretary Ghulam Nabi Azad has an inexhaustible ability for bouncing back, thanks largely to the gift of the gab.

Six months ago, he was stripped of a crucial responsibility—the charge of handling the media on behalf of the party high command. The

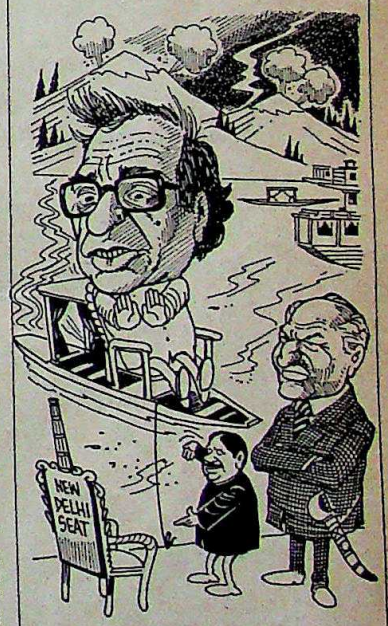
action was taken by party president Rajiv Gandhi who had received complaints even from friendly journalists about Azad's unsatisfactory performance.

The sober, soft-spoken V.N. Gadgil was then assigned the responsibility of handling and briefing the press. After lying low for a while, the irrepresible Azad has proved that no dustbin is adequate for dumping him. These days he is addressing most of the press conferences at party headquarters on 24, Akbar Road. Gadgil's absences are explained away as his urgent need to travel to Pune to look after his constituency. Azad's performance has hardly changed. Then why does Rajiv prefer him to the more competent Gadgil? Azad, party insiders say, is indispensable as an aggressive mud-slinger at a time when political vituperation is of the essence. Gadgil, they feel, cannot go beyond a certain limit, despite his best efforts. Hence Azad's victorious return as the unofficial spokesman.

Kashmir's Loss

● General K.V. Krishna Rao's appointment as the new governor of Jammu & Kashmir, following the expiry of Jagmohan's five-year term, was a hotly-debated subject among the prime minister's advisers. One group felt that Jagmohan, who had established himself as a legendary administrator in the valley, should be given an extension to handle Kashmir's deepening crisis. This group believed that sending a former general as governor would give the region's anti-India militants more ammunition to propagate the view that Kashmir is forcibly occupied by the Indian Army, and that India wants a military solution to Kashmir's political problems.

Sources say Jagmohan, whose five-year term expired on June 30, was initially told by the prime minister that his term would be extended. But,



suddenly, at the end of July he was summoned to Delhi and told by R.K. Dhawan that the prime minister wanted to give him a party ticket to contest for Parliament from any Delhi constituency. But Jagmohan, these sources add, is believed to have turned down the offer. Kashmir's loss can hardly be said to be New Delhi's gain.

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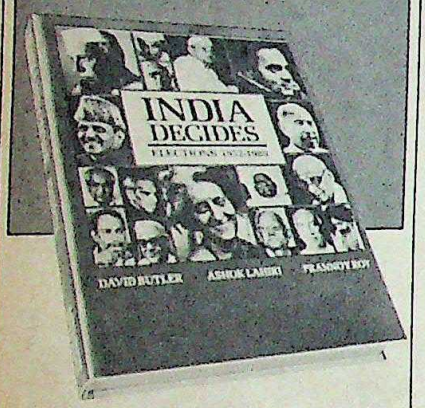
ELECTIONS 1989



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The Times of India

- *The members of the Opposition were elected to fulfil the vital democratic function of contesting the Government and its policies right here on the floor of the House, not in the streets and columns of newspapers.*

■ RAJIV GANDHI in Parliament

- *I don't think V.P. Singh matters enough to deserve my personal comment.*

■ CHANDRA SHEKHAR in *Newstrack*

- *I should not poke my nose in such big international issues (Indo-Nepal relations). After all I am a* chota *man.* ■ SUBHASH GHISING in *The Week*

- *We do not want to insult them. Let them (Indian troops) leave our shores as friends.* ■ RANJAN WIJERATNE, Sri Lankan foreign minister, in *The Times of India*

- *With friends like Mr Kalpanath Rai and Mr K.K. Tewary, he (Rajiv Gandhi) does not need enemies.* ■ ARUN NEHRU in *The Statesman*

- *The Congress(I)'s slogan is:* Desh ke neta Rajiv Gandhi, mahilaon ki neta Sonia Gandhi, bachchon ke neta Rahul Gandhi, bhaad mein jaye Mahatma Gandhi *(The country's leader is Rajiv Gandhi, the leader of women is Sonia Gandhi, the children's leader is Rahul Gandhi, to hell with Mahatma Gandhi).* ■ AJIT SINGH at the National Front's rally in Jaipur

- *The* RSS *works for Hinduism, but the Shiv Sena works for militant Hinduism.*

■ BAL THACKERAY in *Surya India*

- *The Janata Dal is my first love. But what can I do if my beloved is having a dalliance with a villain* (BJP)*?* ■ SYED SHAHABUDDIN in *Sunday*

- Bharat bachane se pehle, Rajya Sabha ko bacha lijiye *(Before saving India, please save the Rajya Sabha).*

■ NAJMA HEPTULLAH to Opposition members

- *I have had a sinful past. I have been a bureaucrat.*

■ T.N. CHATURVEDI in *The Times of India*

- *If we had won the Windies series and then gone to play exhibition matches, they* (BCCI) *probably would have chartered a plane for us.*

■ DILIP VENGSARKAR in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*

- *Amitabh Bachchan is certainly not cut out for politics. He's only cut out for cut-outs.* ■ SHATRUGHAN SINHA in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

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A pleated Salwar Kurta, inspired by the legend of Heer Ranja and the colours of spring. To stroll through a casual evening. Or grace a semi formal day.

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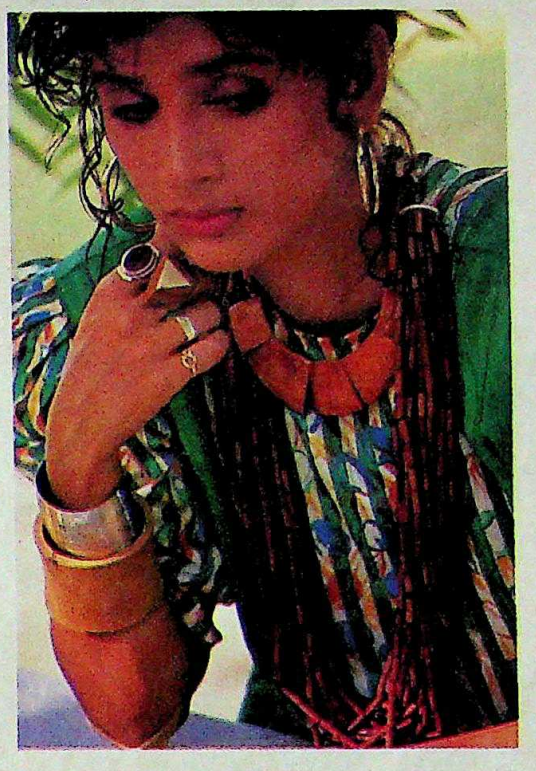
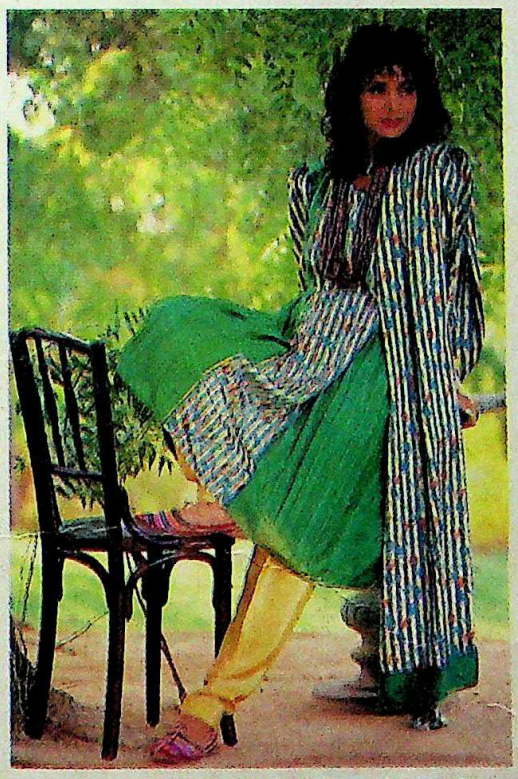
Kurta, yoked with prints and flared around skirt area.

Jewellery comes from colour accents on the print.





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Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

GROOMS IN GLOOM

■ The Madhya Pradesh experiment to bring Government to the common man's doorsteps created a piquant situation recently at Pichhore village in Shivpur district. The visiting minister was faced with an unusual request: 18 young men of the Lodhi community sought his intervention in their search for brides.

Since the minister was a Lodhi himself he understood their plight. Because of the shortage of women in the community, only rich men capable of paying a *mehr*-like amount of Rs 5,000 to Rs 40,000 could secure a bride. This led to a high turnover in Lodhi brides—with some being sold more than once. Some hard-up bachelors remained single, forced to become *brahmcharis*.

The sympathetic Government approached a Gwalior orphanage, only to be rebuffed. In matters of the heart the orphanage girls did not want middlemen. So the lonesome Lodhi bachelors remain just that—bachelors.

RAIDING RAJIV

■ All the black cat commandos and sniffer dogs could not stop this enterprising thief. Breaking through the security cordons around the country's most heavily guarded VVIP, he removed the stereo from Rajiv Gandhi's car right outside the prime ministerial residence.

Panic buttons were pressed the moment the theft was discovered last month. Afraid of publicity which would make them look silly, as they did when a fanatic took two pot shots at Rajiv in Rajghat some time back, the security men did not lodge an FIR. But security officials have been searching high and low for the crafty burglar.

An obvious fallout of the lapse: some of the drivers and mechanics were immediately transferred. Officials are worried that the unnoticed prowler could have brought explosives into the house.

The theft may have gone unnoticed, but the commotion it caused within the security set-up can only be described as stereophonic.

DOG-GONE

■ Every dog has his day. With pedigreed dogs it is more so, as a prized Alsatian proved recently by bringing traffic on the Grand Trunk Road in Madras to a grinding halt for an anxious five hours.

The problem began with three men and a dog who tried boarding a bus in Tambaram. The unimpressed conductor refused to let the dog in despite being told that it had political links: it belonged to the local MLA.

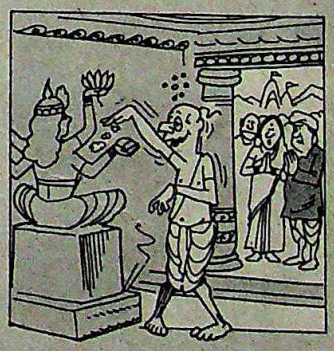
The angry dog lovers beat up the conductor. When the police refused to register a complaint, the state transport employees exacted revenge by floating a rumour that the conductor had died.

This led to a wildcat strike and angry bus drivers blockaded the road for a full five hours. All attempts to placate the disgruntled staff failed. Only after the three persons who had beaten the conductor were arrested, was the strike called off. But as the drama unfolded, the Alsatian over whom the fracas began, had vanished. Dog-gone.

PRIESTLY SPIRITS

■ The Nainadevi temple in the salubrious hills of Himachal Pradesh is always crowded with devotees. Most of them go back moved by the magic of the *mantras* they hear at the temple. But on a recent occasion visiting devotees were puzzled because they could not decipher the unintelligible chants emanating from the temple. Many of them thought that the pujari had worked himself into a frenzy or he was communicating with the gods in a strange tongue.

But the truth was more earthy. The simple pujari, unaware of the priestly code



of abstinence, had set up a bar for himself in the temple. Unamused, the devotees raised a chant for his removal. The temple authorities had no option but to act and our highly-spirited pujari found himself facing the prospect of doing time behind bars of a different kind.

BETTING BUG

■ Everyone is acquainted with *Chitrahaar*, Doordarshan's weekly song and dance ritual, but who ever heard of a *Chitrahaar* lottery? Ask the residents of Darjeeling. They have. A local entrepreneur is literally cashing in on the popularity of the television programme.

Come Wednesday, and lotterywallahs fan out selling slips of paper to star-struck viewers of *Chitrahaar*. The slips have the names of film-stars written on them. If the programme happens to feature a film star named on a slip, the bearer wins twice the amount he paid for the ticket. If not, obviously the money spent is lost forever.

Television gambling is certainly becoming a good substitute for those unable to make it to Kathmandu's famous casino. However, the only objectors may be film stars who might not relish people betting on them like racehorses.

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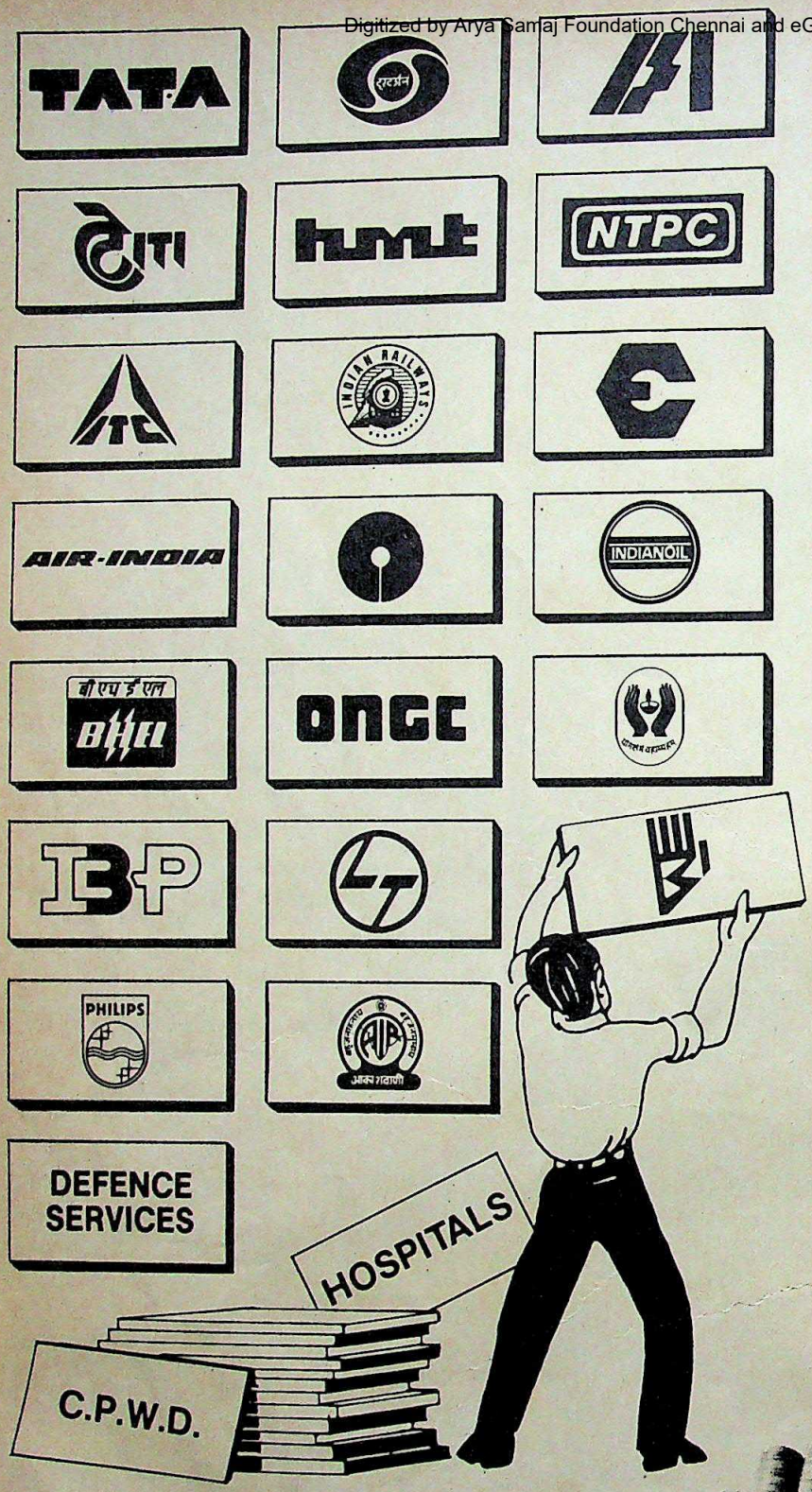

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Dear Bharat,

A lot of waterloos have flowed under the bridge since my last dispatch from the trenches. The hot news from the front is exactly that; the battle has really hotted up. Frankly, it's pretty hairy being a war correspondent right now with the conflict getting dirtier by the day. There are missiles and bombshells whizzing around like an extended Diwali celebration and the casualty rate could soon sky-rocket.

The problem is in trying to figure out who is sniping at whom and for what reason. In other words, it's real gorilla warfare out there. One side is using a mixture of ancient ammunition—Bofors and HDW—and some fresh supplies gifted by the enemy like the Ambanis and Mohan Katre. The other side is busy using the latest weaponry—shoot and scoot and burst fire—in the hope that their heavier firepower will win them the war. Their Dirty Tricks Department has also been effective in sowing discord and suspicion in the enemy ranks with secret bank accounts and forged letters circulating like confused confetti.

What is difficult to decipher is what the respective strategies are. General Gandhi has the superior forces but his battlefield tactics are pretty bewildering. Overall, he seems to be the more aggressive, launching offensives on various fronts—Andhra Pradesh and Assam being two prime targets—and trying to outflank the opposing army under General Singh. General Singh seems to be under general anaesthesia most of the time.

Yet, when General Gandhi challenged him to single combat in a televised duel, Singh accepted with alacrity. And, it was General Gandhi who hastily backed out, offering to send major-domo Bhagat in his place. Morally, that particular battle was won by the invaders.

But Gandhi, a five-star general, obviously has the bigger and better equipped army. And though the marksmanship is pretty awry, their long-range weapons have been firing from as distant redoubts as Kuwait, Istanbul and even the obscure St Kitts in the Caribbean—all targeted at General Singh. So far, Singh seems unharmed by the bombardment though there is always the chance that a stray slug could eventually find its mark.

So far, General Singh appears unharmed by the bombardment though there is always the chance that a stray slug could eventually find its mark.

As a strategist, however, General Gandhi seems to have patterned himself on Rambo, a one-man battering ram charging through enemy territory and shooting wildly from the hip. He tried that in Andhra Pradesh against the local chieftain, N.T. Rama Rao, but his shots were wide of the mark. Eventually, his offensive only provided Rama Rao with extra cannon fodder to hit back.

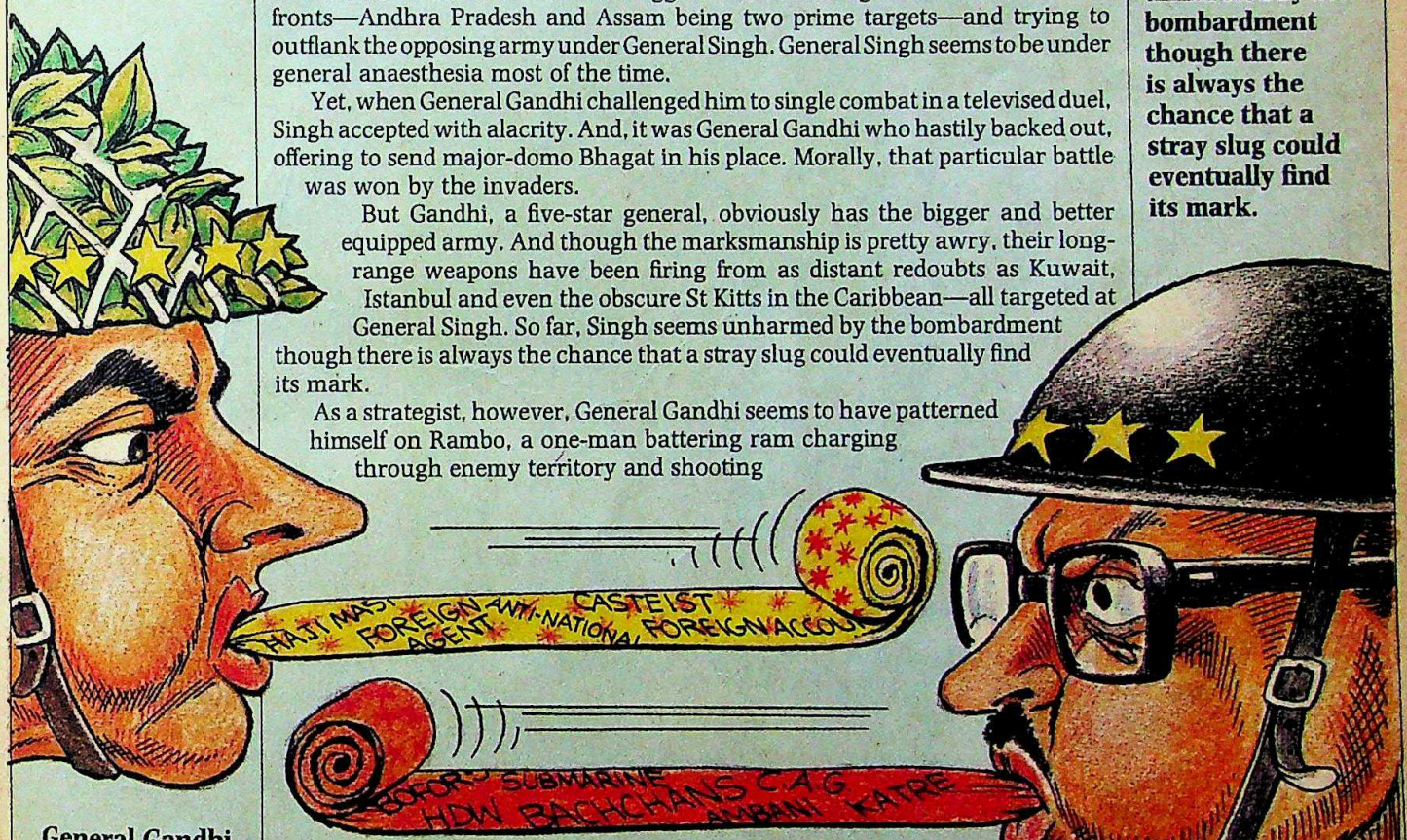

Illustration by AJIT NINAN

General Gandhi has the bigger and better army. Their long-range weapons have been firing from distant redoubts like Kuwait and St Kitts.

That, of course, is what makes the battle such a closely contested one. The defending army is led by a reckless general with the tendency to blunder into his own minefields. Moreover, his second-rank leadership is virtually non-existent or else they are the best-kept secret of the war. The invading army, on the other hand, seems to have too many chiefs and too few Indians with General Singh facing a constant threat to his leadership. Their combat troops are also pretty thin on the ground.

There are other contrasts as well. The more serious the battle becomes, the more ridiculous it appears to get. Just take the latest bit of news from the front—General Gandhi has just elevated his *bete noire*, General Singh, to the unofficial rank of cabinet minister and provided him with heavy security. There is a strategy in that somewhere. Except nobody can figure out what it is.

Don't worry. Be happy.

—DILIP BOBB

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BOFORS

GETTING AWAY

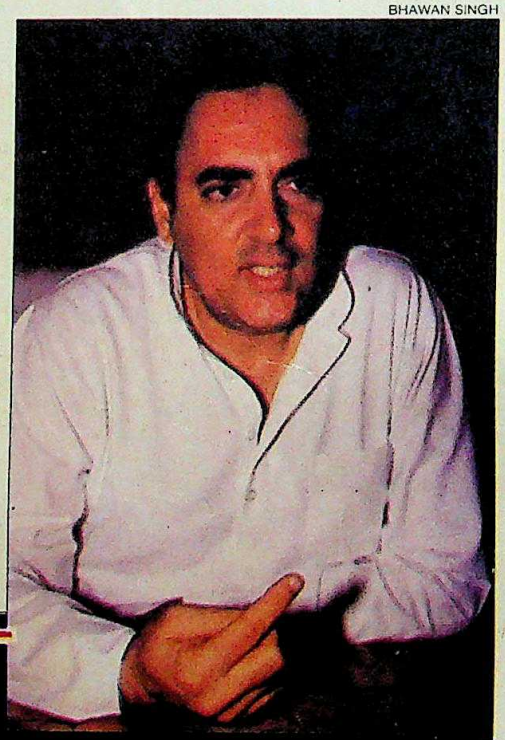
THE politically explosive question that has dogged the country and come perilously close to destabilising the Rajiv Gandhi government is, who made the Rs 64 crore that Bofors paid in commissions for India's acquisition of its 155 mm gun?

The recent report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), while casting doubts on the Government's version of the selection of the gun, did little to unravel the mystery of the pay-offs. But parts of the second major mystery: why the Government did not use the ultimate weapon—cancellation of the contract—have now cleared. Former Army Chief, General K. Sundarji, in a detailed interview to INDIA TODAY *(see following pages)*—his first since he retired in April 1988—forcefully contradicts repeated assertions by the prime minister that security considerations prevented the Government from exercising the cancellation option. "As Prime Minister I cannot compromise the nation's security to clear my personal name...," Rajiv Gandhi told *Blitz* in July 1987. He repeated this in an interview to *Sunday* in November, 1988. Rajiv said: "These questions had come up very long ago. In fact this was one of the first things I asked. Can we do this? And the second question I asked with that was: what is the cost of doing it? The cost is first in terms of security. Do we reduce our security? Second, in terms of money. Do we actually lose money or gain..? So I asked the Defence Ministry to evaluate all this. On the security side they said an almost categorical no."

But General Sundarji reveals that when he was asked by the Ministry of Defence in June 1987, about the security implications of cancelling the contract, he had said it was "an acceptable risk". He wrote this in an official note after polling all his principal staff officers—the heads of all departments in army headquarters. Sundarji, whose earlier recommendation had tilted the competition in favour of the Bofors gun, in fact, advised the Government to go ahead with cancelling the contract 14 months after it had been signed. Not because he had changed his mind about the gun but because he believed that such financial pressure was the only way to force Bofors to come clean on the pay-offs.

During a critical three-month period starting mid-April, 1987, evidence showed that Bofors had lied to the Indian Government about not having used middlemen to get the contract. Clearly, commissions were paid for the deal. The country was awash with rumours that ruling party leaders and army brass had been bribed. For Sundarji, threatening to cancel the contract or even cancelling it, under the circumstances, was a matter of restoring the badly damaged credibility of the country's and the army's leadership—a matter of "national honour".

BHAWAN SINGH



In 1987, Rajiv was urged by Arun Singh and Sundarji to compel Bofors to reveal the names of the pay-off recipients. He chose not to.

This was also Arun Singh's view. So seriously was this step contemplated that in late May 1987, prior to the Sundarji recommendation, the Ministry of Defence prepared a detailed brief—forwarded to the prime minister through his secretary, Serla Grewal—outlining the financial and administrative implications of cancelling the contract along with international legal angles involved.

Now, based on several months of investigations, INDIA TODAY has been able to piece together details suggesting that in July 1987, the prime minister directly called off this hard-line strategy started within the Ministry of Defence which could well have led to the revelation of the names of the recipients of the payments. This led to the resignation of Arun Singh, minister of state for defence and Rajiv's confidant, who had ordered the hard line, but was unable to persuade Rajiv to approve that course of action.

Under Singh's instructions, N.N. Vohra, then additional secretary of defence, now secretary for defence production, had apprised Bofors officials that if they did not reveal the names, the whole deal may have to be called off. Even as Ministry of Defence officials were contemplating this action, Rajiv summoned a meeting on July 4, 1987, and berated the entire scheme. Singh stood by Vohra and told Rajiv that Vohra had been acting under his instructions. No amount of pleading by Singh was able to change Rajiv's mind.

Arun Singh resigned less than a fortnight later. The prime minister was, at that time, a beleaguered man. V.P. Singh, after quitting as defence minister on April 10, had been expelled from the party on June 16. The stink caused by his ordering an inquiry into commissions for the HDW submarine deal had become a personal political embarrassment for Rajiv.

The air was already thick with talk of pay-offs when the story about Bofors pay-offs broke. Insiders say Rajiv did not want Arun Singh to quit at the time because of adverse political ramifications, but Singh remained adamant, believing that the

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credibility of the army and the government had suffered and he could not in good conscience continue to hold office.

Those urging cancellation of the contract were firmly convinced that the loss of even a few hundred crores in penalties and legal costs—one of the reasons cited by Rajiv for not playing the cancellation card—would well be worth the risk in terms of restoring Rajiv's political image which had taken a battering. He would, with one bold, dramatic sweep, re-establish himself as a decisive leader capable of tough decisions. And the Bofors scandal would simply die and deprive the Opposition of its only issue. They reasoned, also, that India, as one of a few avidly-courted unattached arms buyers in the world market would send a no-nonsense message to all future suppliers not to take its government for a ride. They argued that the nation was no banana republic and was quite capable of withstanding any financial shock caused by cancellation.

Here is how the scenario unfolded:

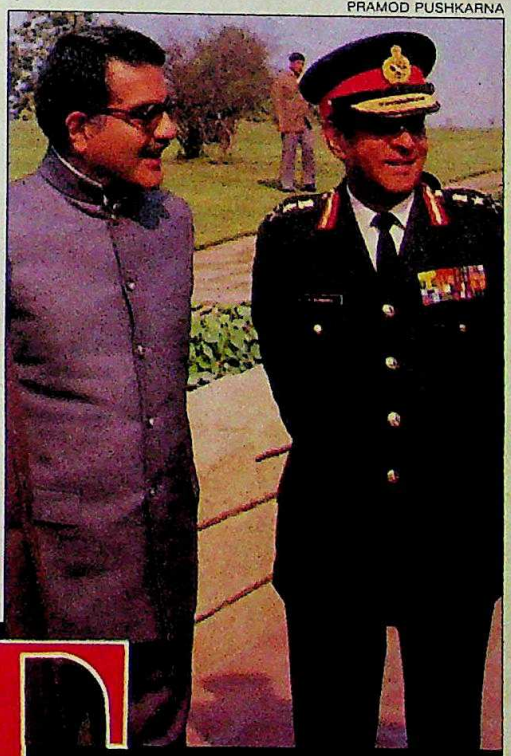
▶ By March 1986, following years of technical evaluations by the army, the competition had been narrowed to the French and Swedish guns. What helped clinch the decision in favour of Bofors was the financial package. Bofors had progressively reduced its price from Rs 1,620 crore to Rs 1,427 crore. The lowest French offer was Rs 1,436 crore. An additional inducement was the 3.1 billion kroner credit offered by the Swedes for a period of 90 months from the date of signing the agreement—March 24, 1986.

▶ The April 16, 1987, Swedish Radio report that commissions had been paid to obtain the contract, and the June 1 report of Sweden's National Audit Bureau virtually confirming this, knocked the bottom out of Bofors's repeated declarations to the Indian Government—the first one was given on March 10, 1986, two weeks before the contract was signed—that the company had no middlemen or commission agents in the deal. This implied that the contract price could have been cut by at least an amount equal to what the Swedes paid in commissions.

The ball now was in the court of the Indian Government to persuade Bofors to part with the information. Between June and July Arun Singh gave the green light to Vohra and Joint Secretary T.K. Bannerji to start putting the squeeze on Bofors. Several letters from Secretary S.K. Bhatnagar to Bofors asking for the details of "the precise amounts that have been paid by Bofors; the recipients of such amounts; the services rendered by such persons or companies; copies of all correspondence between Bofors and such recipients" received the standard Bofors response which sheltered behind a plea of commercial secrecy. By now a consensus had developed that Bofors would yield only to arm-twisting as it was interested in negotiating another multi-crore project for the joint production of another gun system in India.

▶ On July 3, 1987, Bertil Bredin, vice president of Bofors visited the Ministry of Defence where Vohra hinted that Bofors Managing Director Per Ove Morberg and other top officials may have to be summoned to Delhi to discuss cancellation of the contract and blacklisting of Bofors.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



The news of the pay-offs convinced Arun Singh and Gen. Sundarji that the contract with Bofors should be terminated.

The tactic appeared to be producing results. Bredin offered to put together a top delegation of Bofors officials, including the company president, to visit India within the next several days to clarify questions repeatedly posed to the company by the Ministry of Defence since June 16. But this was becoming an issue on which the political leadership disagreed. The Government appeared to be lacking the political will to go through with what was perhaps the surest way of getting the names of the pay-off recipients.

▶ On July 4, the day Rajiv Gandhi returned from Moscow, this was confirmed. He summoned a meeting of top officials among whom were present Vohra and Arun Singh. He felt that Ministry of Defence officials in pursuing the arm-twisting line had exceeded their brief. The excuse to drop this tactic was that the Government had already committed itself to appointing a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on June 11 and that it was up to the JPC to get to the bottom of the matter. Bofors was informed not to send the delegation.

▶ On July 18, Arun Singh resigned. His sudden resignation, without any explanations, sent shock waves through the country. Singh became a recluse in his hilltop retreat and has not spoken since.

SOME other startling revelations have been made by former deputy chief of army staff Lt. General Hriday Kaul in another exclusive interview *(see box)*. Kaul has disclosed that multi-crore bribes were offered to army generals to change the order of preference in the army's shortlist of guns. Gun manufacturers and their representatives had infiltrated security at the highest levels of government and procured information circulated only among half a dozen top officials.

This raises the question that if a mere change in ranking on the shortlist was worth crores, how much more would the same manufacturers be willing to pay to those who could ensure they landed the contract.

Coming to the present, there are indications that the Government and Bofors may come to another agreement—that in return for the manufacturing contract, Bofors will, as a gesture of good faith, reimburse the Rs 64 crore to India. This would the Government hopes, clear the air just before the elections—with the money having been returned.

But the fact is, it is too late. The Government's refusal to take decisive action at the right moment—and that moment has now passed—has done untold damage to the nation's vital institutions—the Government, the army, the bureaucracy, and to a prime minister who enjoyed the largest political mandate given to any Indian politician. And institutions are easy to destroy, very hard to build.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR and RAMINDAR SINGH

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GENERAL KRISHNASWAMI SUNDARJI (RETD.)

I said for national honour we should go to the extreme of cancelling the contract

'WOODSIDE' is a pretty house overlooking the picturesque Coonoor valley in the Nilgiri hills. But its occupant likens it to Alcatraz. The analogy is apt judging by the high-security perimeter of ten-foot-high brick walls topped by barbed wire, and punctuated with watchtowers manned by armed sentries of the Madras regiment. Inside this forbidding fortress lives General Krishnaswami Sundarji (retired), guarded over by a huge slobbering Dobermann named Mechy (after Mechanised Infantry, the regiment raised by Sundarji). It's a life of sad seclusion for the flamboyant former chief of army staff, and a far cry from computerised war games. He now spends much of his time in his kitchen garden growing strawberries and exotic herbs like thyme, basil and marjoram. It's like being under house arrest, he says. "I can move out but my jailors come with me." Some distance away lives Field Marshal Sam Maneckshaw. But unlike Sundarji, the Field Marshal is not tied down to Coonoor and travels around the country.

It is quickly evident to all visitors to 'Woodside' that here is a man whose talents are being wasted. He knows it too, and the frustration of enforced hibernation, so soon after an eventful term as chief of army staff, makes him sad. Breaking his self-imposed silence, Sundarji spent five hours over two days, talking to Associate Editor RAMINDAR SINGH *about his role in the Bofors gun selection, the lobbies active in government on behalf of the competing guns, the Government's attempt to make him change his advice to cancel the contract, and the reasons behind the resignation of Arun Singh as minister of state for defence. Some startling excerpts:*

Q. *Why did the army change its preference at the last minute from the French to the Swedish gun. How did this happen?*

A. When I was deputy chief of army staff from about August 1981 till Decem-

SHYAM TEKWANI

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BOFORS CANCELLATION

ber 1982, I had assessed the contending guns and shortlisted the French, Swedish and British in that order for purchase and licence production. The first two guns were good guns, close to each other and I did not give any special weightage to the Swedish gun at that point.

In November of 1985, after the Government announced that I was to be the next chief, the minister of state Arun Singh asked me, officially but orally, about my views on the relative merits of the two systems. I requested Major General Ajay Singh and then Brigadier T.P. Singh, both from the Directorate of Weapons and Equipment (DWE), to do a thorough, objective analysis in the light of the two factors which had undergone a change in 1985—the gun-locating radar was becoming available to Pakistan and the project of the French self-propelled system was out, so all hopes of commonality were lost. This team suggested they would give the Swedish gun an edge over the French. I was convinced of this and from that point on it became my decision.

Q. *Did you tell anyone of the change in preference?*

A. I briefed Arun Singh along these lines sometime in November of 1985. After that I heard nothing. I took over as chief on February 1, 1986. Around the middle of February, I was told by my staff that the Defence Ministry wanted us to put our final preference in writing.

My staff was suspicious about this, but I told them not to worry. If we had any ulterior motive in making this change, we would not do it so blatantly but in a much more sophisticated manner. There will be people who believe that it should have been the French gun. I have no quarrel with them. In my mind I apply certain values to certain qualities. Equally honestly and with equal professional competence, you will perhaps apply different values to different characteristics.

Q. *One perception, maybe of the Sundarji-baiters or Sundarji-haters, is that you virtually bought your job by this decision. The timing suggests that it was a price that you were asked to pay or felt needed to be paid for the chief's job.*

A. Totally untrue. Because I was asked for my view only after the announcement had been made (about my being selected the next chief). Before that, neither Arun Singh nor anybody else sought my views.

Q. *There was no quid pro quo ?*

A. There was nothing, not even a suggestion that this should be my answer. If our analysis had shown the original order of preference should remain I would have said so. It would have made no difference.

Q. *The reason why this question is raised by some people is that from 1982 to 1986 the army listed the French gun as number one. In October 1985 there was a meeting in New York between Rajiv Gandhi and Olof Palme. Bofors officials and the then defence secretary S.K. Bhatnagar told the JPC that the matter was discussed there. It was only then that Bofors started seriously feeling that they were in the picture. In November 1985 Arun Singh speaks to you and you order a fresh evaluation. In January 1986, Palme comes to Delhi and a note is put up to the prime minister by his secretariat equating the two guns. On February 17, your evaluation was handed in, listing the Bofors gun on top, and the Negotiating Committee which had for nearly two years, nitpicked the army's recommendation, accepted your recommendation within days. From all this it seems as if everyone was going out of his way to help the Swedes.*

A. If it looks like that circumstantially, I cannot help it. All I can say is that there was no question of my being told by anybody that this was the required choice. If I carry on from there, I will

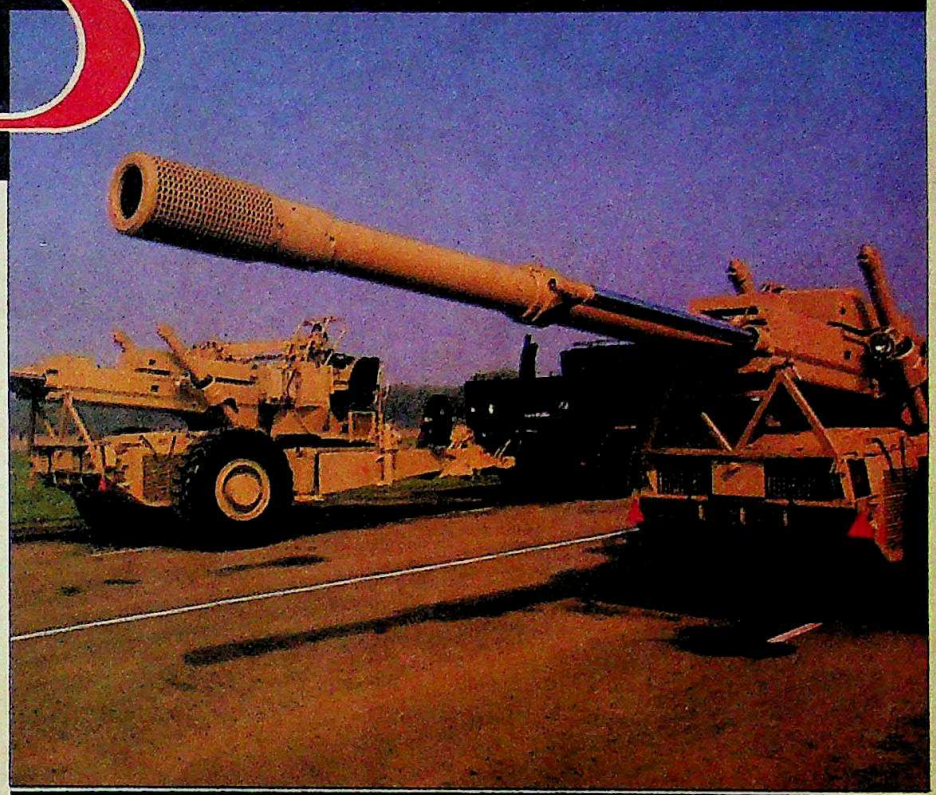

PHOTO: PUSHKARNA

> I believed that if we threatened to cancel the contract, there was a 99.9 per cent chance that Bofors would cough up the information about who had received the money.

> I analysed the effects of cancellation. I said the acquisition process would be delayed by 18 months to 2 years... Even though it was a risk, it was an acceptable risk.

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LT. GENERAL HRIDAYA KAUL

"They were willing to pay Rs 2.5 crore to move their gun up the list"

AS deputy chief of army staff between January 1983 and February 1985, Lt-General Hridaya Kaul was the third ranking officer in Army Headquarters (AHQ), and was directly in-charge of the selection of the 155 mm medium gun for the army. Most of the directorates concerned with the gun's selection reported to him. Kaul was also a member of the Negotiating Committee, but was transferred to Shimla as General Officer Commanding in Chief, Western Command, shortly before the Negotiating Committee okayed the Rs 1,427-crore contract with A.B. Bofors. Kaul who has till now steered clear of the swirling Bofors controversy, finally spoke out in an exclusive interview with Associate Editor RAMINDAR SINGH, *about the astronomical bribes offered by the gun dealers, their amazing ability to procure top secret information and the Defence Ministry's failure to blacklist the firm even after he brought the bribe offer to its notice. Excerpts:*

Q. *Wasn't it you who signed the assessment which placed the French gun ahead of the Swedish gun?*

A. Yes. When I took over as deputy chief in 1983 the army badly needed a medium artillery gun. My predecessor Lt-General K. Sundarji had listed the French gun as number one and Bofors second, but his third and fourth choices—the British and Austrian guns—were totally unacceptable to me. In view of this, I made a presentation to the army chief, General K.V. Krishna Rao. He agreed that only the French and Swedish guns should be considered, but we listed all four to induce competition. Through 1983, we pursued the matter but we got no satisfactory reply from the Defence Ministry why there was no decision.

Q. *What happened when General Vaidya took over as army chief?*

A. He wanted to be put in the picture, so, around February 1984, we made another presentation for him. He approved the Krishna Rao decision. I sent a note to the Defence Ministry and the six other members of the Negotiating Committee, spelling out the AHQ choice of gun and the reasons for the choice. Soon after that I got a strange invitation. A foreigner representing one of the gun manufacturers invited me for dinner at a private suite in a five-star hotel.

Q. *Did you go?*

A. I declined since I didn't accept invitations from companies. But the company had done its homework. They sent an intermediary whom I had known in the past. He made the offer. He told me the company would pay Rs 2.5 crore in any currency or bunch of currencies anywhere in the world, in return for a favourable recommendation for their gun. They only wanted me to move their gun up in the list, not necessarily to the top. And for this they were willing to pay Rs 2.5 crore. I had a feeling they could go up to Rs 5 crore.

Q. *What did you do?*

A. Wait. That's not all. The intermediary also told me that the company knew the recommendation I had made (to the Defence Ministry). I went straight to the chief (General Vaidya) and told him we must take some action. The defence minister was out of town, so I requested the Defence Secretary S.K. Bhatnagar, to inform the defence minister. Vaidya is dead, but you can check with Bhatnagar. When we met at Delhi airport in early 1987, Bhatnagar remembered how worked up I had been about this bribe offer.

Q. *Which company was it?*

A. I don't want to take any names.

Q. *Where is the intermediary now?*

A. Don't ask me that. I gave him my word that I would not reveal his identity.

Q. *So one of the gun companies had access to the top secret note containing the army's recommendations.*

A. Yes. I know for certain that two competitors had the information. Maybe all four had it. It worried me like hell. This note was addressed by name to the defence secretary and five other members of the Negotiating Committee. It was delivered by hand and could be opened only by the addressee. I don't know whether these civilian bureaucrats keep such notes with themselves or with their private secretaries. But the information leaked. In AHQ only the chief and I knew what was in the note. And I did not even let my private secretary see it.

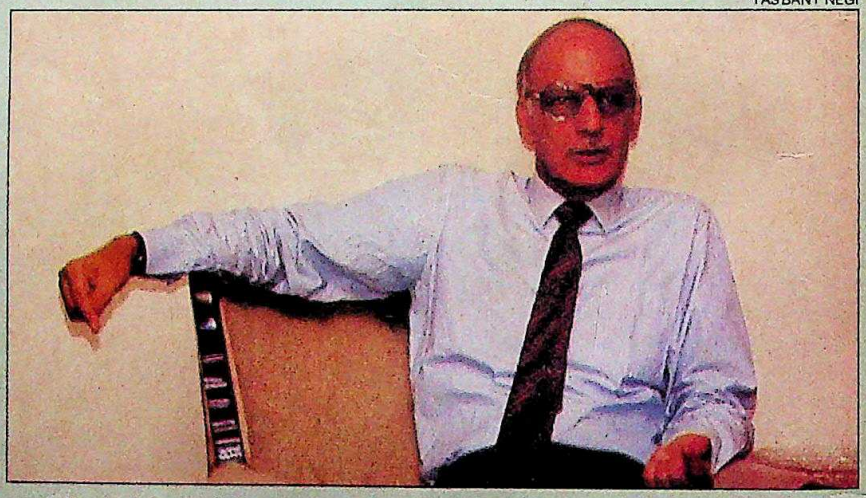
Q. *What did you do about the leakage?*

A. I told the chief and the defence secretary. I also insisted that the firm which had tried to bribe me must be blacklisted.

Q. *Did the Government take any action against the company which offered the bribe ?*

A. Not that I know of. There was no progress till I left AHQ in February 1985. As far as I know, the matter of the bribe offer never went beyond Bhatnagar. I cannot say whether Bhatnagar or Vaidya put it down on paper.

YASBANT NEGI



Q. *What about the defence minister? Did you check with him?*

A. I don't even know whether he was informed.

Q. *Did this come up when you gave evidence before the Joint Parliamentary Committee probing the Bofors pay-offs?*

A. No. The JPC only wanted answers to the questions they asked. I was put certain questions to which I gave answers. The only thing I talked about was the procedure for selecting the gun.

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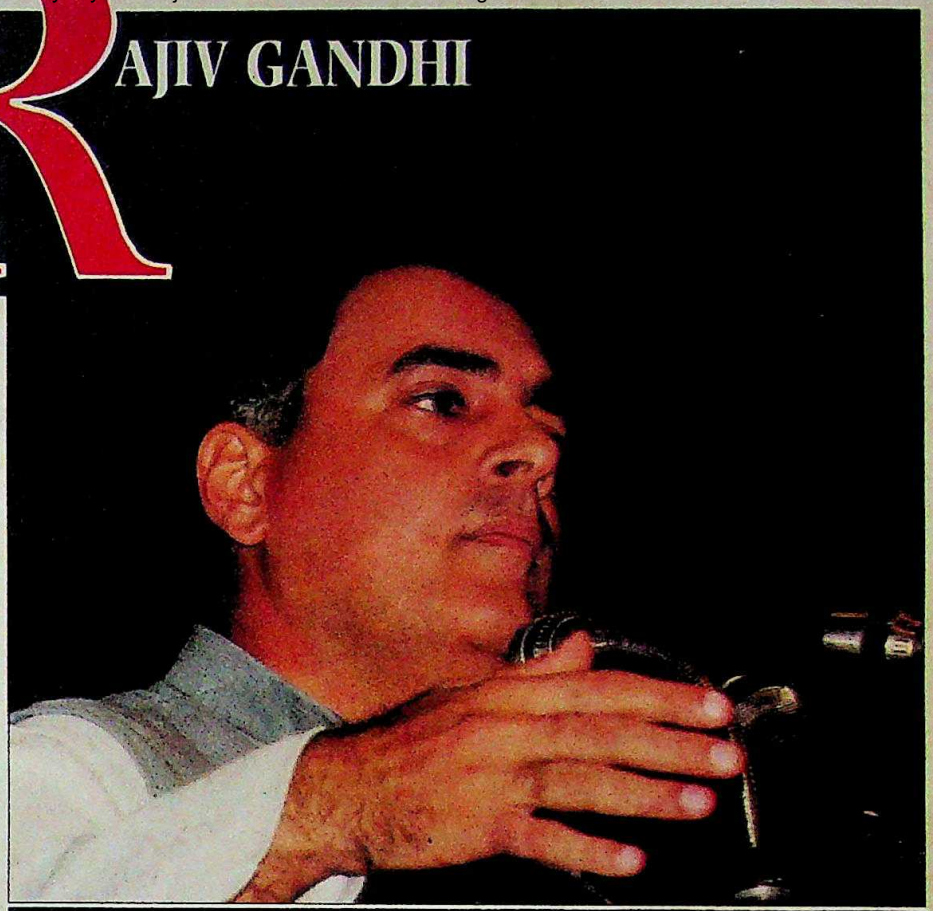
RAJIV GANDHI



perhaps be able to give you some other circumstantial evidence to show that this was not so.

Q. *Such as what ?*

A. In April '87 the news about kickbacks broke. In May we had a number of informal discussions with the Ministry of Defence about what line to follow. I urged all along that we should threaten to cancel the contract with Bofors to extract the details of the pay-offs and recipients. Sometime in mid-May ('87) I was asked by S.K. Bhatnagar, one to one, orally, for my considered opinion on the pros and cons of cancelling the Bofors contract. Having given considerable thought to it, I told him I believed that if we threatened to cancel the contract there was a 99.9 per cent chance that Bofors would cough up the information about who had received the money.

Q. *And if they didn't?*

A. I analysed the effects of cancellation. I said the acquisition process would be delayed by 18 months to 2 years. I based this on the fact that though the French had a tried and tested gun and they had quoted a price in 1986, they could take us for a ride if we entered into negotiations only with them. The British gun, earlier dropped, had by 1986 made certain improvements. So I said we could introduce competition whether we used the British gun for negotiating or as a real contender. The delay would occur because we would have to try out the (modified) British gun. I said in the ultimate analysis, for national honour and everything else we should go to the extreme of cancelling the contract, if necessary.

Q. *In spite of the two year delay?*

A. Two years delay was acceptable. Even though it was a risk, it was an acceptable risk from the point of view of the totality (of circumstances). Around the same time (mid-May) the same question was addressed to me separately by a senior member of the prime minister's office and I gave the same answer.

Q. *Was it Gopi Arora ?*

A. It was Gopi Arora, and I gave him the same view. I also told him that I had given a similar answer to Bhatnagar. The next thing that happened was, that on Friday, June 12, I remember the date clearly, I was asked by the Defence Secretary, Bhatnagar in writing, to put down on paper my views about cancellation of the contract. That day I put down on paper all that I had said earlier. It was delivered to Bhatnagar on the morning of June 13. I was convinced that if you threatened to screw that contract, everything would come out, pit-a-pat, *sab niklega*. Initially my feeling was that MOD was indeed proceeding along those lines.

> The PM was angry. This is hearsay, but Vohra told me the PM lit into him for adopting a threatening approach towards Bofors to force them to come out with the information.
>
> Serla Grewal's letter said the PM was upset that the Defence Ministry had not sent him the assessment he had asked for of the implications of cancellation of the contract.

Q. *You were given to understand that the Ministry would act along these lines?*

A. I had the feeling that the Ministry was inclined to follow this course.

Q. *What happened after that?*

A. For three weeks or so I heard nothing. But the day the prime minister returned from Moscow, it was a Saturday, (July 4), he called a meeting at his house, at which Arun Singh, Bhatnagar and N.N. Vohra (then additional secretary, defence) were present, among others. The PM was angry. This is hearsay, but Vohra told me that the PM lit into him for adopting a threatening approach towards Bofors to force them to come out with the information. Vohra came back from the meeting somewhat disgusted and I believe he booked calls to Bofors to tell its officials not to come. They were already coming.

Q. *Is this authoritative?*

A. Vohra told me himself, almost immediately thereafter. Then sometime in July, maybe the first week, the defence secretary returned my note to me. He tentatively felt me out, asking if there was a possibility of a change in this.

Q. *He wanted you to change your views?*

A. Modify them, shall we say.

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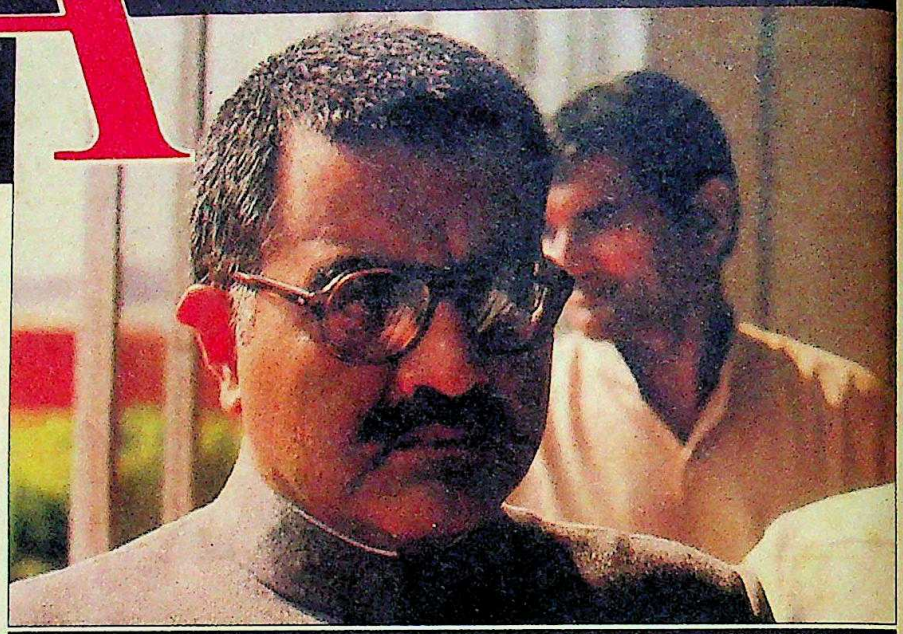
ARUN SINGH



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

He went and had a very big dust-up with the PM. He was torn betwen loyalty to the man and what was right... Till then I had assumed there was nothing wrong with the contract.

One of the major reasons Arun Singh resigned was he felt nothing should be done to harm the army which is untouched by the crumbling processes affecting some other institutions.

Q. *In those words?*

A. It was very tentatively put. He said 'government has taken a decision and this (note) is awkward and is it possible for you to modify your views.'

Q. *What did you do?*

A. I asked tentatively what exactly he meant by modification. I then said 'No, this is my considered view and it is going to stay that way. If you don't want it (the note) you need not take it'. So that piece of paper was handed back to me. I took it back, gave it to my military assistant (MA) saying it had been returned and as far as I was concerned he could shred it. But as I learnt later on, he had not.

Q. *He kept it on file? Are you sure?*

A. Let me finish. This was around the first week of July. On the 14th of July, I remember the date clearly, Bhatnagar rushed into my office waving a piece of paper. It was a letter from Serla Grewal (then PM's secretary) saying the PM was upset that the Defence Ministry had not sent him the assessment he had asked for, of the implications of cancellation of the Bofors contract. Bhatnagar seemed quite agitated about it. I read the letter and said let's go see Arun Singh. We walked into Arun Singh's office. He read it. I said I did not know what the Defence Ministry had sent to the PM, but as far as I was concerned I could give my views again on the strategic impact (of cancellation), on security. I told Bhatnagar I was going back and putting down exactly what I had said in my earlier note.

Q. *You did not tell Arun Singh that you had given an earlier note?*

A. It was implied in what I stated.

Q. *You were indirectly informing Arun Singh you had given your views on this?*

A. That's right. That is what was implied. At that moment it did not strike me to enquire from Arun whether he had seen the original note or not. However, I went back to my office, called my MA and asked him if he remembered the points made in the earlier note. That's when he told me that he had not obeyed my orders to shred that note. He produced the original note along with the office copy.

Q. *Does that note show it was received in the Defence Ministry and had come back from the defence secretary?*

A. Yes, yes. It was dated as received on 13th of June. The receipt given by his private secretary was also on the file. I had the note retyped, dated it 14th of July, 1987 and had it delivered. That's the last I know about it. That (file) stayed with me and when I handed over charge, my MA told me he had handed over the file to my successor's MA.

Q. *The whole correspondence?*

A. This particular one. At that time it had a lot of security value and was being rated as top secret because it dealt with our assessment, and the security implications of the delay and our vulnerability in the time gap. Today after thinking it over I think the security value no longer attaches to it. It has more historical than security value. For all I know, technically, it is perhaps still top secret. Therefore, I might be accused of discussing with the press a classified matter.

Q. *Did you subsequently ask anybody why your views were not accepted?*

A. This happened on the 14th and soon after that (July 18) Arun Singh put in his resignation. That was that.

Q. *Was his resignation connected with the stand you had taken?*

A. I think so.

Q. *Arun Singh would probably have taken it up with the prime minister saying this is the army chief's view.*

A. Perhaps he would have. That is my belief.

Q. *It's surprising that Arun Singh, aware of what the prime minister's attitude was, from the July 4 meeting, still went and took it up with the PM after he got your letter.*

A. I think he went and had a very big dust-up with the PM. He was torn between his loyalty to the man and what he felt was right. It's a great pity. That's when my first misgivings started. When you have a very firm perception of somebody it doesn't change suddenly, overnight. It takes time. Even your subconscious refuses to believe certain things which your senses tell you, you ought to believe.

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This was the beginning. Till then I had assumed there was nothing to hide. Turn the screws and get the information.

Q. *Till then you had assumed there was nothing wrong with the contract?*

A. Absolutely.

Q. *If your misgivings started after July 4, then the subsequent letter from the PM's office, saying that the PM had not been informed of the implications of the cancellation, must have appeared to be a deliberate cover-up.*

A. To be thoroughly honest, I had given my letter to the Ministry of Defence and I didn't know whether they sent it up.

Q. *But since you had also told Gopi Arora, it's fair to assume that either he or the defence secretary, if not both, would have conveyed your views to the PM.*

A. Correct. Agreed.

Q. *That's probably why Serla Grewal wrote back, rather than Gopi Arora?*

A. That was the cause of disgust as far as Arun Singh was concerned. One of the major reasons why Arun Singh resigned was he felt nothing should be done to harm the army, which is one of the institutions left relatively untouched by the crumbling processes affecting some other institutions.

Q. *Did he tell you as much?*

A: Not perhaps in so many words, but the sense of it was that he would rather resign and take it upon himself than let the army be harmed by the Bofors controversy. He is a totally honest and honourable man and he should come out and help the truth emerge in the interest of the service and the country.

Q. *The truth about who took the payment?*

A. Whatever. To my way of thinking, in the JPC and subsequently, too much has been made of the nuance-change in judging the qualities of the guns. This has led to an over-emphasis on the rationale, propriety and possible motives behind the nuance-change rather than on the major issue, which is—who has made the money. The real question is: who took the money?

Q. *Would you like to say who made the money? Do you have a reasoned guess as to where the money could have gone?*

A. I have no proof, so I can only go by the general belief of what has happened in the past. Generally many governments have been getting a percentage of many of these large deals, whether defence deals or otherwise, perhaps for party funds. I don't think this is a new phenomenon. It's been going on for some time. The fact is that irrespective of which weapon is chosen, if the intention is to cream a certain amount off the top for party purposes or whatever, it could be creamed off whichever weapon is chosen.

Q. *Any manufacturer would be willing to pay?*

A. Of course. It's well known. As a matter of fact if the French weapon had been finally chosen, perhaps they would have got a similar percentage. Most politicians realise this and yet they act as if they are totally innocent. This being so, from my point of view where is the compulsion to push one weapon or the other. This is exactly why, as far as the army is concerned, we make sure that what goes into the shortlist is fundamentally acceptable. Thereafter from our point of view it is immaterial which one is chosen.

Q. *But for the person, or the Government looking for a cut, the bigger the cut, the better the gun. If money is the criterion, then more money should be the best criterion?*

A. Maybe. I don't know how these things work.

Q. *Is this government different from others in that respect?*

A. It does not appear to be so. I have no definite knowledge either in this deal or in earlier deals, but the general belief was that money was being made.

Q. *Have you heard about army generals being approached with offers of money?*

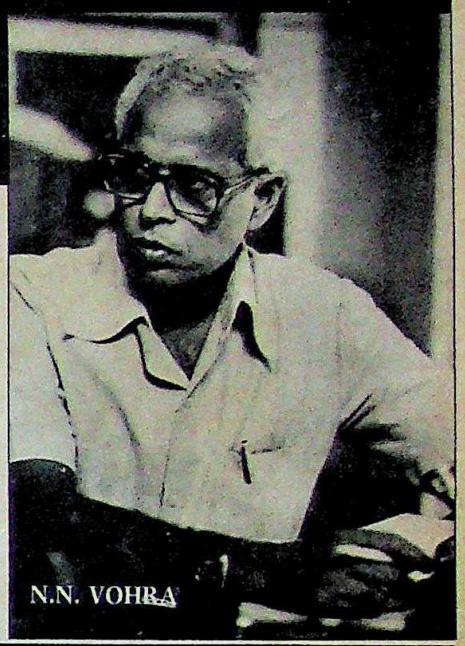
A. I have not heard of any such instances, but it does not appear unlikely given the ethos etc.

Q. *We have a statement by Lt. Gen. H.Kaul that he was approached with an offer of Rs 2.5 crore if he agreed to change the order of preference on the shortlist.*

A. Did he inform the Government?

THE BUREAUCRACY

S.K. BHATNAGAR



N.N. VOHRA

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Defence Secretary Bhatnagar tentatively felt me out... He said the Government had taken a decision and my note was awkward. And was it possible for me to modify my views?

Vohra came back from the (prime minister's) meeting somewhat disgusted and I believe he booked calls to Bofors to tell its officials not to come. They were already coming.

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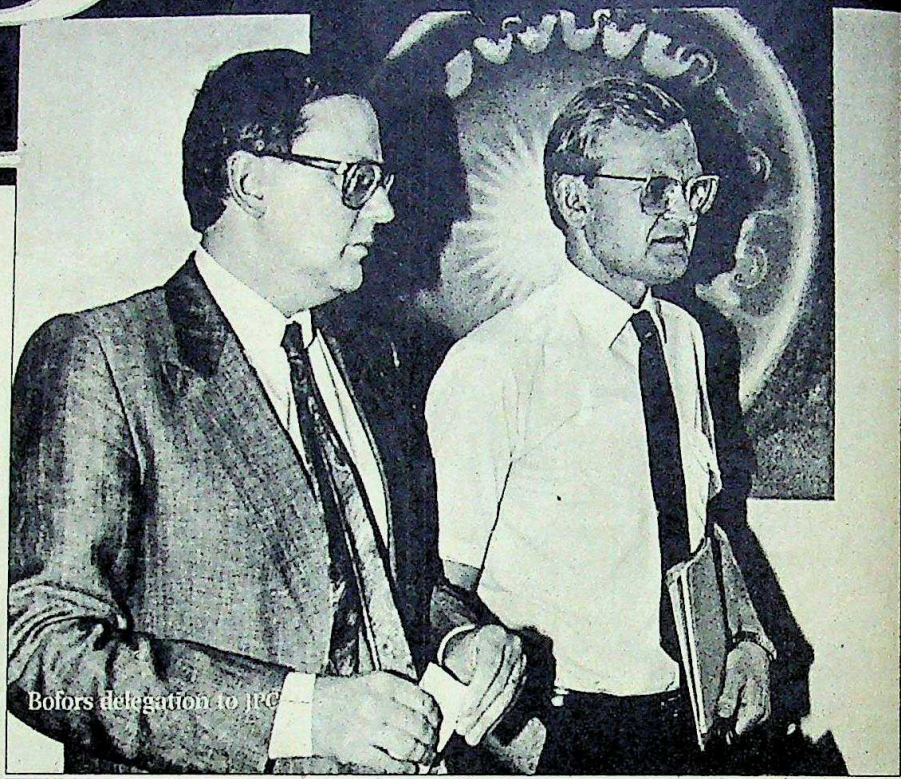
PAY-OFFS



Bofors delegation to JPC

BHAWAN SINGH

In the JPC and subsequently, too much has been made of the nuance-change in judging the qualities of the guns, rather than the major issue. The real question is: who took the money?

Generally many governments have been getting a percentage of these large deals, perhaps for party funds. I don't think this is a new phenomenon. It's been going on for some time.

Q. He says he informed the Government. He told Bhatnagar. He says he went to see the minister, who was out of town. So he went and met Vaidya and Bhatnagar.

A. Why didn't they take action against the chap who offered the bribe? I had not heard about it but I think it is preposterous that no action was taken. If they know who offered the money and it was based on information the company should not have had, some action should have been taken. At least the leak had to be investigated. The person may deny he offered the money but it has to be investigated.

Q. Bhatnagar told the JPC he informed all four manufacturers in May 1985 that they would not tolerate middlemen. Bofors officials told the JPC that they were told seriously to remove middlemen only in November of 1985, that is following the New York meeting. What has also come out now is that in November of 1985, instead of terminating contracts, Bofors signed an agreement with one of the three agents promising to pay 3 per cent commission on the Indian contract. It conveys the impression that by November of 1985 Bofors was pretty sure it would get the gun order.

A. I get what you are suggesting but I have no idea at all...

Q. If people say General Sundarji was part of that scenario? That you were drawn in?

A. It's totally untrue. Nobody in the Ministry of Defence, or Arun Singh or the defence minister in any way suggested, hinted or indicated to me what my view should be.

Q. Did you ever wonder that your view was accepted too quickly, almost without question by the negotiating committee which had till then questioned every opinion and action of the army?

A. I cannot comment on that. I made my judgement totally on objective factors. The committee had raised questions in the past, and could continue to question, but sometime they had to take a decision. I cannot see the logic of the argument that unless they dragged their feet on it, it was not a genuine decision. As far as the army is concerned, we don't question when someone takes a decision. We just say *shukar hai*.

But I do want to mention one other thing about the guns. In December of 1982, when I assessed the guns I had taken it that all four guns were capable of 30 km range. That was a basic assumption. It was a reasonable extrapolation, in the view of our artillery experts. Subsequently during 1983 and 1984, somewhere along the line in my view, the assessment got skewed to the extent of wanting to make the French gun the only gun. That skewing had been done, whether deliberately or not. I am not making allegations, by saying that they would take the range of the Swedish gun to be 21 km.

Q. So you felt that the range of the Swedish gun was being held down, almost intentionally, to devalue the gun?

A. Yes. There was no fair competition. It was being tailored to become a one-horse race. The Austrians were out, the British were dropped from the shortlist, and if the Swedish gun was being assessed as having only a 21.4 km range then it had no goddamn business to be on the shortlist. The whole thing was being so oriented: all the matrices drawn up, the values given were in my view totally bogus.

Q. And you corrected what you thought was an injected bias?

A. I believe the DWE had been given instructions which would have biased them against the Bofors gun. One was on the question of range. I told them to forget any instructions which would tilt the competition unfairly and crank in whatever factors had come up in the recent past

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and make an objective assesment.

Q. How does Lt Gen. Mayadas' choice of the Austrian gun fit into all this?

A. Mayadas himself is honest, but his whole technical evaluation committee was, I believe, set up with the sole intention of pushing the Austrian gun. There was a whole set of people in the Defence Ministry who were dissatisfied with the way the army was pushing the French gun, almost as the only choice. So they started a parallel technical evaluation committee, which had never been done before. The Indian representative of the Austrian manufacturer, Noricum, was the son-in-law of a retired artillery major-general. I have a suspicion, I hope I am wrong, that they got at someone in DWE who more or less stage-managed this whole exercise.

General Vaidya, the deputy chief Gen Kaul and the Director General of Artillery Jaggi Malhotra did not like this one bit. So Mayadas was transferred out as well as his junior who had put him up to it. I think the Government of India also has files on the lobby operating in government on behalf of the French gun. I had the feeling that this lobby was firing their gun from my shoulder (using my 1982 evaluation). From 1983 to 1985 this went on.

Q. So maybe your final decision (in favour of the Swedish gun) was influenced by this realisation?

A. Regretfully it was. I keep asking myself, how much of this ultimate decision was really because I felt so, and how much because I felt so much wrong was going on. I cannot answer it but I keep asking myself every day. You don't know how much better I feel, having told you everything.

Q. About the French lobby being in action. Was it told to you? It could be disinformation, to spur you into acting in a particular manner.

A. Not at all. I was told there was a file and the French gun was being pushed. It was quite blatant.

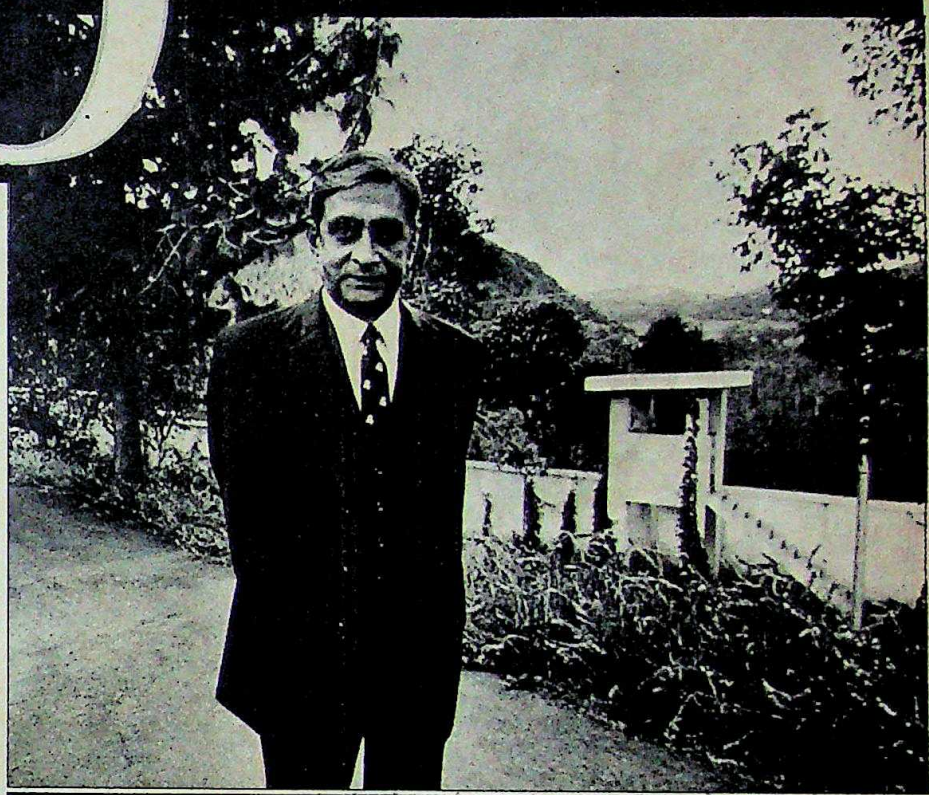
Q. There appears to be a new willingness on the part of people to talk about things, to cleanse the system of the stigma of this deal. Do you think a lot of people now feel that the truth should be out?

A. I was always convinced that the truth will be out. The truth has to come out. It will be a very sad world if the truth does not come out.

Q. Maybe you will have played a part in that.

A. A minor part.

ON HIMSELF



SHYAM TEKWANI

Too many of us are prepared to go along. You take a joker like me living in Alcatraz. If the Government decides tomorrow that I need no Alcatraz, Alcatraz will be withdrawn.

I am quite prepared to take the consequences for speaking out. They can harass me, they are welcome to. What the hell can they take apart from life and bloody liberty.

Q. Chaturvedi (the CAG) had played a major part.

A. The CAG has had a big role to play. He has done what he had to do, and I have no reservations about the CAG's role. I think he is perfectly justified in commenting on the systems. But I honestly don't know how effectively the Ministry of Defence put forward its defence. Quite often the ministry itself does not understand the finer points of professional decision-making. When somebody who is not a professional, tries to explain to somebody else who is also not a professional there is a vast scope for (misunderstanding). The ministry is not able to carry credibility.

Q. After the CAG report, a lot of people are willing to stand up and be counted. That's a plus point.

A. Absolutely, but I am still cynical enough to believe that too many of us are prepared to go along. You take a joker like me, who is already living in Alcatraz. If the Government of India decides tomorrow that I need no Alcatraz, Alcatraz will be removed.

Q. Does that really worry you?

A. It does not. If it worried me, do you think I would talk to you. I am quite prepared to take the consequences for speaking out. They can harass me, they are welcome to. What the hell can they take apart from life and bloody liberty.

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CBI

Playing Politics

The CBI, the country's premier investigating agency, has been transformed into a political tool of the ruling party. Its increasingly controversial role under current Director Mohan Katre has eroded the image of the organisation.

The CBI's credibility as a fair, impartial investigative body, so assiduously acquired over 22 years, has taken a pummelling in the last three years. It is now viewed as the political gendarme of the ruling party, and is derided as the "Congress Bureau of Investigation".

Last fortnight when the *Indian Express* produced what it called irrefutable evidence linking CBI Director, M.G. Katre's son, Umesh, with Reliance Industries *(see accompanying story)*, and the Opposition demanded Katre's removal, attention was also focused on the CBI's worsening record.

Its once exemplary record of 75 per cent convictions has dipped by around 5 per cent since 1987. The reasons are clear. The CBI's plate is full of politically sensitive cases other agencies should be handling. Many of its top sleuths are engaged in this work and they find it demoralising.

Seven opposition states are yet to give the CBI permission to take up cases under the Prevention of Corruption Act, amended last year. In Andhra Pradesh, 90 cases involving over 200 government servants and over Rs 10 crore in frauds are pending because the state Government barred the CBI.

The Opposition's distrust has also blocked legislation to reorganise the CBI's functions. The committee headed by the cabinet secretary had suggested a major overhaul, involving amendment of the Constitution, in order to allow the CBI to undertake investigations of certain crimes without the permission of the state Government.

Politicisation of the CBI is not new. In 1969, Mrs Indira Gandhi ordered raids against the Birla group because she felt it had links with her adversaries. During the Emergency, Sanjay Gandhi used the CBI to silence critics and raise party funds. And R.K. Dhawan, now officer on special duty in the cabinet secretariat, routinely instructed the then CBI director, D. Sen.

Gurumurthy being arrested

Chandraswamy after his arrest

Nehru and Jalappa

Some of the cases given to the CBI have more to do with politics than crime. Their handling has damaged its exemplary record.

The Shah Commission during Janata rule accused Sen of bending to the whims of his political bosses. When former director, John Lobo, stood firm against political pressure, Charan Singh, the then home minister, created a special cell under protege R.D. Singh. Clearly, its political masters played a major role in undermining the CBI.

But the present crisis in the bureau is unprecedented. It has its roots in the rapid change of roles thrust upon it by the Rajiv Government. From a confident phase, when it was told to prosecute the belligerent *Indian Express*, the CBI soon slipped into the role of a cover-up agency for a panicky government. So, while the bureau has often been used to harass the Government's opponents, this is the first time it has been accused of shielding corruption.

Katre dismisses the charges as "nonsense". His confidence emanates from his closeness to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Since Rajiv Gandhi is also the minister of personnel, Katre deals mostly with the powerful bureaucrats who have Rajiv's ear, earlier Serla Grewal and Gopi Arora, and now B.G. Deshmukh. Though the CBI falls under the Department of Personnel and the Home Ministry, officials in both departments stay clear of the bureau as does Minister of State for Personnel P. Chidambaram.

Initially, Katre used this exceptional clout for the good of the bureau. In the first two years of his tenure, he turned the organisation around. An extra post of additional director was created to streamline distribution of work. The number of vehicles was doubled. Every office got textel and fax machines. And, crucially, special intelligence units were created in the four regional offices. "He gets what he wants," commented a colleague.

But if the Government gives, it takes as well. Some of the cases given to the CBI recently have had more to do with politics than crime. Their

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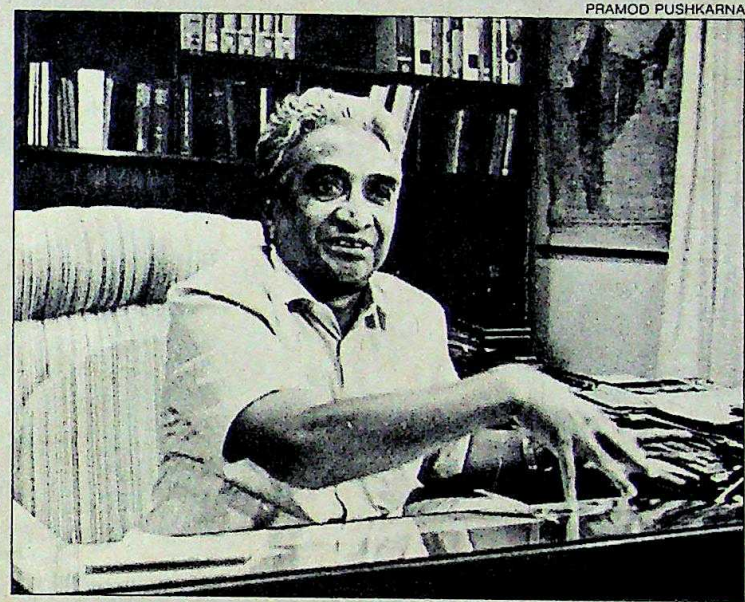
MOHAN KATRE

"I am doing my job"

Mohan Ganesh Katre, 60, is perhaps the CBI*'s most controversial director. Two years ago he was due to retire. The Government offered to make him special director in charge of sensitive cases. Katre turned down the offer and the Government had to bend—he continued as director. His bosses clearly needed him more than he needed the job. Katre began his tenure in the top post with a bang in 1985, streamlining and expanding the organisation. But soon, allegations of covering up for the Government surfaced. And then, last fortnight, when Katre was at the receiving end of charges linking his son Umesh with Reliance Industries, the Government stood staunchly by him. Katre spoke to Senior Correspondent* PANKAJ PACHAURI *last fortnight. Excerpts:*

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Q. *How do you feel about your family being investigated?*

A. They tailed my son for two days before the story appeared. Correspondents parked their jeeps for hours in front of my flat in Bombay. My daughter-in-law was alone with two children. She rang me up to complain about the harassment. I talked to the commissioner of police and only after he sent some plainclothesmen, did the reporters go away. She was so upset answering the calls that I had to ask my DIG to send a peon to man the phone.

Q. *What is your reaction to the* Express *charges?*

A. The main charge is that Saras is a *benami* firm for my son. Saras Director Kamlesh Shah, who is an old friend of my family, has denied that. Now the question is how did my son do business with the *Express* reporter on the Saras name? If they had approached Kamlesh Shah, produced a bank draft for an order, he would have done the same for my son's company. Why didn't they ask Shah how much he knows about my son's business. They work together and know each other's business.

Q. *What about the connection with Reliance?*

A. Reliance Industries is only one of the many companies they deal with. They got the agency through a newspaper advertisement.

Q. *The charge pertains to your intimacy with Reliance.*

A. In 1985 the Industry Ministry requested us to investigate the source of official documents quoted in an *Express* article on Reliance. I sent the request to my junior who was dealing with such offences. He noted that along with the ministry's request, the charges against Reliance should also be investigated. We filed FIRs against both, though I would have been within my rights to ignore Reliance and ask him to pursue only the charge under the Official Secrets Act.

Q. *But now the Law Ministry says that the Official Secrets Act charge against* Express *is untenable.*

A. I don't know about that. We have sent our investigations to the Home Ministry. It's up to them.

Q. *Do you think the Wadia conspiracy case warranted* CBI *intervention?*

A. The CBI cannot take up cases on its own. The Maharashtra Government requested the Central Government, which ordered us to take up the case.

Q. *Why haven't you prosecuted Reliance in the last two years?*

A. We cannot move till the other departments complain to us. The Directorate of Enforcement has decided not to lodge a complaint. The Chief Controller of Imports and Exports has not got back to us yet in two years.

Q. *Do you think the credibility of the* CBI *has been eroded?*

A. Our credibility remains the same. Courts all over the country hand over about 80 cases to us in a year. About 50 requests come from the states.

Q. *The Opposition has sought your resignation.*

A. Why should I resign? A newspaper has levelled charges against my son without talking to him. As a senior government servant I have voluntarily written to my bosses twice, clarifying my position. If they want to start an inquiry, I am ready. We will counter all the charges in court.

Q. *The Opposition has accused the* CBI *of playing a partisan role.*

A. It is only when they are involved, that they criticise the CBI. We have also taken up cases against Congressmen. We prosecuted Congress(I) MP Tapeshwar Singh, we prosecuted a former chief minister (of Arunachal Pradesh).

Q. *But you failed in the Bofors case.*

A. We are a government agency and cannot work like journalists to obtain information. We officially asked the Swiss authorities for access to the Svenska accounts, which received the biggest share. We told them that Win Chadha had evaded tax and committed fraud because he had given false taxation documents to the Government here.

Q. *What was their reply?*

A. They said non-declaration and evasion of tax was not a criminal offence under Swiss laws. It is a fiscal law offence. Access to bank accounts is given only when the offence is criminal in both countries. If someone concocts documents only then will the Swiss call it a fraud and criminal offence.

Q. *What are you doing about it now?*

A. We will write to them again.

Q. *There is also criticism regarding your extended tenure.*

A. The Government has given me this job and I am doing it.

Q. *What is your view about having a fixed tenure for* CBI *chiefs?*

A. It is a good idea.

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handling has blotted the CBI record.

For the country's top investigating agency, these are serious lapses. Rues a senior official: "Due to a few rotten fish, the whole basket seems to be smelling." Besides, these cases have taken up a lot of the CBI's time. Despite a 15-per cent vacancy in its ranks, CBI officials are asked to help in proceedings like the Joint Parliamentary Committee probe on Bofors and the judicial inquiry into the hiring of Fairfax. Commented a DIG: "There is a tendency to take up cases which in the past were politely refused."

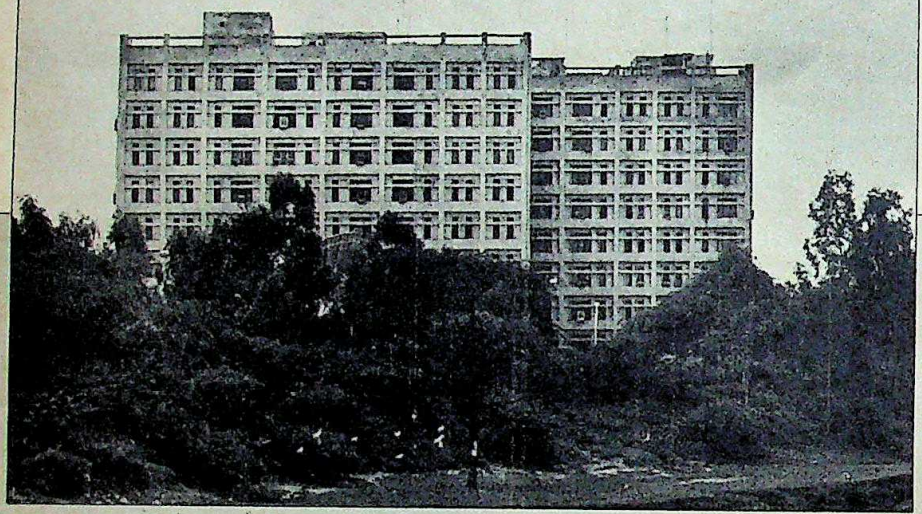
What is irking officials of the bureau is the fact that while they attract flak on such cases, serious work done by them is totally glossed over. "It demoralises the men," observes one official. But what troubles them most is the inexplicable second extension given to Katre last year. During his first extension, Katre's immediate junior, joint director Radhakrishnan Nayar, had already been announced as his successor by the Government. When he was denied the post, Nayar took premature retirement. Moreover, Katre's continuation as director is blocking the promotions of at least a dozen IPS officers in the organisation.

Says a former CBI director: "The people still trust the organisation as a police agency. But they balk at its political hatchetry." With Katre in the saddle—and his image of being the ruling party's crisis manager—the CBI's legendary detecting skills and its apolitical role now obviously belong to hoary history.

—PANKAJ PACHAURI

PRASHANT PANJIAR

The CBI was often used to harass opponents, but it's now being used by a panicky government to shield corruption.



Controversial Cases

IN recent times, the CBI's role in several sensitive political cases has been criticised. Examples:

► It wrote to the Swiss Government asking it to reveal the names of the persons behind the Svenska account who received kickbacks in the Bofors gun deal. The CBI named Win Chadha as a suspect but is yet to file a case against him. Later, Chidambaram told the Lok Sabha that no Indians were involved in the kickbacks—an example of how the Government changes CBI findings to suit its interests.

► The CBI prosecuted Nusli Wadia for misrepresenting his citizenship and charged that he was financing the *Indian Express* investigation of Amitabh Bachchan's holdings abroad. Immigration authorities deal with passport matters. But the CBI deputed half a dozen sleuths to probe the matter.

► When the *Express* was wooing Chandraswamy to elicit information on Bofors, he was grilled by the CBI on the basis of a British resident's complaint that he had been cheated by the godman. However, Chandraswamy soon switched sides and was allowed to travel abroad. Nothing has come of the case.

► The CBI arrested Janata Dal leader Sanjay Singh in the Syed Modi murder case. Selected leaks showed that it was predisposed to implicate him. There was a rift among the officials about the leaks but the official media gave wide coverage to the charges.

► It prosecuted *Indian Express* financial adviser and columnist, S. Gurumurthy, for violating the Official Secrets Act when he wrote against Reliance Industries, quoting official documents. The Law Ministry has held that the charge does not come under the purview of the Official Secrets Act.

► The bureau filed a case against former Karnataka home minister, R.L. Jalappa, for conspiring to murder Kerala lawyer Abdul Rasheed. Jalappa resigned due to the ensuing controversy. Now the CBI has pinned only two charges on him: that of transferring a deputy commissioner of police to the area where the victim was killed and of partially hiding information from the Assembly.

► The CBI probed the *Express* report by Editor Arun Shourie on Congress(I) MP Kamal Nath's illegal foreign accounts. It found that the documents quoted were authentic. Instead of taking up the case with the Enforcement Directorate and the Reserve Bank of India, it has been shelved.

► It probed the charges made by S. Thangarasu, an AIADMK (Janaki) faction MP, that the Jayalalitha faction tried bribing him. The CBI found that the amount of Rs 5 lakh belonged to the MP and was not given as a bribe. It has, however, not shown any interest in tracing the source of the money.

► The CBI inquired into the involvement of the Delhi Administration and civic officials in the violation of building plans for a New Delhi hotel. Despite detecting a bungling of Rs 36 crore, no case has been made out. The hotel owner had earlier held posts in the Congress(I).

► In 1988, the bureau raided the house and office of the New Delhi Municipal Committee Chairman, Dharam Dutt. It filed an FIR but is yet to file a chargesheet against the powerful bureaucrat.

► It initiated proceedings against Rajiv Gandhi's adversary, Arun Nehru, for allegedly causing a loss of Rs 19 lakh to the Government in the Czech pistol deal while he was minister for internal security.

—PANKAJ PACHAURI

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KATRE-RELIANCE

A Tangled Web

An expose establishes a Mohan Katre-Reliance link

FOR some time now whispers about an underhand link between Dhirubhai Ambani's Reliance Industries and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Director, Mohan Katre, have been circulating. But besides the possession of a few hundred shares, no substantial connection could be established.

Until last fortnight when an intrepid Bombay journalist, Maneck Davar, pretended to be a small-scale detergent manufacturer and virtually entrapped Katre's son Umesh, 31, into revealing his potentially lucrative, newly-forged link with the Reliance business empire (*see box*).

Umesh Katre (left) and Davar; damning exposure

Is Mohan Katre's son a commission sales agent for Reliance Industries? Umesh quit his job with Mafatlal Apparels last December to set up a garment export company called Spice Islands Apparels Pvt Ltd. The company's registration lists two chartered accountants as its shareholders, who, together, had invested just Rs 200 in the company's authorised capital of Rs 5 lakh. Spice Islands was set up on November 17, 1988. Umesh Katre's visiting card identifies him as a director of the company. The address and phone numbers on his card are those of another chartered accountant, Dinesh B. Mehta.

Spice Islands was registered with the Apparel Export Promotion Council only on April 13 this year. Already, it has contracts worth Rs 50 lakh from West Germany, a highly competitive market.

Umesh's friend, Kamlesh Shah, meanwhile, had been running the Modern Chemical Corporation. Modern Chemical is the flagship of a clutch of private limited companies and partnership firms run by Bhogilal Shah, an old friend of the Katre family. In December 1987, Reliance Industries appointed Modern Chemical Corporation as one of the distributors for its new product, LAB. In October 1988, the distributorship was transferred from Modern Chemical to a firm called Saras Chemicals.

Saras Chemicals was incorporated in October 1988, around the time Umesh decided to resign from Mafatlals. But there is another link between Reliance and Saras—the new detergent Sasa, promoted by the Shree Mahila Griha Udyog (makers of Lijjat papad) with Reliance's help

Maneck Davar's Account

August 14, 10 a.m. I spot Umesh Katre entering a white Mercedes with a lady and tail him to Clark House.

August 14, 10.20 a.m. The watchman informs me: "Katre Saab's Saras Chemicals is on the 2nd floor."

August 16, 11 a.m. Posing as 'Naresh Vohra' of Brilliance Chemical Industries, I tell Umesh I need 3 tonnes of LAB.

August 16, 11.20 a.m. Umesh Katre actually rings up Reliance to find out if the material is available.

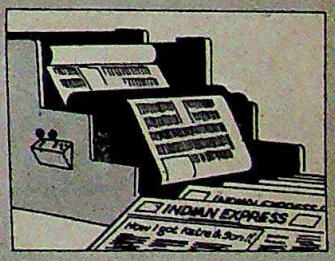
August 16, 4.00 p.m. I bug my phone and call Umesh to confirm delivery from Reliance. Link established.

August 17, 2.00 p.m. I bring Yogesh Kamdar as witness to Umesh's office. Umesh types order to Reliance.

August 17, 2.15 p.m. Umesh gives me receipts for Rs 1,01,257.80 in the name of Saras Chemicals.

August 17, 2.30 p.m. Yogesh Kamdar visits the Reliance office in Tulsiani Chambers to collect the delivery order.

August 17. I return to my office and collate all the evidence I had collected linking Umesh Katre to Reliance.



August 18. *Indian Express* front-pages the entire episode in an article titled: "How I got Katre and son."

Illustration by AJIT NINAN and B.K. SHARMA

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last December. Sasa is without doubt another brilliant move by the Ambanis. Reliance is one of the three Indian manufacturers of linear alkyl benzene (LAB), a petrochemical by-product which constitutes about 20 per cent of the raw material input for synthetic detergent. The total demand for LAB in India is 120,000 tonnes. Reliance's share of the capacity is 60,000 tonnes. Three more companies, including Hindustan Lever and Nirma, both of which produce synthetic detergents, have now been given licences to produce LAB which will add over 200,000 tonnes to the installed capacity. Sasa kills two birds with one stone—it challenges Nirma's domination of the booming inexpensive detergent market while it guarantees an outlet for Reliance's LAB.

The synthetic detergent market is estimated to be worth Rs 1,500 crore, of which nearly two-third is constituted of cheap detergent powders and soaps. But the market is growing rapidly and is expected to double in the next 10 years. Nirma dominates the lower-priced detergent market, and will be competing with Reliance by making LAB also. Sasa can stop Nirma dead in its tracks.

Since December last year, when the first Sasa plant was set up in Bombay, four others have come up, while 31 more are planned throughout the country. By the end of 1990, Sasa could be producing 100,000 tonnes annually, against the current production of 22 tonnes a day. Since the Mahila Udyog comes under the umbrella of the Khadi Village Industries Commission, efforts are on to get Sasa exempted from sales tax and excise. Gujarat recently exempted Sasa from sales tax. If excise exemption is also given, and other states follow Gujarat's lead, Sasa will enjoy a whopping 40 per cent price advantage—enough to wipe out market leader Nirma whose trumpcard so far has been its low price compared with products like Hindustan Lever's Surf.

When Saras Chemicals was launched, Kamlesh Shah and K. Thyagaraj, Reliance's general manager (commercial), told the press that Saras Chemicals would provide turnkey services to set up detergent units and would offer technical know-how along with Reliance. The

Katre-Reliance Link

October, 1988: Saras Chemicals incorporated.
Directors/shareholders: Bhogilal Shah, Kundan Shah, Kamlesh Shah, Aruna Shah and Maharoukh Irani (wife of Umesh Katre's school friend)

October, 1988: Reliance Industries appoints Saras Chemicals as its distributors for LAB.

November, 1988: Umesh Katre quits Mafatlal to set up Spice Islands Apparels Pvt Ltd. His visiting card lists the same fax and telex number as Saras.

August, 1989: Umesh Katre gives 'Naresh Vohra' a quotation for Reliance LAB on Saras Chemicals' letterhead and also signs as Director of Saras. He personally accepts a demand draft for Rs 97,507.80 as payment for three tonnes of LAB.

Katre tells 'Vohra' that Saras Chemicals was supplying LAB to Shree Mahila Griha Udyog, makers of Sasa detergent and helping to set up Sasa detergent plants.

Kamlesh Shah and K. Thyagaraj, a Reliance official, announce that Saras would provide turnkey services to set up detergent units along with Reliance. Mahila Udyog will be the first Saras customer. Shah later says Modern and Saras Chemicals have earned Rs 59,079 as LAB commissions from Reliance so far.

Sasa will also guarantee an outlet for Reliance LAB—estimates are that the Mahila Udyog will require 20,000 tonnes of LAB annually for the 36 Sasa plants it plans to set up.

If the Mahila Udyog were to buy LAB through Saras Chemicals, the company's commission would be around Rs 1 crore a year.

Mahila Udyog says that it is no longer dealing with Saras Chemicals and is buying LAB directly from Reliance.

Mahila Udyog would be the first Saras Chemicals customer. Last month, Umesh Katre told 'Naresh Vohra' that Saras Chemicals was not merely supplying LAB to the Mahila Udyog but was also helping set up the Sasa detergent plants. Yet according to documents supplied by Saras Chemicals, the company sold Reliance's LAB to the Mahila Udyog only between February and April, 1989.

Rukminibai Pawar, head of the Rs 25-crore turnover Mahila Udyog, also insisted that her organisation began purchasing LAB directly from Reliance in April. She described the fact that Saras Chemicals had helped set up the Sasa units as "a lie" and added: "We have only taken guidance from Reliance."

Nevertheless, a Reliance source insisted that "the entire LAB was given to Lijjat by Kamlesh Shah, and Sasa was promoted by Shah". If the Mahila Udyog sets up many of its planned 36 detergent plants, and succeeds in gaining an invincible price advantage through excise exemptions, production could reach 100,000 tonnes annually by end 1990. For this, the Mahila Udyog will require 20,000 tonnes of LAB annually.

If this were to come from Reliance via Saras Chemicals, then the commission from just the supply of LAB to the Mahila Udyog would work out to a staggering Rs 1 crore.

Clearly, if Umesh Katre's negotiations with 'Naresh Vohra' were not just to help out a friend but to promote an actual—if *benami*—interest in Saras Chemicals, he can look forward to a tidy annual income from LAB sales commissions.

Meanwhile, the joint CBI-Bombay Police investigation ordered by the Supreme Court into the Wadia murder conspiracy case took off sluggishly. The police assigned Senior Inspector, Keshav Sahastrabudhe, who played a

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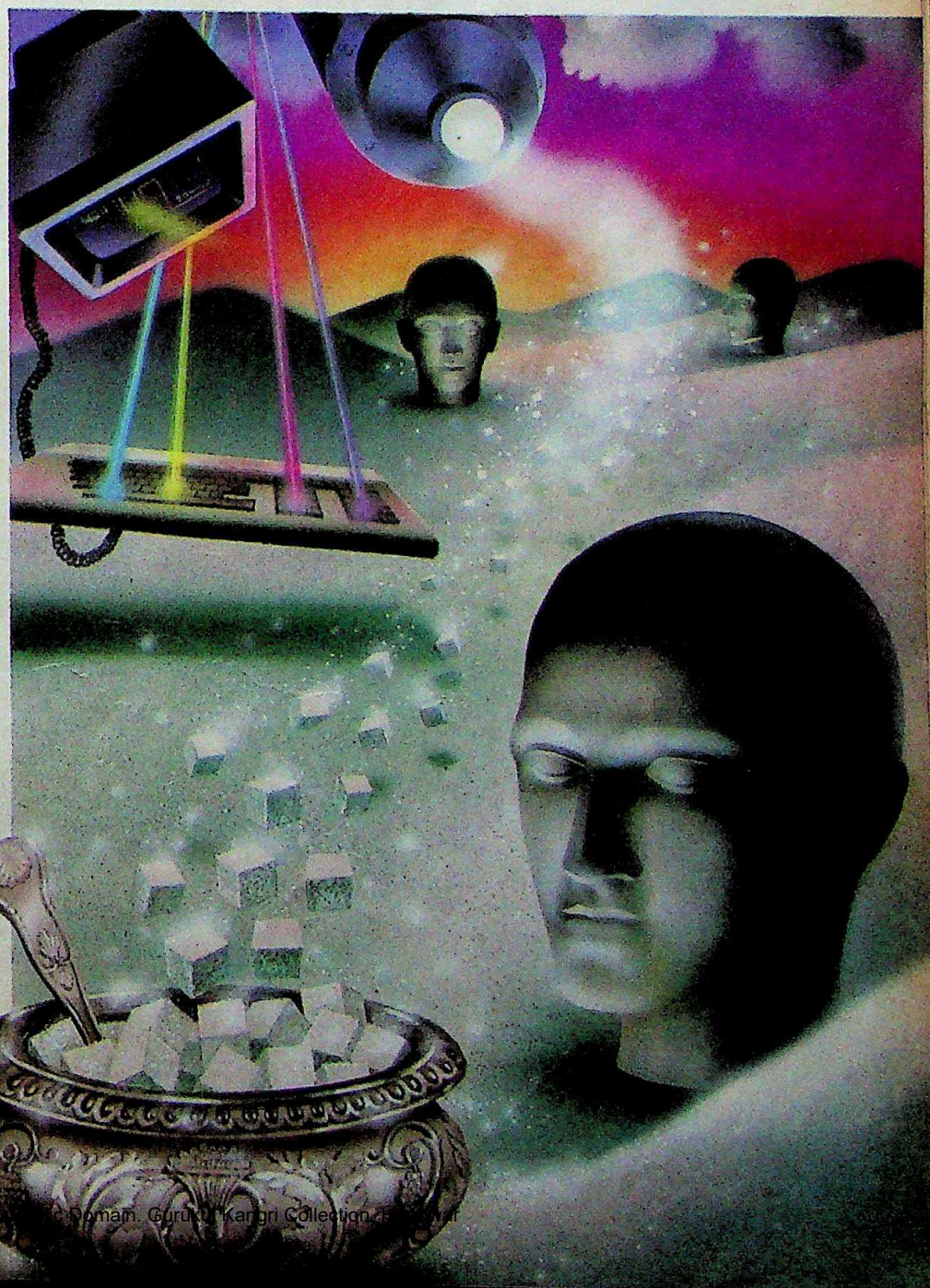

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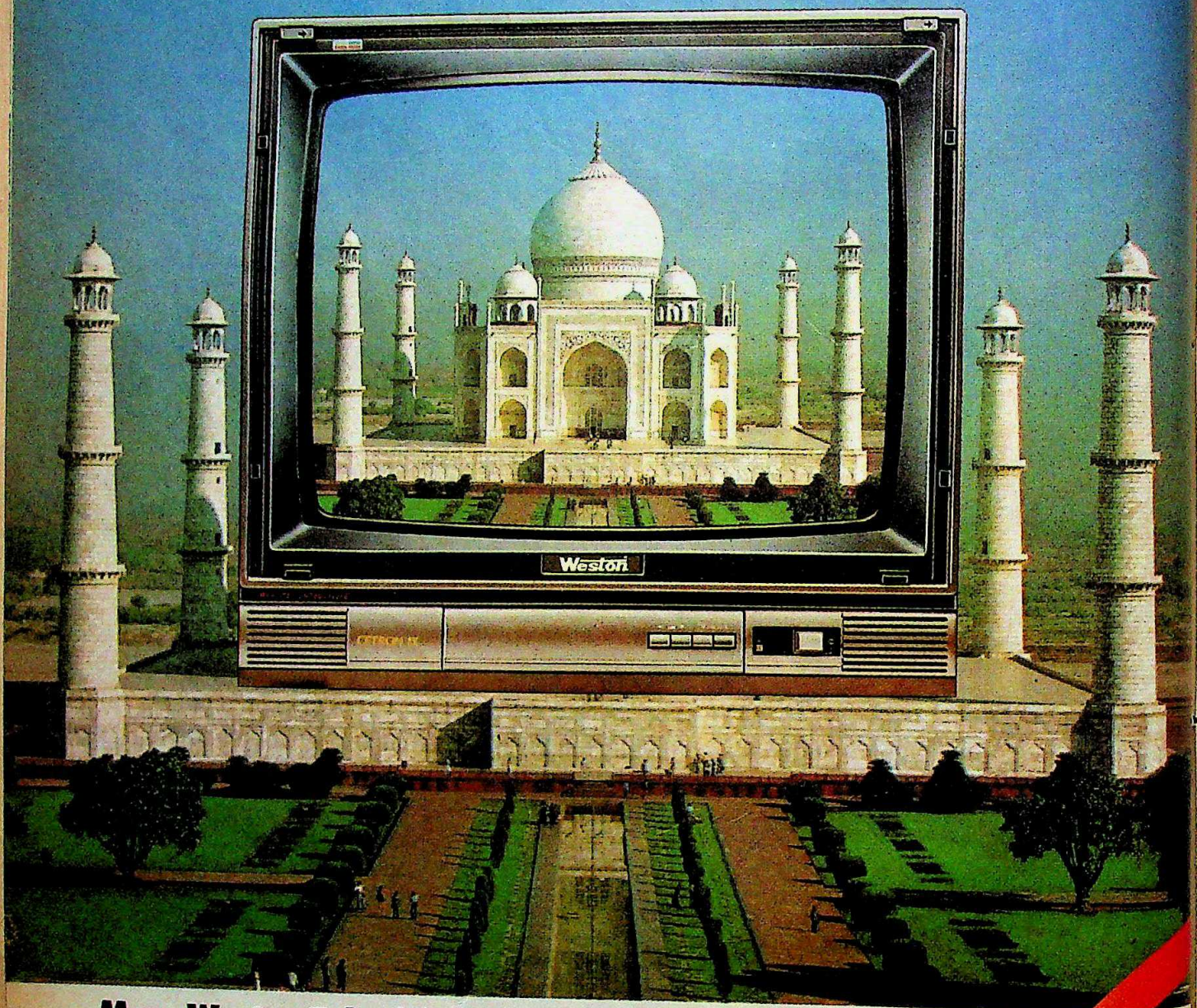

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crucial role in the arrest of Kirti Ambani and Babaria, to assist the CBI team along with another inspector. Out on bail, Kirti and Babaria reported at the CBI office every day between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. as ordered by the magistrate. Before their questioning began, the CBI sleuths interrogated 'Shanu' and 'Verma', the two criminals who were to participate in the alleged murder attempt. According to a police source, both stood by their sworn statements given earlier to a magistrate.

Wadia himself got a breather from his latest problem—the Bombay High Court stayed the deportation of the British passport-holding textile magnate until his citizenship case is decided. But some days before the judgement, a large number of Bombay Dyeing employees took out a procession to Raj Bhavan demanding immediate Indian citizenship for the 45-year-old chairman. Once again, it seemed, the Ambani-Wadia squabble had spilled out into the streets, albeit in a peaceful manner. And once again, it was impossible to predict what the next dramatic development would be in the ongoing battle between the two business tycoons.

—M. RAHMAN and RAGHU NANDAN DHAR

VASANT SARAF

"We are not pawns in anybody's hands"

Vasant Keshaorao Saraf, 55, who took over as Bombay's police commissioner in August 1987, has maintained a low profile. Until last month when the arrest of Kirti Ambani, a top Reliance executive, in the Nusli Wadia murder conspiracy case suddenly focused national attention on the Bombay police. In this interview with Bureau Chief M. RAHMAN *and Senior Correspondent* RAGHU NANDAN DHAR, *he responds for the first time, to the controversy generated by the arrest. Excerpts:*

NAMAS BHOJANI

Q. *How did the police come across the Wadia murder conspiracy case?*

A. We have a good criminal intelligence system. The Crime Branch has a number of contacts in the underworld. In this case, a contact of one of our sub-inspectors informed him there was a *supari* (contract) out for a *bada admi* (a big fellow). In the beginning, our attitude was the same as yours—we did not believe it. Then we questioned the underworld fixer, Babaria. And along with interrogation, we started trying to corroborate their story independently.

Q. *When were you convinced of the veracity of the story?*

A. Even after Babaria was grilled a good deal, and his house was checked, we remained tentative. But after questioning the hit man Shanu, and coming across other independent corroboration, we realised that it was not a concocted story. For 13 days, more than one experienced officer questioned them, and the story held.

Q. *There have been conflicting reports about the kind of evidence collected by the police.*

A. I don't know how these stories get planted. For instance, that the police recovered diamonds given as payment from Babaria's house. There is no truth in it. Whatever we have seized is with the CBI now.

Q. *It is said that Kirti Ambani's telephone conversations recorded by the police actually relate to share transactions.*

A. Anybody who hears the tapes will not come to that conclusion.

Q. *Wouldn't somebody wanting to kill a big businessman go to somebody like Dawood Ibrahim and not small fry like Babaria?*

A. Babaria is not a killer. He was an intermediary. He is a blabber-mouth and claimed to be friendly with Dawood Ibrahim's gang, with Dawood's brother Noora, with Haji Mastan. So obviously he was believed.

Q. *What about the charge that the police have been manipulated to concoct a case against the Ambanis?*

A. I stoutly deny it. It is insulting to say we are a part of some conspiracy. Maybe outside Maharashtra it's not fully realised that the police enjoy a lot of autonomy here. We aren't pawns in anybody's hands.

Q. *Could the Crime Branch have been a victim of a hoax?*

A. The Crime Branch has a national reputation for its investigative skills. My officers cannot be taken in by such a hoax. If we were so gullible, the first time somebody came to us with the story we would have registered a case and called the press. Our first informant gave us a good enough picture. But we took special efforts to see that the story did not leak out. Why should we have done this unless we wanted enough time to verify every bit of the story?

Q. *Did the police inability to interrogate fully Kirti Ambani and Babaria after their arrests affect investigations?*

A. Babaria was interrogated before his arrest, though more details could have come out during further interrogation. But in Kirti Ambani's case, perhaps a lot more could have been obtained if interrogation had gone on. Now the advantage of surprise is lost. Moreover, anybody who had anything to do with the case will try and obliterate his prints.

Q. *How will the Bombay police and the CBI work together on this case?*

A. We are all for cooperation. We gave the case to the CBI without rancour, even though the press said we were unhappy. Nothing of the sort. We did not take up the case because of any personal animosity. It came to us, and I insist—as professional policemen we had no alternative but to pursue the information we received to its logical end. I do hope the CBI will take advantage of our officers who understand the case very well. And we have contacts all over.

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V.P. SINGH

Slush Slinging

As the Mr Clean of Indian politics, Vishwanath Pratap Singh faced accusations of stashing away millions of dollars in the Caribbean, many felt that this was the latest counter-offensive missile fired by the ruling party's Dirty Tricks Department.

FOR some months now, ruling party supporters have been hinting that the Mr Clean of Indian politics, opposition leader Vishwanath Pratap Singh, was going to be exposed as being more corrupt than any of those he has crusaded against. Last week, the expected exposures came tumbling out in screaming headlines claiming that the former finance minister had squirreled away millions of dollars in an off-shore trust corporation in the Caribbean.

Supported by documents and suggestive interviews with the former managing director of the trust, the 'investigations' attempted to prove that Singh, with the help of his son, Ajeya Singh, a middle-level bank executive in the US, had stashed $21 million (Rs 31 crore) in a secret bank account in the Caribbean island of St Kitts during his tenure as finance minister.

On the face of it, the charges were serious enough. If true, they could demolish Singh's advancing political career and completely scuttle the Opposition's chances in the approaching elections. In terms of its timing alone, the exposures were devastating. The main details were:

- Ajeya Singh, an executive of Citibank in New York, opened an account (Number 29479) on September 16, 1986, in The First Trust Corporation Limited, Basseterre, St Kitts and Nevis.
- Vishwanath Pratap Singh was named as the beneficiary of the account.
- Deposits ranging from $ 2 million to $ 5 million were made in six instalments.
- The money was withdrawn from the account on February 13, 1988.
- The reports suggested that the funds deposited in the bank were obtained through kickbacks for imports of zinc and copper from Zaire and Zambia during Singh's tenure as finance minister.

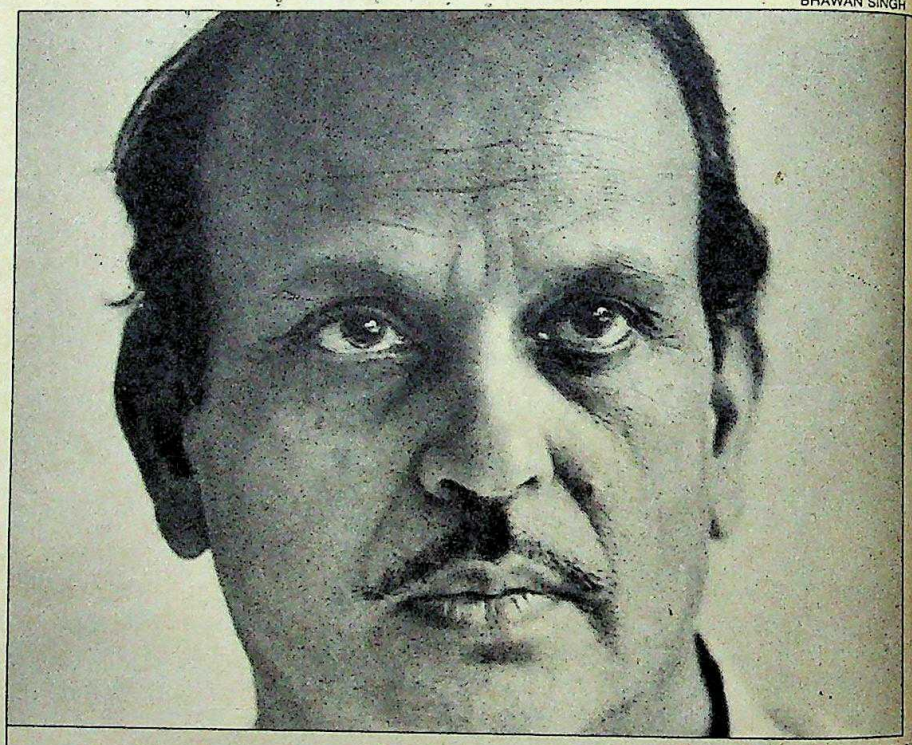
Ultimately, however, the revelations raised more questions than they attempted to answer. For one, the anti-establishment newspaper *Indian Express* had predicted, two days before the stories about Singh appeared, that the ruling party had set in motion a deliberate plan to smear Singh which included allegations that he held secret funds abroad.

More questionable was the fact that the 'exposures' first appeared in the *Arab Times*, a newspaper published in Kuwait where strict press censorship does not encourage investigative reporting. The paper generally carries international news picked up from international wire services. Further, India is extremely low down on its list of editorial priorities.

Even more curious was the fact that while the *Arab Times* story was front-paged in the national dailies based on a United News of India (UNI) report, it was ignored by the government media—which normally has a hyper-sensitive antenna cocked for any news embarrassing to the Opposition. It was only four days after the Singh story surfaced that Doordarshan bothered to mention it in its newscast.

But even stranger was the fact that the most potentially damning documents—photostat copies of a ledger showing the deposits and withdrawals from Ajeya Singh's account and a photocopy of the agreement supposedly signed between

BHAWAN SINGH



What seems almost certain is that the current smear campaign against V.P. Singh is merely a prelude to what promises to be a dirty war. With the media having drawn the battle lines, a virtual free-for-all is on the anvil.

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the trust and Singh's son naming his father as the beneficiary—first appeared in an obscure tabloid published from Istanbul in Turkey. *Golceadam* is published in Turkish and features just one page in English. On August 21, almost the entire page was devoted to the story headlined: 'Opposition leaders too might be corrupt; In India Mr V.P. Singh leader of opposition, in corruption scandal.'

Next, Indian newspapers favourable to the Congress(I), notably *The Hindustan Times* and *The Telegraph*—whose editor M.J. Akbar makes no bones about his distaste for V.P. Singh—got into the act. *The Telegraph* reproduced the documents that had appeared in Istanbul, and frontpaged interviews with George Maclean, the former managing director of the First Trust Corporation. Curiously, Maclean talked only to these two papers.

Expectedly, ruling party politicians demanded Singh's prosecution. Said AICC(I) General Secretary Ghulam Nabi Azad: "The so-called honest leader of the opposition stands exposed. His misdeeds are now known to the whole world."

The target of the attack remained unfazed. Dismissing the allegations as clumsy forgeries, Singh shot off an angry letter to the prime minister challenging him to prosecute him and his son if the accusations were proven. Says Singh: "Only people in the ruling party are capable of such forgeries. They have with them professional forgers in arms dealers, corporate smugglers and others whose only job is to launder money abroad."

The so-called exposures did show signs of being the handiwork of the ruling party's Dirty Tricks Department. The *Arab Times*, it was later revealed, had based its report "on Indian political sources", a fact the UNI conveniently neglected to mention when it first put out the story.

The *Arab Times* also sent a correspondent to Delhi, a Ms Porter (though her business card does not mention her designation). She arrived in India on a tourist visa on the day the story first appeared armed with copies of the newspaper. She immediately made contact with Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Shiela Dixit. And according to her, she was contacted later on by the Government's Principal Information Officer Ram Mohan Rao. The next day, the *Arab Times* story was picked up by the Indian press.

By then, it was revealed that the First National Trust in St Kitts had closed shop in August 1988. While the *Telegraph* had Maclean insisting that account number 29479 did exist, the trust's former solicitor Terence V. Byron told India Abroad Service—an independent media organisation based in New York—that no such account was ever opened. Byron also disclosed that the trust had closed because of financial difficulties and could not pay even its rent and telephone bills. Byron further stated that Maclean "ran out of money" and had returned to Canada. Singh claims that his detractors, by choosing a defunct organisation, had ensured the truth would never come out.

The authenticity of the documents was further questioned by Anne Sorenson who was Maclean's assistant at the trust. She says:

► The corporation serviced just one Indian account in the name of Jeevan Shastri. There were no other Indian accounts.

► That all account numbers were in six digits. (Singh's account number in the documents is given as 29479.)

► That the point of a numbered account was that there are no names mentioned. "If a client wanted a name to appear there would be no reason to open a numbered account," she says. The agreement published in the media carries the name of Ajeya Singh.

► That the trust had no stamps such as those on the documents.

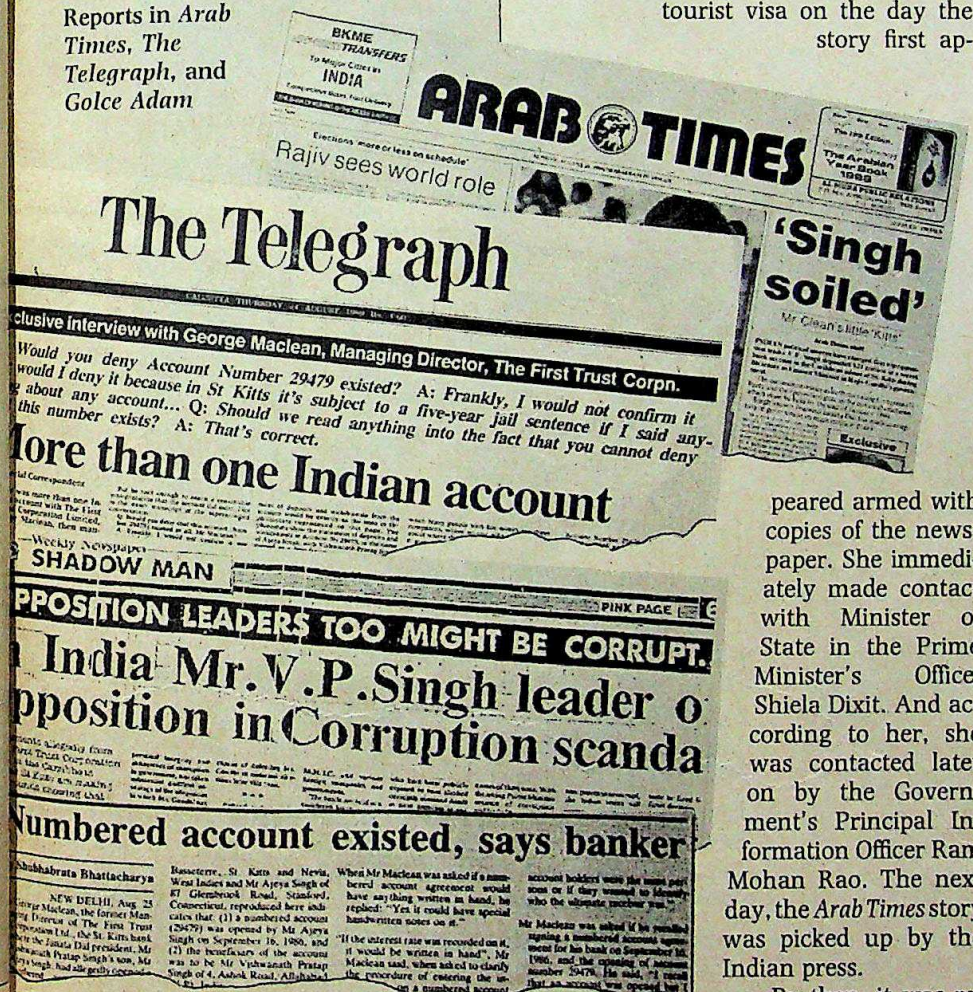
Further, while the agreement was supposedly signed in Basseterre in St Kitts on September 16, 1986, Ajeya Singh insists that he has never visited the island (a British Protectorate) and is willing to produce his passport as proof. Also, the original *Arab Times* piece mentioned that the funds were connected to kickbacks for imports from Africa when Singh was finance minister. Such deals, if any, would be signed by the commerce minister who, at that time, was P.Shiv Shankar.

Singh's family sources also point out that Ajeya Singh had borrowed money from his employers to buy Reliance debentures in 1986—when he was supposed to be putting millions into the St Kitts account. Moreover, he lives in a two-bedroom apartment in New Jersey and his life-style is hardly indicative of any ill-gotten affluence.

What seems to confirm the theory that the documents are not authentic is the fact that the ruling party is reluctant to initiate any action against Singh. Says opposition leader Arun Nehru: "I think they are not sure whether their forgery will stand scrutiny or not. They dare not arrest Vishwanath or his son."

The Janata Dal leader and his colleagues believe the latest 'revelations' are part of a strategy to divert public attention from the scandals that have dogged the ruling party and also dilute the credibility of any future disclosures against the Rajiv Gandhi Government. A section of the Janata Dal leadership also believes that a group of people led by controversial godman Chandraswamy are behind the release of the documents. Chandraswamy returned last month from a long tour

Reports in *Arab Times*, *The Telegraph*, and *Golce Adam*



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- **Interest @ 10% p.a. will be credited to the assessee's designated bank account on 1st April every year without tax deduction at source and can be freely withdrawn for any use.**
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abroad and once again left India two weeks ago.

Said *Indian Express* Editor Arun Shourie: "This is a portent of what they will inflict on the country for years and years, if they happen to return to power." *The Telegraph* editor, Akbar, however, is confident about the authenticity of the documents. Says he: "I have done everything a journalist can possibly do to convince myself about the credibility of facts."

But it is undisputable that the documents are only the latest in a series that have appeared in the recent past aimed at embarrassing the Opposition and its supporters. Some examples:

► March 1987: a forged letter from Fairfax, the US private investigative agency, to *Express* adviser S. Gurumurthy saying that it was investigating the Bachchan family, ostensibly on orders from then finance minister V.P. Singh. The CBI arrested Gurumurthy on the basis of this letter which later mysteriously disappeared. Singh was accused of compromising state security.

► January 1989: Subramaniam Swamy after his visit abroad released a letter from Fairfax chief Michael Hershman stating he was investigating various opposition leaders. Opposition leaders branded it a ploy to divide them. The letter turned out to be faked.

► May 1989: A Gujarati daily published a photostat copy of a letter allegedly by Jayaprakash Narayan stating Singh was "a spineless person". JP's former secretary challenged the letter.

► August 15, 1989: *The Telegraph* reproduced a letter written by Singh to former underworld don Haji Mastan thanking him for his support in the Allahabad by-election. The letter was released by Ashraf, a former assistant to Singh who was removed because he was suspected to be on the payroll of the ruling party. Though Mastan stood by the letter, Singh claims it was forged.

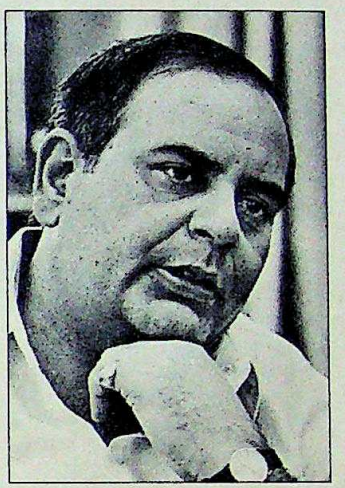
► August 20, 1989: A weekly from Delhi published yet another letter released by Ashraf. The letter was addressed to 'Agent XXI' c/o US Embassy in India. Singh and the embassy ridiculed the letter.

Two months ago, the Indian media published copies of Arun Nehru's hotel bill during his visit abroad. Nehru says that Indian Government sleuths were tailing him indicating they were the possible source. The impact of the documents, however, was destroyed by the fact that they included a bill from a New York hotel which Nehru never visited.

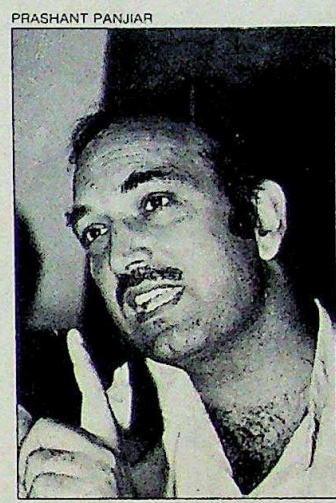
Opposition leaders are convinced that there is a deliberate strategy by the ruling party to launch a smear campaign against them in the hope that some of the mud will stick. Says BJP President L.K. Advani: "This McCarthy-like campaign is not the result of any over-enthusiasm at the second or third rung of the party leadership. It is part of a planned strategy approved at the top."

They dare not arrest Vishwanath or his son. I think they are not sure whether their forgery will stand scrutiny or not.

ARUN NEHRU
Janata Dal leader



PRASHANT PANJIAR

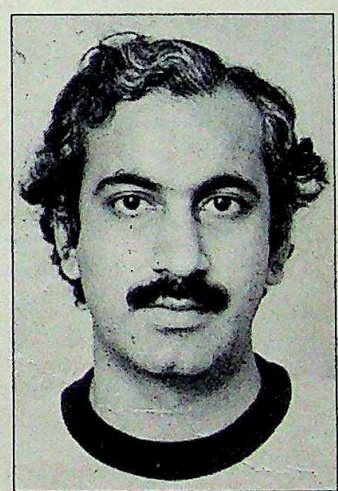


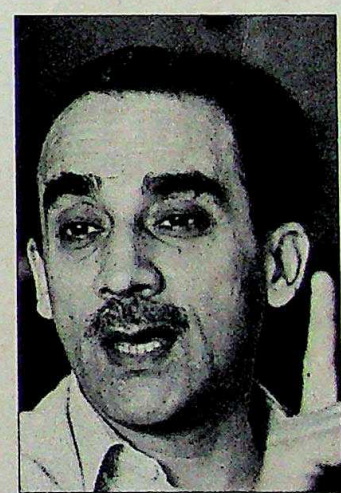
The so-called honest leader of the Opposition stands fully exposed. His misdeeds are now known to the whole world.

GHULAM NABI AZAD
AICC(I) General Secretary

I have done everything that a journalist can possibly do to convince myself about the credibility of the facts.

M.J. AKBAR
Editor, The Telegraph





PRASHANT PANJIAR

This is a portent of what they will inflict on the country for years and years, if they happen to come to power again.

ARUN SHOURIE
Editor, Indian Express

The ruling party, on its part, is sticking to its stand that Singh is guilty and that further investigations will establish the truth. A section of the party also feels it was opposition supporters like Ram Jethmalani and the *Indian Express* who started Operation Dirty Tricks in the first place and that they are only getting a taste of their own medicine.

The only thing that can be said with any certainty is that the current smear campaign is merely a prelude to what is to come. And, with the media having drawn the battle lines, it promises to be a very dirty war. —PRABHU CHAWLA

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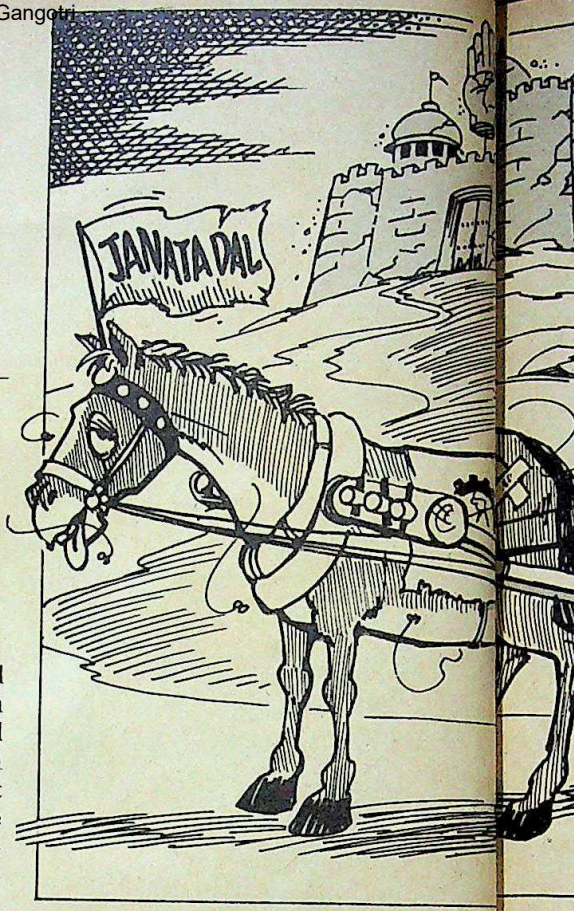
JANATA DAL

Game of Brinkmanship



Rocked by factional squabbles and controversy and yet emerging as a growing political force attracting crowds and attention, the Janata Dal presents a strange paradox. But to convert popularity into votes it will have to quickly get its act together.

OFTEN enough it has resembled a circus, a roadside tamasha, even a theatre of the absurd. Accordingly, its leader has taken on the mantle of a ring master, an inconsequential street performer or a cynical *sutradhar* letting things drift and take their own course, defying logic and rationale. But increasingly now, the Janata Dal, spearheading the national Opposition, has begun to look like an army of sorts—with too many aspiring generals, too many commanders and too few combat-ready troopers.

Worse, it is an army where factional satraps are so busy looking over their flanks that the front is too often left open. It is also an army whose commander-in-chief must often wonder whether his main job is to lead his men into battle and victory, or to keep the peace in his own rear and flanks.

Last fortnight must have given "General" V.P. Singh enough cause to sit back and reflect, rue about the legacy of a fractured opposition he inherited and yet savour the growing strength of his electoral juggernaut. Savour the half a dozen meetings spread from Jaipur to Calcutta and Meerut to Madras where lakhs of cheering supporters braved rain or sunshine to mock at the phony wide-angle camera shots of Rajiv Gandhi's crowds on Doordarshan. Savour also the fact that his rag-tag army showed a rare determination in staying together for yet another fortnight. And yet he had plenty to rue: witness the rehabilitation of just one minor state level official, Raghunath Jha in Bihar, a man with the reputation of a streetside tough incapable of collecting a hundred supporters, almost throwing his entire party into disarray.

The Jha episode that nearly broke up the Bihar unit of the Janata Dal and brought embarrassing resignation threats from seven of its key national leaders served to sum up the siege within the party. All this happened in protest against the changes suggested by the seven member commitee on the restructuring of the party organisation headed by Arif Mohammed Khan. The committee was meant to sort out factional confusion in the states but ended up creating some more as it suggested changes in Bihar, Karnataka and Punjab but the sticking point was the nomintion of Jha to the central parliamentary board.

Just three months back V.P. Singh had dismissed Jha as the party chief in Bihar following allegations of hooliganism. Chandra Shekhar, Jha's patron, was slighted. His removal was a rebuff to Chandra Shekhar. Also, now he became a handy instrument to expose V.P. Singh's weakness: tendency to crumble under pressure. He rehabilitated Jha due to Chandra Shekhar's pressure, and as others quit in protest, bent over backwards to rehabilitate them as well, ending up with a few cuts and bruises on his face. A little like the tired pugilist who punches the bag, then leans back to relax, only to find the bag hit him bang in the face.

One reason for the persistent factionalism is the fact that the Janata Dal is a strange political animal—made up of money and muscle from Devi Lal, a brains trust from the Janata Party, and getting its voice from the conscience-keepers of the Jan Morcha who left the Congress Party in the afterglow of Bofors et al. Regional variations add to this confusion. So if Devi Lal is strong in Bihar and Haryana, he vies with Ajit Singh for the command of

RULES OF THE GAME

- **There are no permanent friends or friendships. There are only factional interests that matter: an old and tested rule of centrist opposition parties.**
- **Your enemy's enemy is a worthy friend. The bigger enemy's enemy is a worthier friend: Ajit Singh and Ramakrishna Hegde join hands with the hope of burying the hatchet in the backs of Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar.**
- **Preserving party unity is a long, sometimes embarrassing balancing act: several leaders not belonging to any faction threatened to resign in order to counter the Chandra Shekhar-Devi Lal combine.**
- **Power unites, at least till such time as you have to sit down to share it: no faction leaders have left the party even though they continue to oppose the party leadership.**

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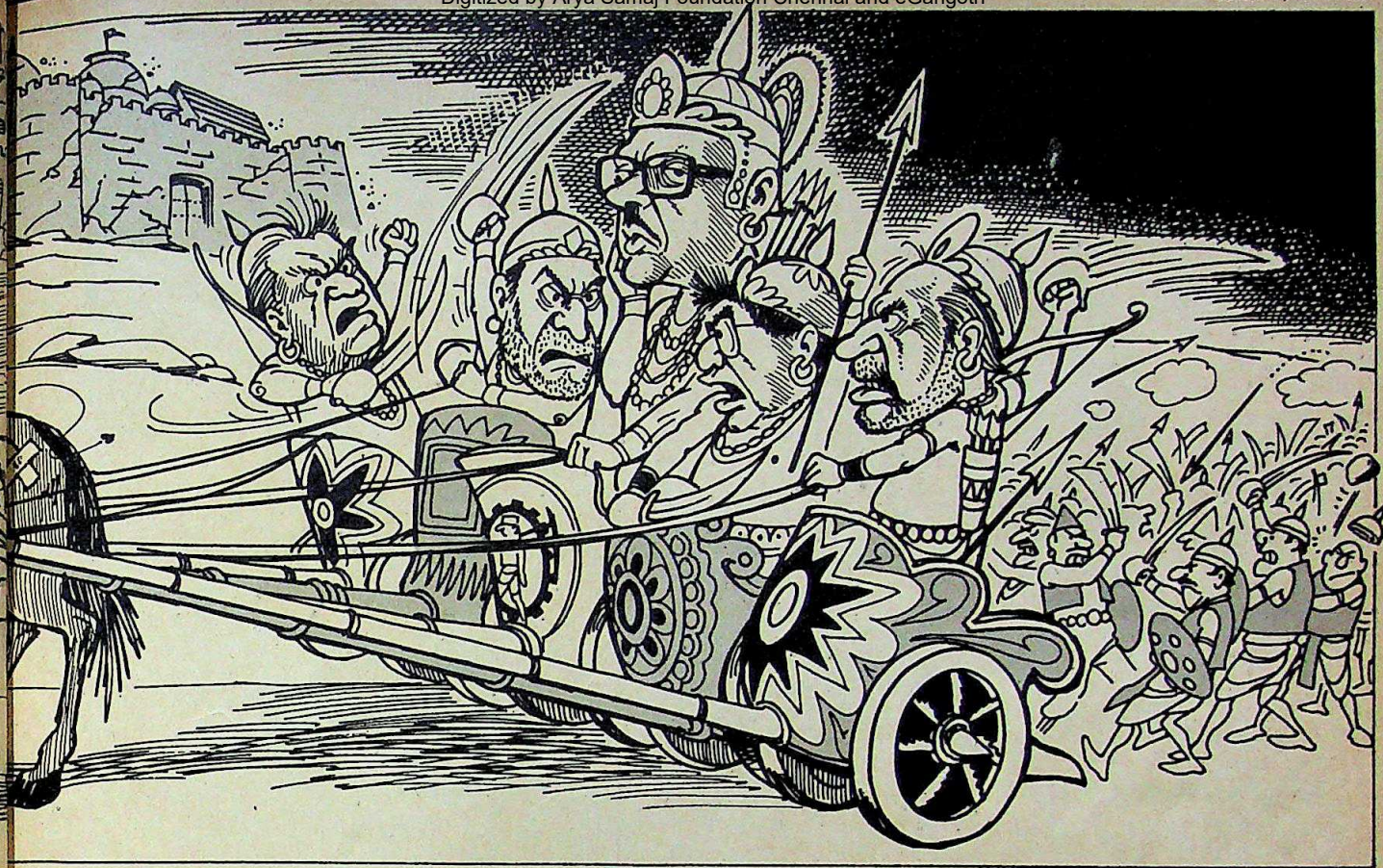
Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



Western Uttar Pradesh voters. The Janata Party has infrastructure and support in Orissa, Gujarat and Karnataka, where other factions are more or less non-existent. Basically, there are four streams of political forces that often pull in contrary directions: the two avatars of the Lok Dal, the Janata Party and the Jan Morcha.

The consequences are obvious. Devi Lal, who has delusions of grandeur—he is known to relish accounts of how his idol is worshipped in the countryside—thinks V.P. Singh is there by sufferance, and he himself will be the king maker. Chandra Shekhar has always believed that he has a much higher place in the nation's history than his poltical career so far seems to indicate. He makes no secret of his ambitions and the fact that he is biding his time.

On the other hand, V.P. Singh and his Jan Morcha colleagues often show irritation with the squabbles among other factions and wonder if it was the best thing to have joined up with them. Many of them still think it would have been better to have trudged alone rather than carry the baggage of the entire Opposition.

This confusion, the issues and rival ambitions are not new. They existed in the Grand Alliance of 1971, in the Janata of 1977 and they haunt the Opposition today as well. So while problems remain, personalities become increasingly inconsequential, engaged as they are in an irrational game of musical chairs, joining one group at one instant, opposing it the very next. Thus if Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal, have now come together after months of bitter enmity they are only conforming to an old and tested rule of the centrist opposition politics: there are no permanent friends or friendships, there are only factional interests that matter.

SIMILARLY if the developments of last fortnight saw Ajit Singh and Hegde join hands, it was done with the hope of burying the hatchet in the backs of Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar and in keeping with the next rule of the opposition game: your enemy's enemy is a worthy friend. The bigger enemy's enemy is a worthier friend.

At the same time, as the crazy new alignments took place several leaders not known to belong to any faction, including campaign committee chief George Fernandes and spokesman Jaipal Reddy, threatened to resign along with Ajit Singh and Hegde. They thought it was necessary to take sides to balance the Chandra Shekhar-Devi Lal combine. Rule three: Preserving party unity is a long, sometimes embarrassing balancing act.

For the Janata Dal the saving grace so far has been that despite the wranglings and dissensions no leader of consequence has left the party and many say it is because most faction leaders are convinced the party is going to win power at the next elections. "In a way we are like the Congress(I). However they may hate Rajiv Gandhi, they stick by him as only he gets them the votes. Unity is for us what Rajiv is to the Congress. Rule four: Power unites, at least till such time as you have to sit down to share it.

Devi Lal's alter ego and party General Secretary Sharad Yadav drives home the same point with rustic logic: "Don't take *badmashis* by people like Chandra Shekhar seriously. His is a psychological case. Tell me, has anyone, even the most bitter person, left the party?" Yadav and others argue that the current differences of opinion and faction-fighting is no more than shadow-boxing in anticipation of power. Each faction wants its own people in key infrastructural positions as later they will play a key role in the distribution of election tickets.

On the face of it the situation may seem ridiculous, but so sure are the Janata faction leaders of winning that they are already carving up the Government amongst themselves. What will happen if the party actually wins is only too predictable. The centrist opposition, now represented by the Janata Dal, can only draw comfort from the fact that factionalism, indiscipline and infighting are to it what sycophancy, personality cult and arro-

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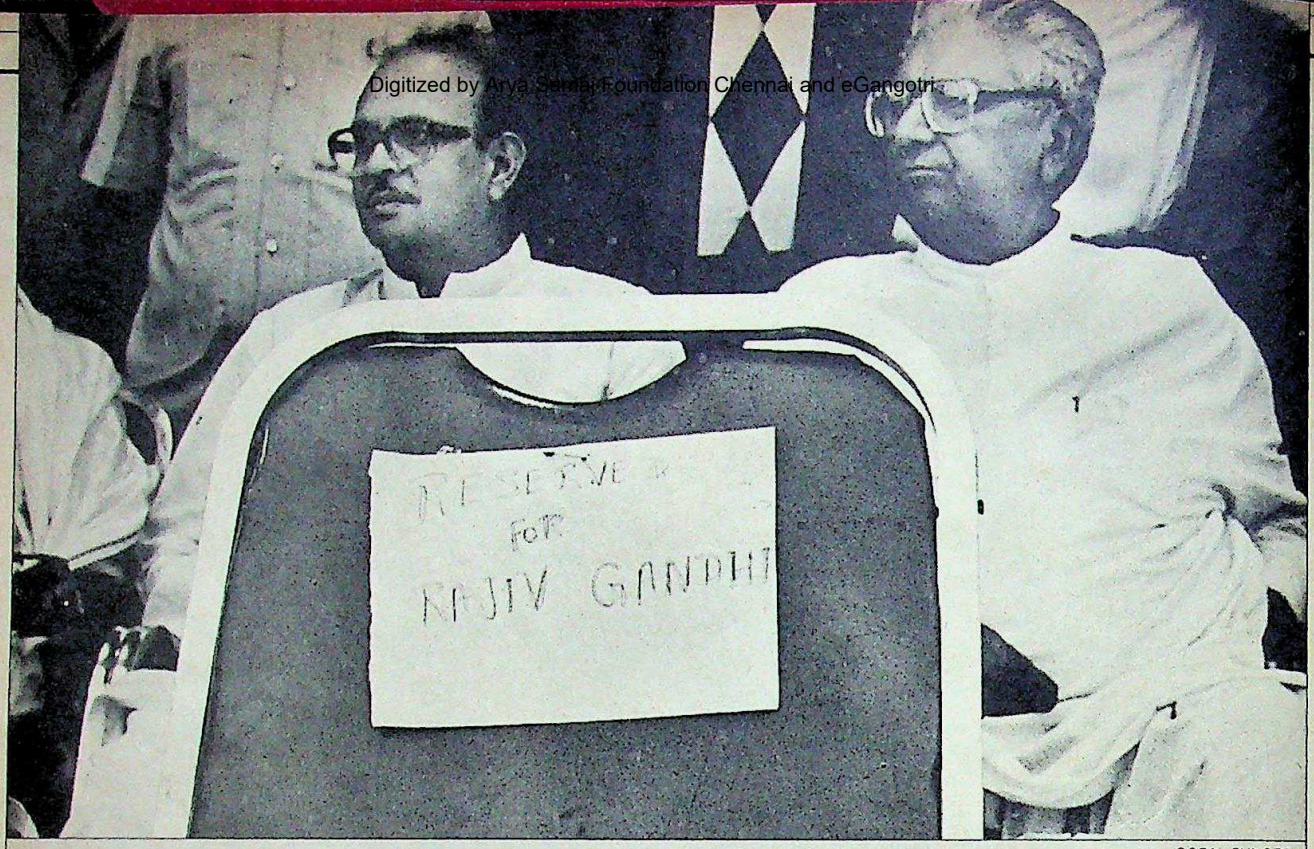

GOPAL SUNGER

The presence of an empty chair at V.P. Singh's public meetings, a symbol of Rajiv's chickening out of the debate on Bofors, is an instant hit with the crowds.

gance are to the Congress(I).

Unfortunately for the Janata Dal the latest wranglings surfaced in a fortnight when it had much to feel good about. Its gimmick in placing an empty chair at the dais in each one of V.P. Singh s public meetings, as a symbol of Rajiv's chickening out of the debate on Bofors that he had himself suggested, was an instant hit. Its effectiveness showed in the fervour with which the crowds cheered each time the opposition leaders pointed at the chair and announced: "This battle not for the chair. The chair is lying empty." At each meeting there was also much derisive laughter each time Rajiv darshan was mentioned. Singh himself showed greater sense of purpose, even rid himself of some of his old modesty and tried to look like the leader.

In the past many close to him in the party had complained that he took the commoner image a bit too far while the people wanted to see a Bapu, an anna (elder brother) or even the Raja in him. Now at least he was taking care to look different even if it meant his settling for a drab henna-coloured turban in the Jaipur rally while the other leaders were resplendent in bright ones of bandhni.

If despite visibly increasing popular backing and such sense of purpose it still leaves the Janata Dal leaders assailed by doubts, the fault lies with them. After delivering a fiery condemnation of Rajiv in Jaipur Ajit Singh asked the crowd: "What will happen on voting day? Through the year you kill cobras. But on the day of nagpanchami, you feed them with milk. Please don't repeat that on voting day."

MANY within the party warn that if the party does not wake up to the credibility issue, memories of the Janata betrayal in 1979 will be revived too soon.

To have a real hope at the hustings, the Opposition has to counter the impression that while they can unite over agitational steps, they are incapable of joining hands to run a government.

There is a fear that the current squabbles may make the party fail that vital test. Many say such wranglings could be suicidal when the Congress(I) election machinery has already begun to lumber into action. The ruling party is already reaching out to gram pradhans and other influential people, generously using the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana money for persuasion. "Ours is a case of *muddayee sust, gawah chust,*" (The plaintiff is indifferent while his witness is full of zeal), explained Ram Niwas, a party worker from Ajmer, underlining the irony of a party failing to get its act together despite growing support.

The Janata Dal's infrastructure and grassroots manpower, which brings voters to the booths and makes the crucial difference on polling day, is extremely feeble. It leaves the party totally dependent on the BJP. The Janata Dal leaders have to show a sense of urgency on this matter before the Congress(I) seizes the initiative. Says Rajya Sabha member Satya Prakash Malaviya: "People have made up their minds to defeat Rajiv Gandhi. But have we also made up our minds to defeat ourselves?" Like Malaviya, many Janata Dal leaders were chastened by last fortnight's incidents and were trying to resolve the problem.

But they do not need the wisdom of a soothsayer or a pundit to tell them what is wrong and what they need to do about it. As Sumangal Singh Sirohi, a vociferous member of the cheering crowd at the Jaipur rally, put it: "*Asal baat yeh hai ki jansamarthan kee vishaal nadi mein yeh sub chhotey-chhotey taapuon par date hain.* (The real problem is that in a vast river of popular support all these people are stuck on their little islands)." Indeed, the various factions of the Janata Dal are like islands. But if the river has to swell into an electoral torrent within a few months, the groups will have to accept the inevitability of it submerging their islands of conflicting ambition and old entities.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

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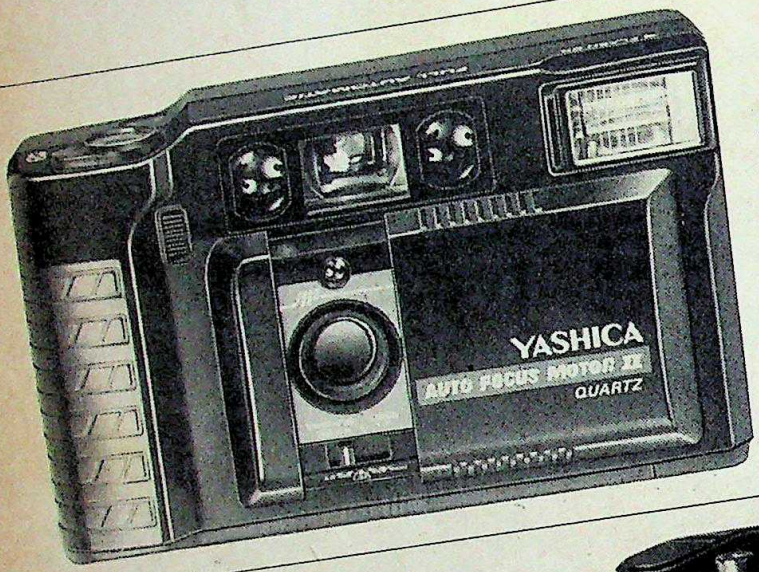

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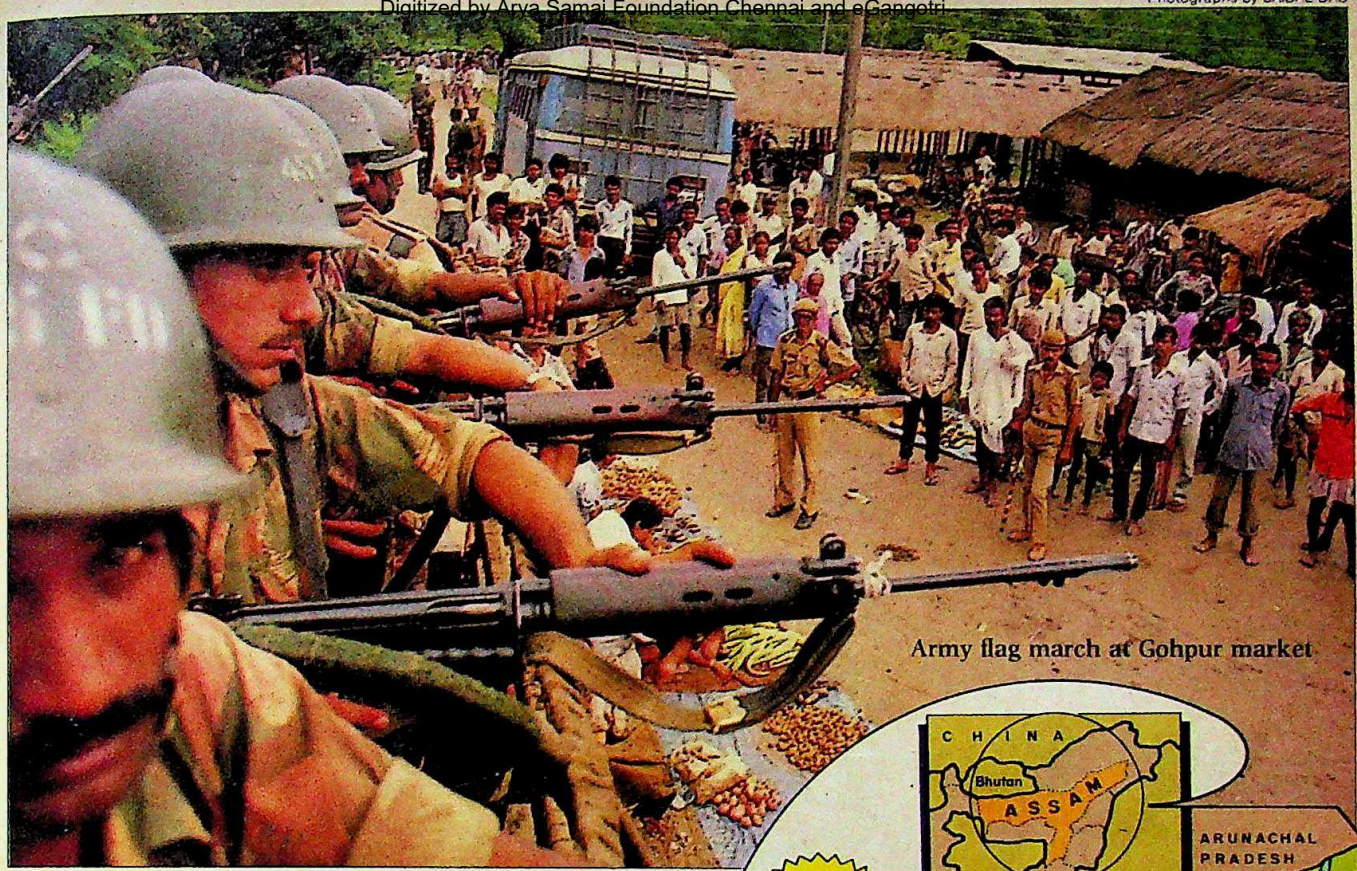
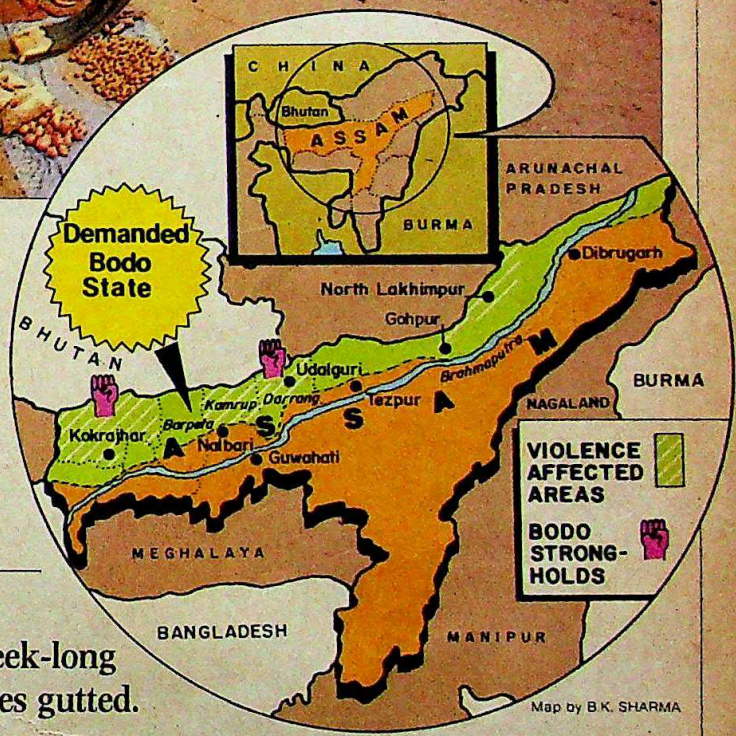


Army flag march at Gohpur market



Map by B.K. SHARMA

ASSAM

A Bloody Price

Bodos and non-Bodos, forgetting old social bonds, attacked each other as enemies in a week-long carnage that left 30 people dead and 40 villages gutted.

THE irony is inescapable. And the drama is turning macabre. More and more blood is let as the leaders of a movement once-labelled separatist grapple with a movement they now condemn, and the Centre, mouthing patriotic homilies, aggravates matters with behind-the-scenes manipulation.

Even as the fury of the Brahmaputra began to ebb last fortnight, the Assamese anger against the agitating Bodo tribals raged leaving death and destruction in its wake. For about a week, parts of North Lakhimpur, Gohpur subdivision in Sonitpur and Mangaldoi subdivision of Darrang districts burnt and echoed with the cries of both helpless Bodos and non-Bodos, who forgot old social bonds, attacking each other as enemies. With 30 people dead, 40 villages gutted, and uprooted people cowering in relief camps, the Bodoland agitation's name stood inerasably etched in Assam's lexicon of violence.

More alarming still was the invidious web of politicking which became visible. Wrote the Guwahati-based English daily *The Sentinel*: "The Centre has helped to create a division that is far more sinister in its impact than a physical division of the state. That it was done with the diabolic motive of imposing President's Rule should be abundantly clear."

What was certainly clear was that the growing communal and social divide had been concretised. Said Bijen Kalita, an Assamese youth from Bezpur, now sheltering in a relief camp in Mangaldoi, the district headquarters of Darrang: "We could see the Bodo criminals setting fire to our houses." About 40 km away in Khairabari, Bodos taking shelter in a relief camp also expressed hatred. Said Deb Nath Basumatay, 20: "The pre-planned Independence Day arson and killings by Assamese chauvinists with the help of the police prove again that we (Bodos) have no security."

The simmering rancour spilled into the open on August 10 when hundreds of Assamese and non-Bodos from north

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Lakhimpur areas crossed the river Sesha and invaded the Gohpur reserve forest area which has both Bodo and non-Bodo settlements. This led to a free-for-all for three days inside the 35-sq km reserve forest areas. While Assamese and non-Bodo tribes rushed towards national highway 52 setting fire to Bodo houses, the Bodos moved into the jungle-infested Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh, torching and looting non-Bodo houses.

It was at this point that the politicking came out into the open. The Congress(I) Government of Arunachal Pradesh headed by Gegong Apang, described by the Assam Government as the Centre's 'agent provocateur', got the news circulated through a news agency that 95 bodies had been picked up from the state's jungles. The news caused nationwide shock and anger. The army was called out and curfew imposed.

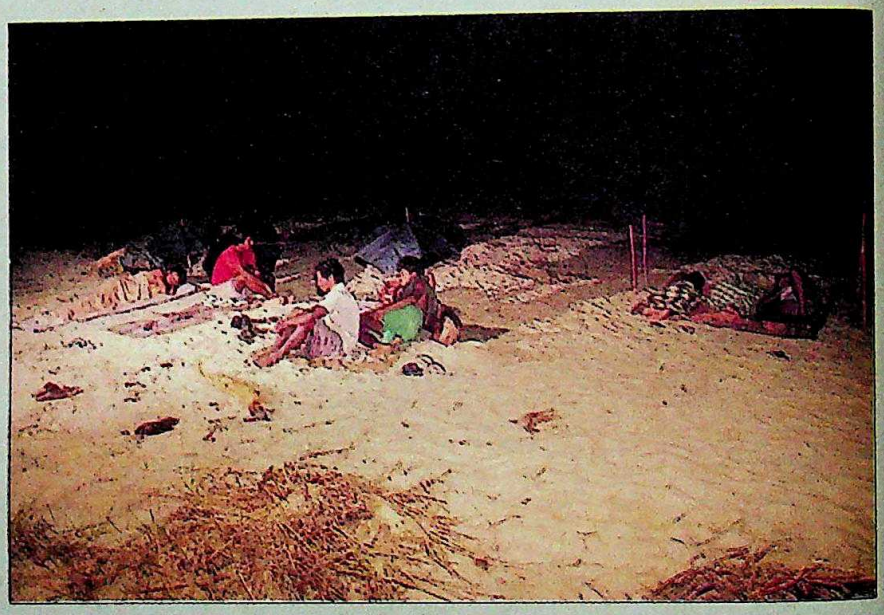
UNFORTUNATELY for Apang, amid the confusion the Assam Police intercepted an SP-rank Arunachal Pradesh intelligence officer in the curfew-bound Behali areas under Gohpur forest. Immediately an inter-state row flamed up. Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta thundered that Arunachal Pradesh had no business interfering in Assam's affairs. Later when Mahanta confronted Apang in Itanagar in the presence of governors of both states, he pleaded innocence and admitted meekly that only four bodies had been recovered.

The August 10 bloodbath was not unexpected. According to an intelligence report sent to the state headquarters by the then Deputy Commissioner Harish Sonowal, leaders of non-tribal communities held a meeting on August 6, where they decided to attack Bodo villages on August 10. Sonowal told INDIA TODAY: "The same day Bodos and non-Bodos inside the Gohpur reserve area decided to remain united and hold a joint public meeting on August 10. Obviously, some agency did not want this. The unity did not materialise and violence broke out."

People say rumours were set off in some villages that the Assamese had violated a Bodo girl. Simultaneously, on August 7, All Bodo Students Union-Upendranath Brahma (ABSU-UB) activists attacked the house of Kusha Dutta, AGP

An Eerie Journey

Many hide-outs and training camps of the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) are in Assam's tribal-dominated Nalbari district, near the Indo-Bhutan border. Chief Correspondent FARZAND AHMED *recently trekked through the region right up to the border, visiting some* ABSU *camps enroute. His account:*



Militants relaxing after training

AT around 10 p.m., the taxi-driver begins to show fear. "Sir, we are now entering the jungles. It's better not to proceed further," he says. We are at the edge of the jungle, at the Tamulpur checkpost, near the Assam-Bhutan border. The Bodo villages nearby are dark, deserted, deathly silent. All the able-bodied men have slipped into the jungles. At night, Tamulpur is an eerie spot.

From this point we are to cross dense, hilly jungles before reaching the border. Tapan, a student and an ABSU activist, who has escorted us from Guwahati, too is frightened by what should be familiar terrain for him. "Who will recognise and save us in the night?" he whispers. "During the daytime Bodo militants would not harm you seeing me, and the police might let you go, but night is always different. Both sides go mad."

Reluctant to enter the forest, Tapan stops the car near a roadside hut. He knocks at the door and then makes a low howling sound—a signal used by ABSU activists. Immediately, the door swings open and an infirm old lady peeps out, followed by a youth, who identifies himself as Jagdish. He offers to guide us through the forest provided the names of persons and places are not revealed, "to ensure that it is not possible for our enemies (the police) to trace us".

We return to the car and drive for 5 km with the headlights switched off to avoid detection by a CRPF camp nearby. The driver stops near a church and hides the car behind a thick bush. We continue on foot into the jungle.

The chirping of crickets and the phosphorescent light of the fire flies are the only signs of life. These jungles are part of the Manas Forest Reserve, which extends into Bhutan. They provide ideal cover for the Bodo insurgents, who hit their targets and then disappear into the thick forests or even slip into Bhutan.

Our destination is an ABSU volunteers' force camp 3 km away, but to avoid a CRPF post, we walk an extra 2 km. After an hour, a desolate house on the edge of a tribal hamlet comes into sight. Shafts of light appear through the cracks of the bamboo doors A few chairs, a bench and a cot are scattered across the lawn. The only occupant of the house is an old Bodo who identifies himself as Narzary. He explains that this is indeed the camp, but all the ABSU men are out making arrangements for a bandh which is to begin the next day. "Only an hour ago the volunteers went into action," he says. (The next day the Guwahati police announce that during the night, militants had killed four per-

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leader of Lakhimpur district. While Dutta escaped, the militants killed his uncle, arsoned the house, and burnt a five-year-old boy alive.

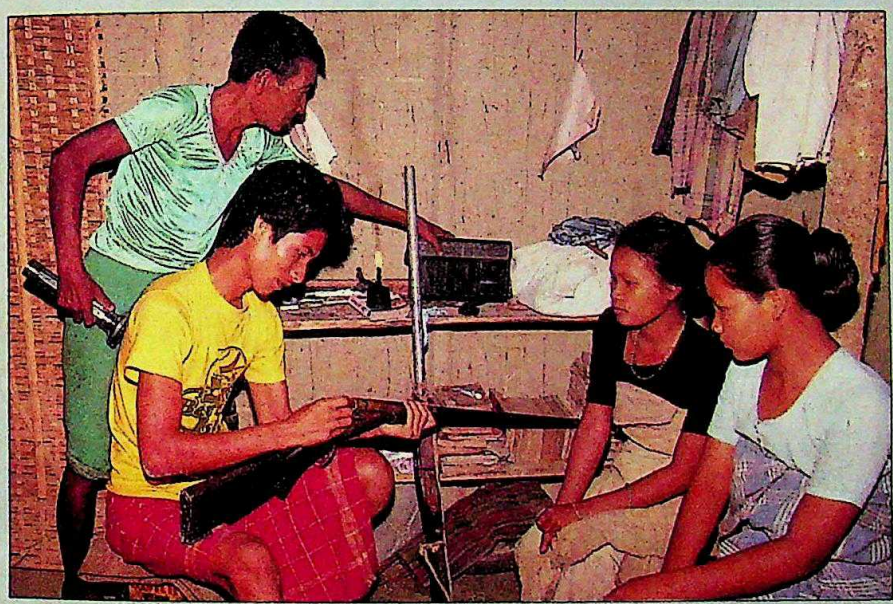
Enraged, the Assamese and non-Bodos attacked Birkrampur, a Bodo-village on August 10. Three days of rioting followed after which, according to a list of the Bodo central relief camp, 108 Bodo villages stood razed to the ground.

The Bodos streamed into the jungles of Arunachal and pitched camps. At this stage Apang moved into the picture. He not only welcomed the Bodos, but even rushed provisions to the camps. He also assumed the role of their spokesman, worsening inter-state relations. Several coincidences pointed a finger at the Centre's involvement too. A fortnight before Gohpur and parts of Lakhimpur erupted, Apang had met with ABSU leaders in Calcutta. Then, Union Minister of State for Home, Santosh Mohan Dev was present in Guwahati on August 11, and had apparently been in touch with Arunachal Pradesh on the wireless network.

DEV was in any case in a corner trying to defend not only his own role but also that of RAW, which was being increasingly accused of providing sustenance to the Bodoland agitation. An organisation of RAW employees recently wrote to Rajiv Gandhi complaining that the intelligence agency was being made to carry out 'Operation Zoom Zoom', with a budget of Rs 3 crore, aimed at destabilising the AGP Government.

Consequently, Mahanta wrote a strongly-worded letter to the prime minister, and his AGP Government took advantage of the prevailing situation to turn a blind eye to the uprooted Bodos. The reaction of the Gohpur mayhem, predictably, followed on August 15 in Darrang district, a Bodo stronghold. Rumours spread that the Assamese were planning to finish them. The Bodo version is that on the night of August 15, AGP workers backed by the police, attacked Tholkwoimari village and once the Bodos had fled, burnt and looted everything.

The AGP and police versions are of course different. They claim that about a 100-odd Bodos first laid an ambush near river Barnadi, then they attacked Boimara village, and finally reached



Bodos cleaning their guns in the camps

sons and raided some non-Bodo houses in the area).

The old man, in fact, turns out to be a veritable gold-mine of information about the ABSU. According to him, it is now a well-knit, multi-tier organisation. All Bodo-dominated areas have been divided into 'anchaliks' (zones) and placed under a 'leader'. Every group of 10 volunteers is headed by a 'captain', while the head of two such groups is a 'major'. All the 'anchaliks' in a district comprise a 'unit'. Every 'unit' has a number of 'commandos' trained in guerrilla warfare. So professional has the ABSU become that, says Narzary, every 'anchalik' includes some nurses.

Suddenly, there is the sound of an explosion. Narzary says it is from a camp 16 km away where arms are being tested. Curious about the ABSU's weaponry, we set off towards the camp. After walking through 2 km of dense jungle and wading across a river, we reach a vast sheet of sand. Fifteen young men appear to be sleeping under the starry sky. "They all are trained militants keeping an eye on police movement," whispers Tapan. The young men awake and begin conversing with the guides in their language. "We spend our nights outside the villages due to police atrocities," says Prasantajit, a militant who speaks both Hindi and English.

He also says that it is impossible to reach the camp where arms are being tested as that involves crossing a stretch of the jungle infested with wild animals. Instead, he offers to lead us to another camp at the foot of the Bhutan hills.

To avoid detection, we walk in silence—even the lighting of cigarettes or use of torchlight is prohibited. In the course of a three-hour-long walk we cross just three villages. But the silent hamlets appear bereft of humans; the barking of stray dogs completes the picture of desolation.

At the foot of the Bhutan hills, we sight a machan-like structure surrounded by three thatched huts. A teenaged boy with Mongoloid features is guarding it with a country-made gun. It is a small camp and an ABSU unit office manned by half a dozen Bodo youth. Says one: "Here we train teenagers to handle country-made guns." Adds the young guard proudly: "We can manufacture guns and cartridges here. We also know how to prepare mechanically controlled bombs." All weapons are hidden in the jungles as the Bodo villages are frequently raided by the security forces.

Nearby, the ABSU Vice-President of Nalbari district Madan Mohan Musahari is relaxing on a cot. "We know that sooner or later we will achieve our goals, nothing can stop us," he says.

What has compelled these youth to abandon their families, their villages, and become fugitives living a hard life in the jungles? "We can now protect our womenfolk from police brutality. Assam Police enters a village with a sense of vengeance and their aim is to loot and rape," says a teenaged militant. Another young boy says with undisguised hatred: "We are now ready to challenge the police force and Assamese chauvinists." In the stillness of the night, his words resonate like a pistol shot.

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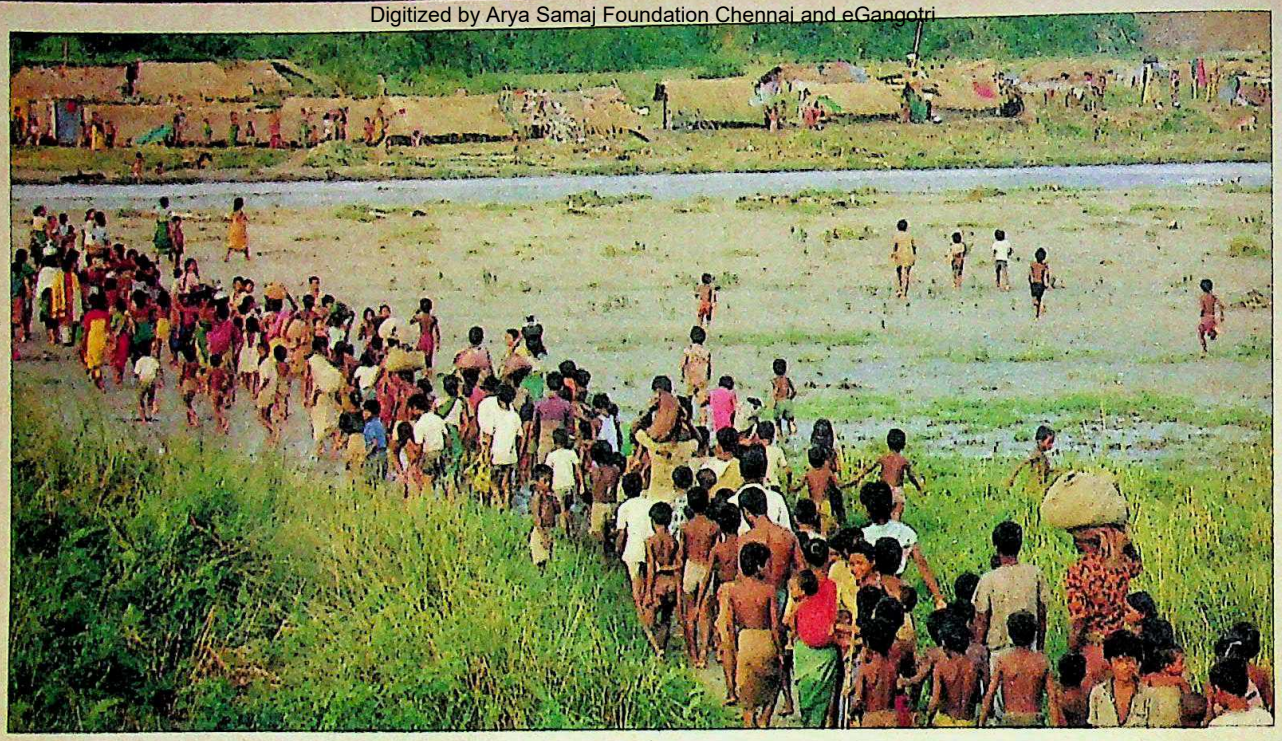
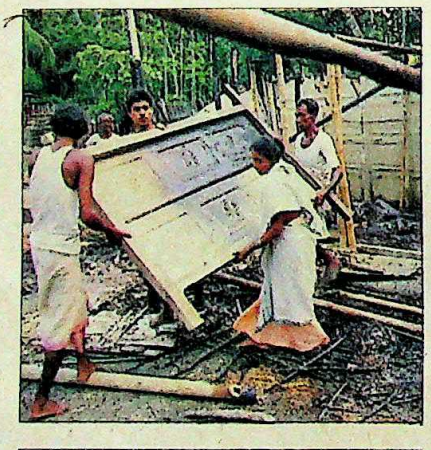
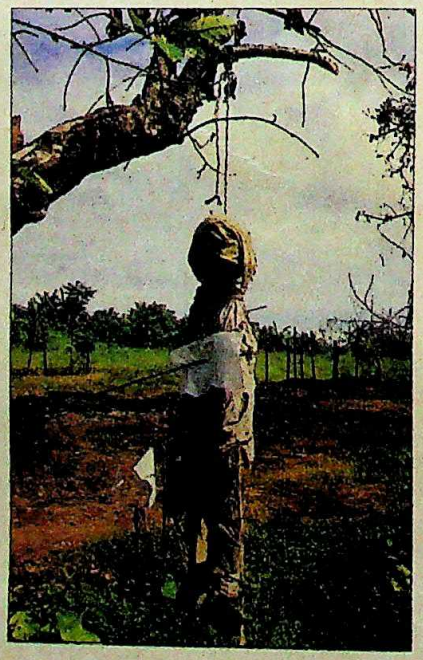


Kwoimara village, where they torched 23 houses. This, says the police, enraged Assamese and non-Bodos who in thousands moved against the Bodos and between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. gutted 10 Bodo villages under Khairabari police station. The next day an Assamese mob arsoned more Bodo houses.

WHILE Bodos claimed they had suffered 58 casualties, officials said in three days of violence hardly seven people had died. Whatever the truth, the violence in North Lakhimpur, Gohpur and Khairabai was obviously directed against the Bodos. According to AGP leaders, the ABSU(UB) had planned to evacuate non-Bodos from the proposed 'Bodoland' areas from August 15, and this led all non-Bodos, other plain tribes and Assamese to combine against them. The ABSU(UB) denies this, but the AGP used it to unite all non-Bodos who in a matter of seven days drove Bodos out of their villages, taking advantage of the fact that most ABSU leaders were camping in Delhi, Calcutta and Siliguri.

The leaderless ABSU workers, though trained in guerrilla warfare *(see box)*, were not prepared to face an onslaught like this. The Assamese plan was also well-timed, as the stage was set for the first tripartite talks between the ABSU(UB), the state Government and the Centre. Mahanta, after allowing the violence to escalate during the past six months—in the course of which ABSU militants created mayhem killing 200-





(Above) Bodos crossing river to refugee camps; residents salvage belongings; and (bottom) effigy of Mahanta.

odd people and arsoning buildings and bridges—played his cards well. Finding that Assamese in general and non-Bodo tribes in particular had turned against the Bodos, he agreed to hold tripartite talks outside Assam, and simultaneously invoked the "Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958, and the "Assam Disturbed Areas Act 1955" which gave licence to the police to shoot-to-kill militants. Then the Assam Government ruthlessly crushed the agitation in Kokrajhar district. According to ageing Bodo Sahitya Sabha President Jogendranath Basumatary: "It is only police violence in Kokrajhar. It has gone mad and is burning our villages."

But there was no ignoring the fact that the Bodos had been painted into a corner. Most other plains tribes like the Mishing and Koch-Rajbanshis, besides Bengalis and tea-garden labourers had turned against them. This also renders the position of the Bodos at the talks quite uncertain. For as Home Minister Bhrigu Phukan declares: "Any solution to the Bodo demand must be acceptable to all plains tribals." The latest bloody round may have gone to Mahanta, but the bout isn't over. If anything, it augurs to become gorier, and will extract a severe price from all concerned.

—FARZAND AHMED in Mangaldoi, Gohpur and Guwahati

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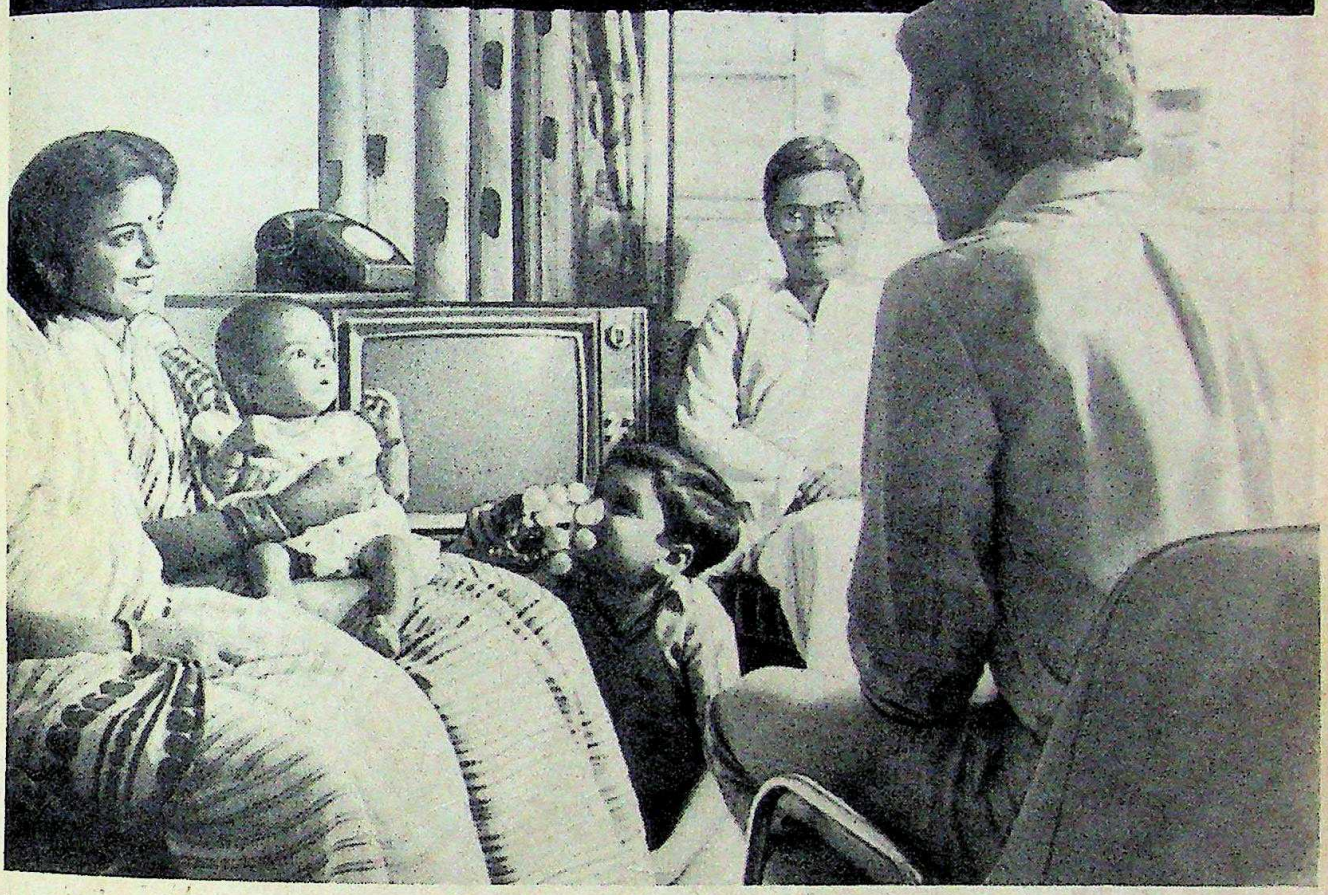

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ANDHRA PRADESH

Misguided Missiles

Rajiv Gandhi's tour of Andhra Pradesh was all too clearly an election campaign, characterised by a wilful distortion of facts to smear Rama Rao.

THE confrontation ended as it had begun. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi flinging wild charges at Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao in his presence while G. Parthasarathy, a joint secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, brusquely denied Rama Rao a chance to defend himself. If that was an ugly enough example of Rajiv's political assault on the Telugu Desam Government last fortnight, it was no uglier or any less demeaning than what had gone before.

Clearly, the prime minister's new and increasingly aggressive strategy to bludgeon his political opponents into submission entails a total disregard for the Queensbury Rules. With Rama Rao already under considerable political pressure in his home state, Rajiv turned the screw as far as it could go. In the course of a day-long tour of Andhra Pradesh, Rajiv addressed well-attended party rallies where he attacked and ridiculed Rama Rao on his policies and performance.

His intentions were clear from the moment he set foot in the state. Rajiv's tour did not include any of the flood-ravaged areas of the state. Neither did the APCC(I) President Dr M. Chenna Reddy insist that the prime minister visit those areas although poor implementation of flood relief measures was one of the reasons for the Congress(I)-sponsored state bandh on August 9.

Rama Rao was the sole target and Rajiv's tirade was typical of his acerbic speech-writers. "Your chief minister prefers to be surrounded by cardboard walls and film sets. He wants to present a rosy picture of everything. Everything looks green but if you look beyond the sets there is nothing. There is a world of difference between fact and fiction, between myth and reality," he declared at the first meeting in Anantapur.

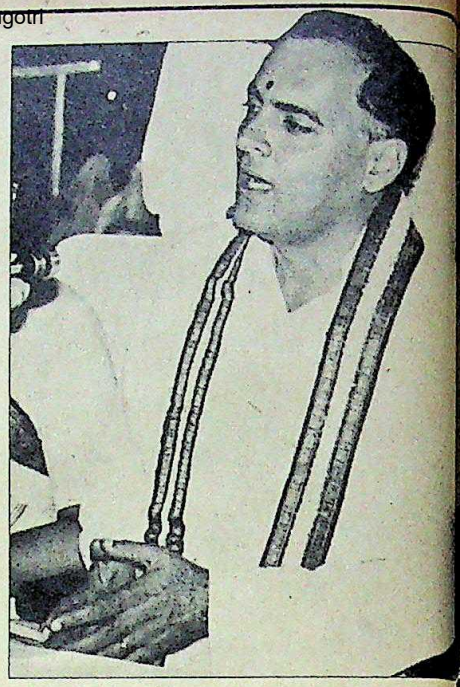
Anticipating the attack, Rama Rao had party and police intelligence report to him about Rajiv's speeches and the public response to them, so that he could be ready with his rebuttal. But even he was obviously taken aback by the personalised and wild charges that Rajiv left in his wake.

Rajiv's tumble-weed tour of rural Andhra Pradesh—the third in three months—was all too clearly an election campaign characterised by a wilful distortion of facts. Whether it was on the issue of the state's handling of flood relief, its dealing with the Naxalite problem or distribution of subsidised rice, Rajiv repeatedly twisted the truth in a typically ham-handed attempt to smear Rama Rao.

In his opening salvo, Rajiv charged the Telugu Desam Ministry and Rama Rao with tardiness in submitting its report on the flood havoc to the Centre and for being slow in responding to the plight of the affected people. "I would have liked to do much more and quicker too, but unfortunately the state took a long time in submitting its report," said Rajiv. He pointed out that the report had reached Delhi only two days earlier—on August 17—and added that the Centre would not delay in sanctioning relief.

The truth was somewhat different, as Rama Rao tried to clarify. The state Government had kept the Centre informed of the flood situation regularly. The first telex message was sent to the central control room in the Ministry of Agriculture on July 17. Further, the state Government was in telephonic contact with Central Relief Commissioner S.V. Giri, an IAS officer of the Andhra Pradesh cadre. Rama Rao sent another telex message to Rajiv on July 26 and a semi-official letter the next day asking for Rs 50 crore based on a preliminary estimate of the damage caused by the floods. A report putting the losses at Rs 600 crore was handed over to Giri personally by state Relief Commissioner T. Gopala Rao on August 17—the report that Rajiv referred to. But even before Rama Rao could complete his defence, G. Parthasarathy intervened saying: "Questions should be addressed only to the prime minister. This is not a joint press conference."

At his next meeting, Rajiv accused Rama Rao of not finding time to visit the flood-affected areas and said he had to send a Central minister all the way to assess the damage. Here again, the prime minister was guilty of making baseless allegations. Rama Rao had visited the



RAJIV'S CHARGE

☐ "Unfortunately, the Andhra Pradesh Government took a long time to send the memorandum. We have received it only on August 17."

☐ "My cabinet minister visited the flood affected areas even before the people from the state themselves had gone there."

☐ "The Government lacked the courage to fight the Naxalites. By agreeing to erect memorials to Naxalites, it was running away from the responsibility of maintaining law and order. Such governments have no right to exist."

☐ "Rama Rao is cheating the tribals of 20 paise on every kilogram of rice. While the Centre wanted him to distribute it at Rs 1.80 a kilogram, he is not doing so."

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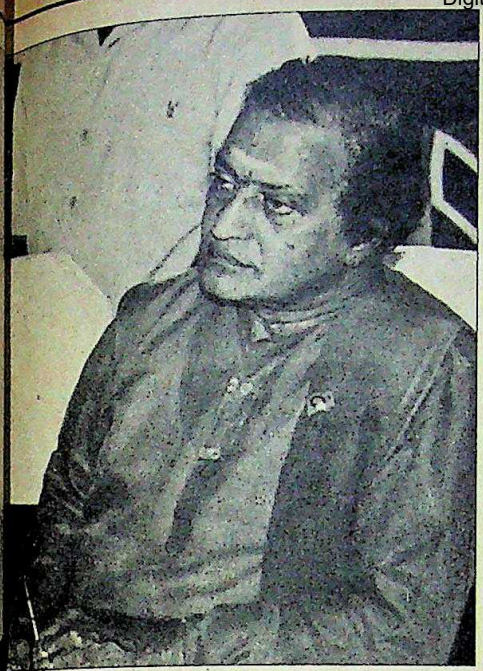

THE FACTS

- Rama Rao sent a telex message to Rajiv on July 26 and a letter on July 27 seeking Rs 50 crore for flood relief; the preliminary damage was put at Rs 450 crore.
- Rama Rao visited the flood affected areas on July 21 and 25; H.K.L. Bhagat, information minister, flew over the areas on July 28.
- The Mahabubnagar district administration agreed to rebuild the memorials demolished by the police in seven places as demanded by the Naxalites for the release of the Kollapur Mandal Praja Parishad President.
- The state sells rice to those with an annual income of less than Rs 6,000 at Rs 2 a kg, spending 20 paise more on the common varieties and up to Re 1 on the superfine.

flood-affected areas on two days—July 21 and July 25—while the Central Information and Broadcasting Minister H.K.L. Bhagat, merely flew over the areas on July 28. Commented Rama Rao's son-in-law and Telugu Desam Party leader N. Chandrababu Naidu: "Bhagat went by an Avro aircraft instead of a helicopter and even forgot to carry his binoculars. They were left at the guest-house. Moreover, one of those travelling with him said Bhagat slept on board the aircraft."

Even on a live local issue—the Naxalite menace in the state—Rajiv's attack on the state Government was blunted by his presentation of the facts. "The Telugu Desam lacked the courage to fight the Naxalite violence in the state by agreeing to erect memorials for them and is running away from its responsibility of maintaining law and order in the state. Such a government does not have the right to exist," thundered Rajiv.

IN reality, Rama Rao in his six-and-a-half years as chief minister has made a serious attempt to find ways to end the Naxalite violence. On June 12, Rama Rao gave a month's time to those who wanted to give up arms. Only 50 surrendered and the Government extended the deadline by another month when 128 more CPI(ML) activists gave themselves up. The Government then decided to extend the deadline by one more month to September 12. Says state Home Minister A. Madhava Reddy: "Only 40 of them surrendered in the four years before the offer was made. There are hardcore members among the 220 who have surrendered so far."

Rajiv, however, glossed over this and the fact that the state has been asking for more CRPF personnel to fight the Naxalites. On June 20, Rama Rao wrote to Home Minister Buta Singh asking for more men, arms and training for the state's own police. But in his reply, on June 23, Buta Singh rejected the request and accused the state of lacking in perception to tackle extremism. "If the local police and administrative structure are not effective, heavy firepower and additional forces will not achieve the desired results," wrote Buta Singh. In the same letter he took exception to the "substandard" operations of the state intelligence agency and argued that it could not combat the Naxalite problem.

Meanwhile, the Rajiv bandwagon rolled on. In his speeches at Nalgonda and Warangal, Rajiv raised the pitch of his tirade to incredible levels by accusing Rama Rao of aligning with "communal, obscurantist, feudal and anti-national forces" who were colluding with those who were responsible for the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Though the connection was obscure enough, for the prime minister to stoop to the level of accusing Rama Rao of collusion with the assassins of Mrs Gandhi was nothing short of political heresy.

But tragically, Rajiv seems to have become the victim of his own speechwriters. On his earlier visits on June 15 and 21, Rajiv had made allegations that were a clear distortion of the truth. He had, for example, accused Rama Rao of "cheating the tribal people" of 20 paise on every kilogram of rice, selling it to them at Rs 2 a kg while the Centre wanted him to distribute it at Rs 1.80 a kg. Countered state Civil Supplies Minister G. Narayanappa: "There is no Central subsidy under this (integrated tribal welfare) scheme. With handling and other costs, the price of the common variety sold to tribals supplied by the Food Corporation of India was Rs 2.20. Actually, we are subsidising at least 20 paise if it is the common variety and more on finer varieties to make rice available to tribals at the same price of Rs 2." Says Rama Rao: "It is unfortunate that the prime minister should behave like this. He cannot accuse a chief minister as he likes. There is something called decency in public."

Clearly, with the coming elections in view, the ruling party is intent on pulling out all the stops in its attempt to denigrate

SNAPS INDIA

Next week, Chenna Reddy will submit a plea to the President to dismiss the state Government.

Rama Rao and undermine the Telugu Desam Party. The Congress(I) has also dragged Rama Rao to court in an unprecedented number of cases (*see box*). In fact, the legal cases are obviously part of the dual strategy the Congress(I) has adopted in the state to keep Rama Rao off balance. While the prime minister uses his vocal blunderbuss, the legal cases could embarrass Rama Rao sufficiently to topple his government.

Coupled with the impending high

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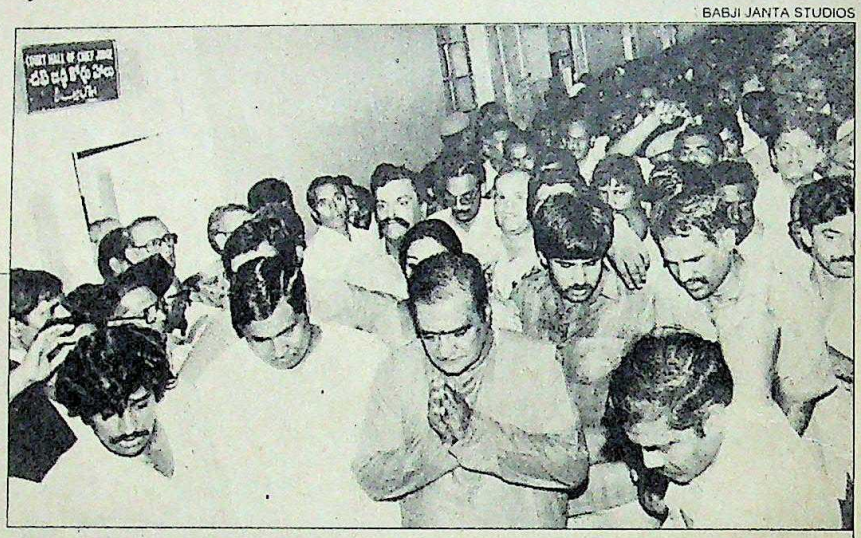
court verdict on whether it is right for a chief minister to act in a film, the ruling party feels it can engineer the collapse of the Rama Rao Government. Next week, the APCC(I) is to submit a memorandum to the President demanding the dismissal of the state Government. Chenna Reddy says the memorandum "will list the misdeeds of the Government."

But Rajiv's intemperate attacks could scuttle that strategy. For Rama Rao and the Telugu Desam, Rajiv's statements only served as welcome cannon fodder in their campaign against the Congress(I). At a party meeting the day after Rajiv's visit, Rama Rao warned: "Society will not pardon the prime minister for his false and baseless allegations. What experience does this *kurra kunta* (brat) have to call the opposition leaders names?" In a resolution, the Telugu Desam also accused Rajiv of lowering the dignity of the office of prime minister "by mouthing blatant lies".

Even a supposedly pro-administration paper like *The Times of India* warned in an editorial: "In the coming weeks and months, such situations with a potential for unpleasant confrontations are likely to recur. They can be avoided by both the Congress(I) and the Opposition observing some rules of the game. The ruling party, which has the advantage of broadcasting its allegations over radio and TV, has a special responsibility to ensure fair play." In his current obsession for opposition-bashing, Rajiv seems to have forgotten one cardinal principle—in twisting the truth, it is his own credibility that will eventually suffer the most damage.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

BABJI JANTA STUDIOS



Rama Rao coming out of a court

N.T. RAMA RAO

Legal Wrangle

With some 200 writ petitions and appeals filed against him, N.T. Rama Rao is starting to resemble a legal pin-cushion. Admittedly, the cases are politically motivated and filed by Congress (I) activists. But they have succeeded in tying down the chief minister to the courts and some could prove politically embarrassing.

The most important case is a 193-page petition listing 197 allegations against Rama Rao. The petitioner is Dronamraju Satyanarayana, a Congress (I) member of the Rajya Sabha. In January, 1988, the high court rejected the appeal but found the chief minister prima facie guilty on seven counts and called for evidence to examine the charges in greater detail. Rama Rao, however, obtained a stay order from the Supreme Court. Some of the other, more significant cases, are:

► Case No. WP No. 2884/87. Petitioner: K. Venkateswara Reddy. Seeking a direction from the court to stop use of government funds and machinery for party propaganda purpose.

► Case No. 18173/87. Petitioner: D.K. Smarasimha Reddy. Questioning the appointment of Aggarwal Commission to go into charges of corruption against Rama Rao's son-in-law N. Chandrababu Naidu.

► Case No. WP No. 2542/88. Petitioner Nadendla Bhaskara Rao. Questioning the appointment of the Justice Chandrasekhara Menon commission to probe a decision Bhaskara Rao took as chief minister.

► Case No. WP No. 310/87. Petitioner: V. Harinatha Babu, asking for directions against the chief minister to stop him from acting in films.

► Case No. WP No. 16114/88. Petitioner: N. Srinivasulu Reddy. Seeking the imposition of President's Rule.

► Case no WP 16115/88. Petitioner: N. Arinivasulu Reddy. Seeking the appointment of a high powered judicial commissioner under the Public Enquiries Act.

► Case No. WP No. 16116/88. Petitioner: N. Srinivasulu Reddy. Prosecution of Rama Rao and others on charges of misuse of office and corruption.

► Case No. WP No. 1901/89. Petitioner: St. Trivikrama Ramananda Bharatiswamy. For a writ of Mandamus to prevent Rama Rao from installing the statue of Buddha in the Hussain Sagar lake, Hyderabad.

► Case No. WP No. 5011/89. Petitioner: V.P. Narasimha Raju. To declare Rama Rao an imposter; the chief minister wearing saffron is unconstitutional; the chief minister acting as Viswamitra in the film or outside is unconstitutional.

► Case No. WP No. 7327/89. Petitioner: Sunku Balaram. To direct Rama Rao to discharge his duties as chief minister under the Constitution of India as a full time job without acting or involving himself in any other way in the production of the film Brahmarishi Viswamitra.

► Case No. WP No. 7232/89. Petitioner: K Lakshminarayana. To stop the Government from executing its plan to issue licences for arms to village defence committees.

The lawyer who pursues most of the cases against Rama Rao with amazing determination is Sriramagiri Ramchandra Rao, 43. "My task is to see the end of a satanic mission. There is nothing genuine about Rama Rao and he loves none but himself," he says. Ramachandra Rao's mission began in 1984 when he saw a 58-year-old village officer relative of his, pedalling a rickshaw in disguise, after he was sacked along with other village officers, following a Rama Rao fiat. The old man knew of no other way to live but died soon unable to cope with the strain of pedalling. The sense of revenge still drives Ramachandra Rao.

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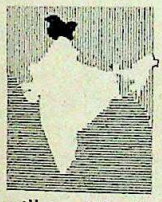
JAMMU & KASHMIR

Act of Desperation

A besieged Abdullah resorts to press censorship

Abdullah in the deserted Bakshi Stadium on Independence Day

Photographs by MEHRAJ-U-DIN



THE one thing you can say about Farooq Abdullah is that he has his own distinct set of theories. One seems to run like this: If I see no evil and hear none, evil itself will vanish. Having failed to crush the secessionists in his state, the Jammu and Kashmir chief minister has taken off on another tangent. He is now trying to gag the press instead.

The passage of the Jammu and Kashmir Special Powers (Press) Bill—which amounts to virtual press censorship—by the state Assembly last fortnight was nothing short of a blatant attempt by the National Conference-Congress(I) ruling alliance to find a scapegoat for its own ineptitude and misgovernance. All sections of the press and opposition parties have condemned the act.

Even as Abdullah took this drastic step to bring the press in line, it became clear that he had no control over his own party: a number of National Conference (NC) members inserted advertisements in local papers announcing their resignations from the party. The blow stunned the chief minister all the more as most of the desertions were from Srinagar—considered an NC stronghold. Other partymen publicly announced their lack of faith in Abdullah's leadership.

That he has lost all influence over the people of the valley had already become evident earlier in the month. It was a slap on the chief minister's face when secessionists succeeded in celebrating Pakistan's Independence Day, August 14, with unprecedented fervour. Crackers were burst and gas balloons along with Pakistani flags were released in the valley. Throughout Srinagar, "flag-hoisting ceremonies" were held right under Abdullah's nose. So bold were the extremists that they even held "ceremonial parades" in parts of the city. A good number of people, especially youth, joined the "march past" and saluted Pakistan's flag even as the police watched the scene helplessly.

In Ghani Memorial Stadium in downtown Srinagar, 21 shots were fired by an armed militant and the Pakistan flag hoisted. What added an ominous dimension to this unabashedly anti-national activity is that for the first time, the Pakistani flag was hoisted over the Old Secretariat building in Hindu-majority Jammu.

In complete contrast to this celebratory mood, the next day, India's Independence Day was marked by a complete bandh in the valley. Dubbed a "black day" by the pro-Pakistan secessionists, for the first time on August 15, state transport buses were taken off the roads. And though Abdullah fretted and fumed, even business establishments owned by alliance members remained closed. The black-out called for by the militants was also a grand success as Srinagar and even remote parts of the valley plunged into darkness. At least eight powerful bombs exploded in Srinagar, claiming one life and leaving 27 persons seriously injured. State PCC(I)

While large numbers celebrated Pakistan's Independence, just a handful attended the August 15 function addressed by Farooq Abdullah.

Secessionists burn the Indian flag

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Posters of Zia: anti-national

chief Mohammad Shahi Qureshi too was not spared—his car, which was parked outside his residence, was blown up by a powerful device.

Abdullah's humiliation was complete when just a handful of persons turned up at Srinagar's Bakshi Stadium where the official Independence Day celebrations were being held. The attendance at other functions linked to August 15 was also embarrassingly poor. It was a telling indication of whose writ runs in Kashmir valley.

There was no respite for Abdullah the next day—August 16, Zia-ul-Haq's death anniversary. The extremists continued their onslaught and extended the bandh for another day. Again, it was a big success. There were isolated reports of bomb blasts, and terrorists hijacked a bus on the outskirts of Srinagar and set it on fire after ordering all the passengers to disembark.

A few days later, terrorists believed to have been trained in Pakistan, again made a mockery of the chief minister's threats of crushing them, when they boldly gunned down an NC member, Mohammad Yousuf Halwai, in broad daylight right in the heart of the capital. Halwai met a bloody end simply because he refused to put out the lights in his house on August 15. His murder was clearly intended to frighten NC members into quitting the party. And it could also be one of the factors leading to the spate of resignations that followed soon after.

It was, in fact, soon after Halwai's murder that Abdullah told the House that some measures restricting press freedom, were in the offing. Nevertheless, he tried to create the impression that these would only apply to news about the pro-Pakistan secessionists. In actuality, however, the new law empowers the Government to censor virtually all types of news reports.

The August 16 bandh called by the secessionist groups in the state to mark Zia-ul-Haq's death anniversary was a grand success.

It is being speculated that this measure could be a prelude to some drastic step the Centre might be planning to take in the state. Others say that this could be because the chief minister's patience with hostile sections of the press has run out.

Abdullah, in fact, is known to have made churlish outbursts against critical sections of the press. Recently he vented his spleen against INDIA TODAY and the *Newstrack* video magazine for their coverage of rising secessionism in the state. *Newstrack* in particular, carried interviews with the militants which must have embarrassed Abdullah. Branding the coverage "premeditated and biased" he told the Assembly: "What INDIA TODAY wrote caused much damage to tourism. So when the *Newstrack* team came here, two hotels refused them accommodation as they were connected with INDIA TODAY." *Newstrack* rebutted these charges in a press release stating it was a balanced story which featured the police chief and Abdullah speaking for over five minutes in a 20-minute story. It objected to being made a scapegoat for Abdullah's problems.

Aside from the fast deteriorating situation in the valley, the last month has seen the emergence of a new problem for the state Government—communal riots in Buddhist-dominated Ladakh. Indefinite curfew was clamped on the district headquarters, Leh, and the army called out, after fighting broke out between Buddhists and Sunni Muslims, most of whom have only recently settled in Ladakh after it was opened to tourism. In the arson that followed, houses of both communities and 150 vehicles belonging to Kashmiri Muslims—mostly taxis—were set on fire. Even some foreign tourists were attacked by a group of armed Buddhists near Khalsti town. The Buddhists' demand is separation from the state and Union territory status for Ladakh. Since the violence broke out, foreign tourists have stopped visiting Ladakh and no private vehicle has crossed Zojila, the gateway to the border district.

Simultaneously, violence continues unchecked in the valley, where the death toll for the past one year has risen to at least 60. Abdullah, however, recently told the House that just 12 people have died in 170 bomb blasts and 165 cases of cross-firing during this period. But then, Kashmir's chief minister obviously believes in hiding the facts—as is evident from his resorting to near press censorship. Though Abdullah's authoritarian instincts have come to the fore, he cuts a pathetic figure, completely at sea in the political tinder-box that is the Kashmir of today.

—ZAFAR MERAJ

Advertisements in local papers announce resignations of NC members

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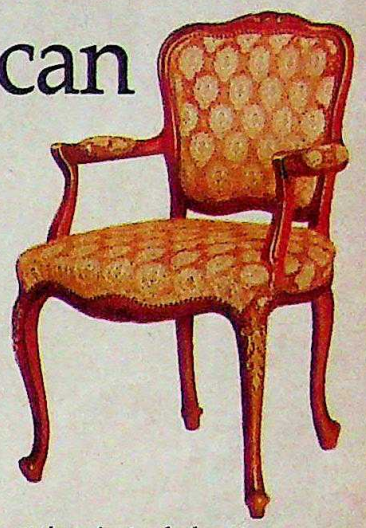
How TouchWood protects your beautiful wooden furniture in ways no polish can



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That's because polish can only form a weak and thin coat: a coat that just can't stand up to spills and scratches.

So within a few months, your furniture starts looking stained and scratched.

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TouchWood: polyurethane strength

TouchWood contains polyurethane: a tough plastic. It forms a thick transparent layer that clings tenaciously on to wood.

A layer which resists hot spills, cold spills and scratches for a very long time.

And it lets the natural beauty of wood shine through, years after the average polish is not even a memory.

Brush on. Takes longer to dry to protect better

Like paint, TouchWood can be brushed on; a job any painter can do. So the next time, instead of getting your furniture polished, try TouchWood.

And because it forms a tough, thick, protective layer, unlike polish, it takes longer to dry. But no longer than the paint on doors and windows.

What's more TouchWood protection spreads to every intricate carving, reaches every hidden corner.

And though TouchWood costs a little more than polish, it more than pays its way by the protection it gives your beautiful wooden furniture: many times longer than polish.

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TouchWood is available in two finishes glossy and matt — unlike polish. And unique TouchWood stainer can make even ordinary wood look special.

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TouchWood. You need to try it just once and you'll see how well it preserves your furniture's beauty.

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Brush on. And keep wood looking new.

OBW/8350

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The day is drawing to a close in Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh. Sitting at one of his largest looms, Abdullah leans back to scrutinise his handiwork. On the semi-finished carpet, the pattern is coming alive; and in his eyes is the craftsman's gleam of pride. As he tucks one last loose thread into place, his thoughts go back to that day in 1977 when ITC's Triveni Handlooms came to his help...

Abdullah of Shahjahanpur. Even the skills inherited from his forefathers weren't getting him two square meals a day.

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As an export agency, ITC matches requirements of foreign buyers.

ITC established Triveni Handlooms to inspire the revival of this traditional craft. Under Colonel Prem Sahgal (of INA fame), Triveni has helped over 2500 talented but poor weavers. Wages have increased from Rs 4 per sq. ft. in 1977 to over Rs 150 and the quality of product has improved impressively. With all their carpets being exported, Triveni earns close to Rs 1 crore in foreign exchange.

Apart from carpets, ITC's Exports Division markets a range of other products across the world. These include computer software, marine foods, garments and handicrafts. With fresh fruits, vegetables, spices and processed food being added to the portfolio, and with new markets showing significant potential, ITC is increasing its foreign exchange contribution to the country.

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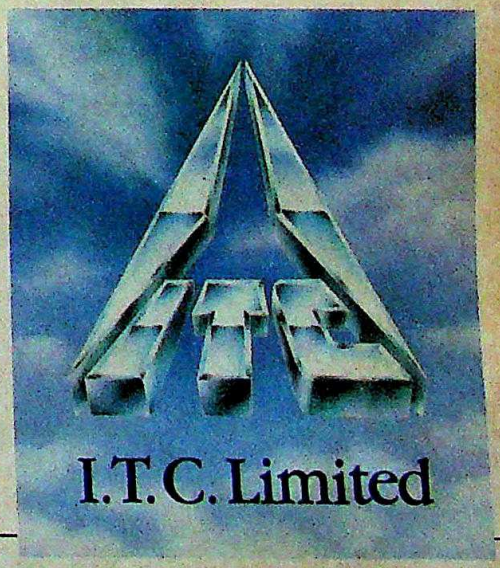
Where else is ITC working for India?

Agro-industry : ITC's technological expertise, gained from decades of R&D in seed development, is being transferred to produce high-yielding oilseeds. With the manufacture and marketing of edible and non-edible oils and their derivatives, ITC is helping reduce imports.

Family Health and Welfare : Through its far-flung marketing network, ITC distributes millions of Nirodh contraceptives and promotes the advantages of a small, well-spaced family: an effort acknowledged by the 1988 FICCI Award for Family Planning.

Paper and Board—in the core-sector : The ITC-promoted Bhadrachalam Paperboards is a leader in its field. It has set new standards by combining record productivity with exemplary concern for wood conservation, environment protection and tribal welfare.



New horizons, new hopes.

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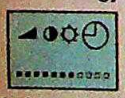

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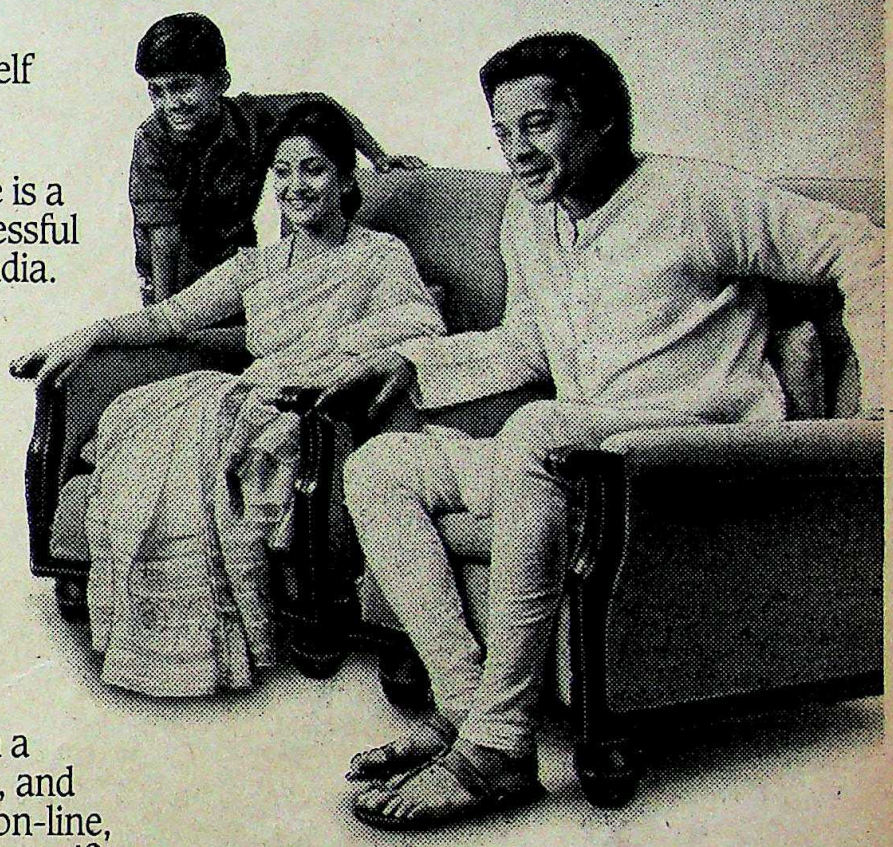

One of these days the friendly Eureka Forbes salesman will ring your doorbell and introduce himself with his identity card.

This man inspires confidence – which is only natural. Because he is a member of the largest, most successful sales organisation of its kind in India. Backed by dependable after sales service.

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EUROCLEAN removes minute specks of dirt and dust in your home effortlessly. Even dust you didn't know existed. AQUAGUARD gives you clear, safe drinking water on tap – at the flick of a switch – even if the raw water has high bacterial contamination.

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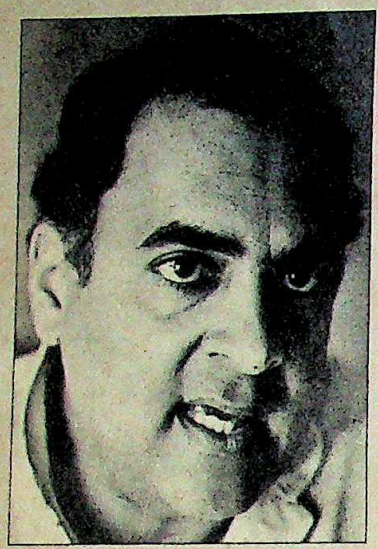
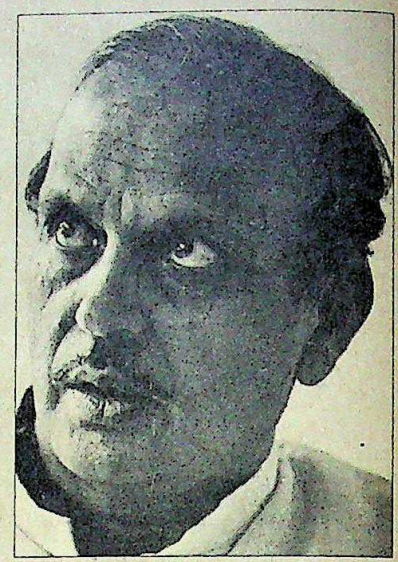


Singh was waiting for a direct confrontation when Rajiv Gandhi made the offer of a one-to-one debate on TV. Singh lapped up the offer. But the Government was soon thinking of ways to wriggle out.



TV DEBATE

Shoot and Scoot

Rajiv Gandhi challenges V.P. Singh, then backtracks

At each opposition rally nowadays, there is one chair on the dais which is invariably empty. The absence is politically pregnant. The effect dramatic. Speakers point fingers at the chair and gleefully accuse: "The man for whom it is meant has run away. Rajiv Gandhi did not turn up for the open debate on Bofors." The audience explodes in laughs and cheers.

Ironically, Rajiv has invited his own embarrassment with typical recklessness. Addressing the national council members and state unit chiefs of the National Students Union of India (NSUI)—the Congress (I) student wing—in Delhi on August 12, the prime minister could not resist the temptation to impress. With brashness, the bait was laid: Rajiv challenged his bete noir, Janata Dal President V.P. Singh to an American style face-to-face Doordarshan debate on the Bofors issue.

The following morning wire agencies reported Rajiv's latest quote: "I am for an open discussion and let V.P. Singh accept the challenge. Let people judge and form their opinion before the country goes to the polls."

But events so transpired that Rajiv's impromptu act of bravado was to prove quite costly. Singh, under siege in his own party thanks to factional infighting, gratefully latched on to his new electoral life-line. In an open letter to the prime minister, he wrote: "I am delighted that you have challenged me to a face-to-face debate on Bofors. I accept the challenge and will look forward to an early encounter with you."

The prime minister already sensed his pending embarrassment and called for a meeting with Information Minister H.K.L. Bhagat and other office-bearers. The objective: to find an escape route out of the obvious mess, minimising the unavoidable political loss. The next day, Bhagat provided an ingenuous clarification: he declared that since Singh was merely a factional leader of the Opposition, the prime minister could not debate with him alone. Proposing a debate between the government side and a group of opposition leaders, Bhagat commented contemptuously: "The prime minister is not a factional leader of our party as you are in the Janata Dal."

The prime minister's retreat was expected. The Opposition was determined to extract the maximum political capital out of Rajiv's backtracking. Janata Dal spokesman, S. Jaipal Reddy accused him of "running away from a TV debate" with Singh. Said he: "It is yet another example of his gigantic guilt complex on the Bofors question." The Bofors issue had been pushed right back to the political centrestage.

As the Opposition barked in harmony, eager to snap at Rajiv's wagging tongue, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) maintained a strategic silence. Meanwhile, the NSUI decided to issue a so-called clarification, declaring that the prime minister wanted a debate between the Government and the Opposition on any forum, including TV. Party insiders confide that a complete denial by the PMO or the NSUI would have created a credibility problem for Rajiv.

In a belated attempt to gain political mileage out of an obviously tough situation, the Congress (I) has been trying to launch a counter-offensive missile at Singh. Congress (I) General Secretary, Ghulam Nabi Azad said: "The prime minister only said that we are ready, let V. P. Singh come for the debate. A prime minister has never engaged himself in such a debate."

But, it already seems too late to save Rajiv's political face. The Government has worsened the situation by ignoring the Opposition demand for producing the tape of his speech. The Rajiv-hunting *Indian Express*, in a caustic editorial, mocked: "If there is one person who can shoot and scoot faster than the Bofors gun surely it is Rajiv Gandhi."

The whole episode has brought home a moral to Rajiv, which he can only ill-afford to ignore in the sensitive atmosphere of an election year: think before you speak.

—BHASKAR ROY

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QUARTZ

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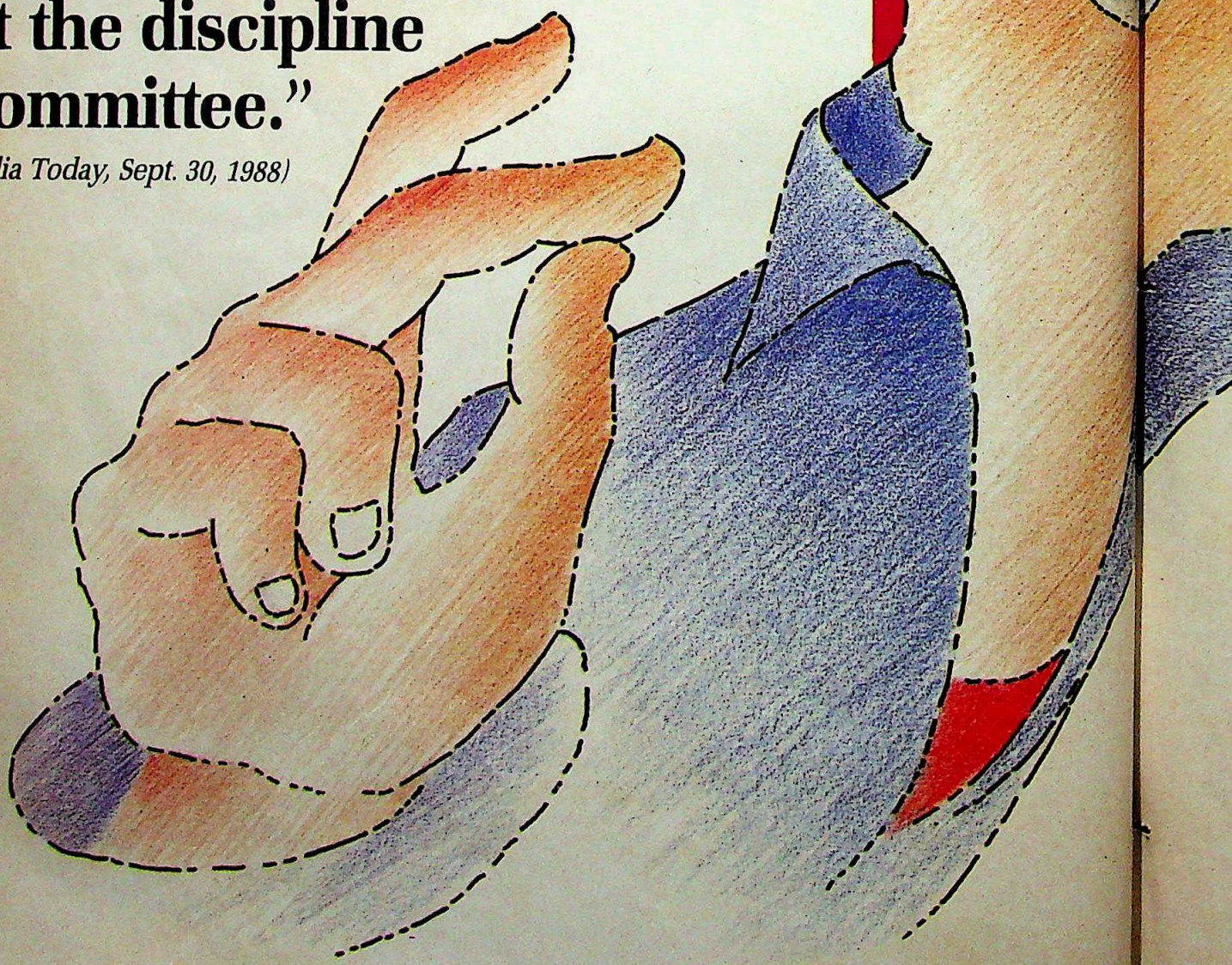
"Despo scene, man. This arbit wardi's getting real agi at the disco about my roomi !"

In simple English this means "it's a desperate situation. The arbitrary warden is getting agitated about my room-mate at the discipline committee."

(India Today, Sept. 30, 1988)



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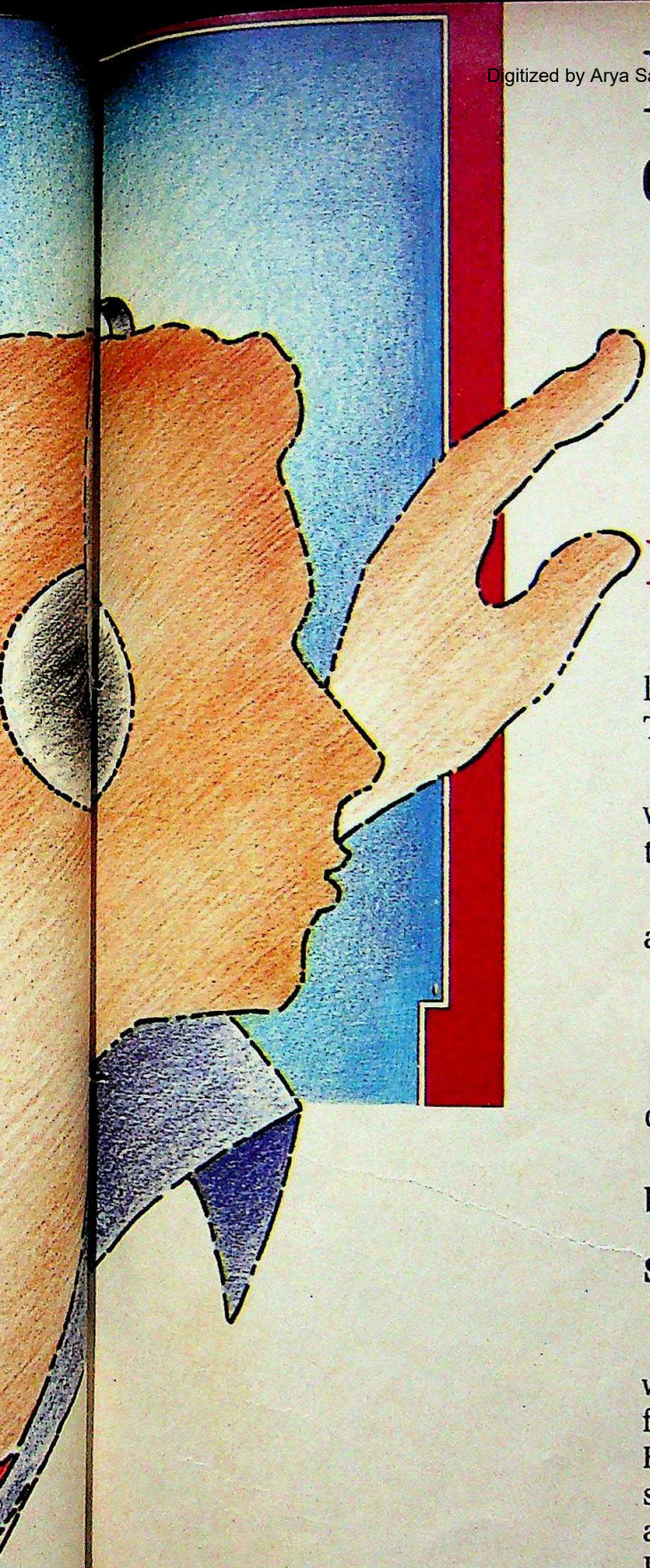

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BANGALORE: Brigade Road, General Electricals • Pots and Pans International • Chickpet, Raja Trading Co., 802, Near Balepet Square • Indiranagar, Balaji Electricals, 325, Chinmaya Mission, Hospital Road • 4th Jayanagar, Anupam Electric Co • M.G. Road, Indiana Crockery • Richards Squares, Adams And Co., 19

MAHARASHTRA

BOMBAY: Andheri, Hemco Steel Centre, 212-S.V Road • Bandra (West), Shazaan, Hill Road • Chembur, Akbarally's, Jaswant Baug, Sion Trombay Road • Natraj Emporium, Nataraj Cinema Building • Dadar, M.C. Jawle Road, Kiran Steel Centre, 6, Laxmi Building • Jacob Circle, Ramanlal Jayantilal and Co., Arthur Road, Opp. Church, Satrasta • Lohar Chawl, Asiatic Electric Trading Co., 46-48, Vittal Sayana Bldg • Sanghvi International, 62 • Malad (West), Bharat Appliances, 34 Natraj Market • Santacruz (West), Akbarally's, Sai Darshan Apartment, S.V. Road • Mahavir Stores, Station Road • S. Bhagat Singh Road, Akbarally's, A-132, Great Western Bldg • Sion Circle, Shri Murugan Steel House, 11/39 Maryland Corner □ PIMPRI: Near Arya Samaj, Rajkumar Enterprises □ PUNE: M.G. Road, Chandan, 217 • Shan Hira, 13 □ NAGPUR: Dharampeth, Bapat's Shop • Pandit Commercial Complex, Gondwana Exports And Trading Co., Modi Lane No.3, Sitabuldi • Residency Road, Frontier Electric Stores, 32 • Sadal, Wox Sales (P) Ltd., 5, Residency Road • Sitabuldi, M.S. Pande & Sons, Main Road, Variety Square • Pandey General Agency, Main Road, Variety Square.

ORISSA

BHUBANESHWAR: Ashok Nagar, T. Krishna Patra, Rajmahal Chawk • Bapuji Nagar, Premier Enterprisers, Choudhuri Market • Reeta, Rajmahal Chawk • Eastern Market Building, Lalchand & Sons • Sahid Nagar, Suruchi □ CUTTACK: Choudhury Bazar, Janata General Stores • Link Road, Royal

TAMIL NADU

MADRAS: Evening Bazar, Formra & Co. 24 N. S. C. Bose Road • M A Etirajulu Naidu, No. 18 • Nyniappa Naicken Street, S Santosha Nadar Son Firm, No. 88 • Purasawalkkam, Raja Metal Stores, No. 264, Purasawalkkam High Road.

UTTAR PRADESH

LUCKNOW: Hazarat Ganj, M/s Domestic Appliances, Opp. Halwaria Market • Hazrat Ganj, M/s Mullicks Emporium • Lalbaugh, M/s Radio & Electric House, Shop No. 13 • Nazirabad, M/s Kanhaiyalal Prag Das, Shop No. 7

WEST BENGAL

CALCUTTA: Bhupen Bose Avenue, Steel Craft Syndicate, 100/2 • Chandni Chawk, Nag And Son, 6, Chandni Chawk Street • Esplanade, Italian Stores Pvt Ltd, 9/2 Chowringhee Road • Gariahatmore, Anandamela, G-9 Gariahat Market • Lenin Sarani (Opp. Chandni Chawk), Navee Electronics And Electricals, C/o Wachel Molla And Sons (P) Ltd, 8, Lenin Sarani • New Market, Bhiswadev And Co. B 70-71 • Ghosh And Ghosh, B-65 • Old China Bazar, Amarnath Kundu And Bros, 14/3, Old China Bazar Street • Satcowrie Dass & Co., 196, Old China Bazar Street • S L Coondoo And Co., 206, Old China Bazar Street • Poddar Court, ABC Traders, 18, Rabindra Sarani, Shop No. 13, Gate No.4 • Rash Behari Avenue, Nepal Sankar And Co., 85 • Sarat Bose Road, Channel Four Electronics Pvt. Ltd., 19C. • Tobin Road, Mullika, 83/2, B. T. Road

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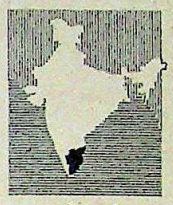
TAMIL NADU

Back in Action

Jayalalitha reasserts herself



THE call was for a change of role. And taking the cue, AIADMK's leading star, General Secretary Jayalalitha, who had been incommunicado for over three months, hogged the spotlight in the political arena once again.

To most the transformation was unexpected. For some time it had been rumoured that Jayalalitha would quit politics. Party members, in fact, had been expecting Joint General Secretary R.M. Veerappan to take over the reins while she recuperated from her ailments.

But last fortnight Jayalalitha showed that she meant business. She met the press six times; convened and presided over the first general council meeting of the AIADMK after MGR's death; cemented an alliance with the Congress(I); and hit out against the Karunanidhi Government.

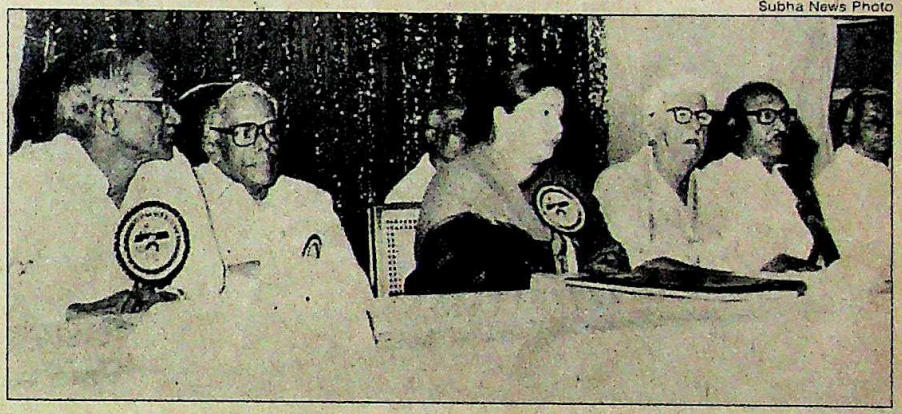
Galvanising Jayalalitha into action were the sobering results of a private opinion poll commissioned by her in July-end. A senior AIADMK leader told INDIA TODAY that the poll showed that less than 30 per cent of the respondents thought she was serious about politics. Surprisingly, even in Jayalalitha's constituency, Bodinayakkanur, nearly 50 per cent thought they had made a mistake in electing her. And as if that was not enough there were serious indications that the Congress (I), desperate for a firm toehold in the state, was exploring possibilities of tying up with the DMK.

Jolted by the startling poll revelations and the shifting political undercurrents, Jayalalitha woke up from her slumber. And as a curtain-raiser, she addressed a series of press conferences to pour ridicule on the resignation of opposition members from the Lok Sabha, oppose the August 30 Bharat Bandh, and express her unstinting support for Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress(I).

The next act had her reasserting her hold over her party by convening the AIADMK general council. The party named her permanent general secretary, giving her the authority to conduct negotiations she deemed necessary with any party. The council also passed resolutions praising the Centre for introduction of the Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika bills in Parliament and attacking the DMK Government for giving up MGR's populist schemes.

Jayalalitha also catalysed the formation of a six-party group led by the AIADMK and the Congress(I) to oppose the Bharat Bandh. Said Jayalalitha: "We will work actively to frustrate the DMK's bandh ambitions."

Subha News Photo



Jayalalitha at AIADMK meeting

Expectedly, the DMK Government was up in arms over her statements. And what gave it the upper hand temporarily was her party's council resolution castigating the DMK for halting the distribution of 20 kg of rice per week to ration card-holders. Food Minister Arcot Veerasamy offered to resign if Jayalalitha could prove that 20 kg of rice had been supplied each week during MGR's regime. Said a shame-faced Jayalalitha: "It was a typing error. We meant 20 kg a month."

Retorted Revenue Minister Nanjil K. Manoharan: "What can one say of a political leader who does not know the difference between a week and a month? Does she have the standing to criticise the chief minister?" But Manoharan's sarcasm notwithstanding, it was all too apparent that Jayalalitha was back in harness, ready once again to tilt at the DMK bastions. —GUHA PRASAD

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UTTAR PRADESH

Gory Episode

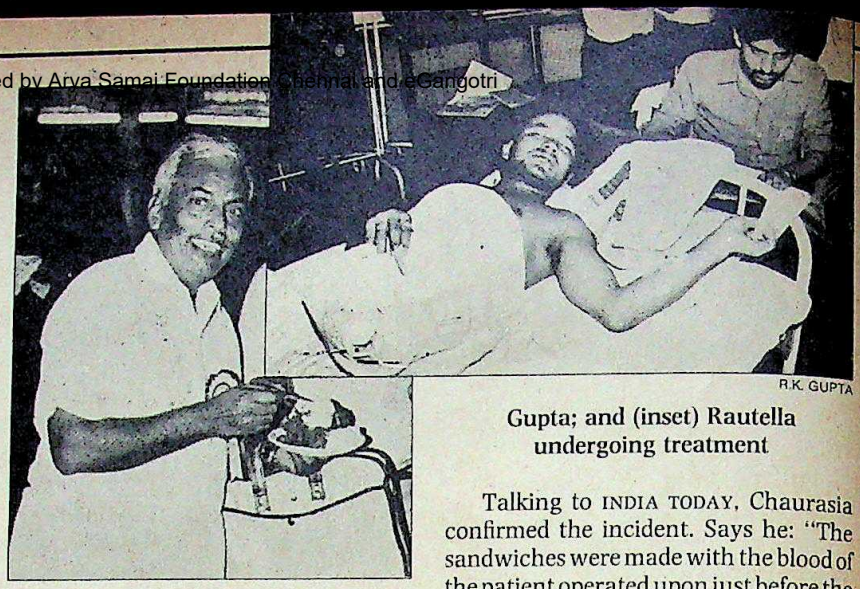
Gruesome incident in college

SANDWICHES smeared with human blood 'sauce' may be Dracula's idea of a sumptuous breakfast. But it was a hellish one for a junior doctor, still severely traumatised by the recollection of eating the gory 'snack'.

The blood-soaked sandwich was served to Dr Rajesh Singh Rautella of the Moti Lal Nehru Medical College of Allahabad last fortnight by an unlikely personage: his professor, Dr R.C. Gupta.

According to an FIR lodged by Rautella, the gruesome incident took place soon after an operation performed by Dr Gupta, an orthopaedic surgeon. In the ante room, where a lecturer Dr S. K. Chaurasia was also present, Gupta asked Rautella whether he was a vegetarian or a non-vegetarian. Recalls Rautella: "I told him I was a non-vegetarian. Then he gave me a red-coloured sandwich, saying it had a special sauce brought by his daughter from the U.S."

The unwary doctor took a bite and then another. Says Rautella: "I told him that the sandwich tasted sour. He said it was because I was trying the sauce for the first time. After the third bite, I realised the strange odour was familiar. Then I knew it was blood."



R.K. GUPTA

Gupta; and (inset) Rautella undergoing treatment

Talking to INDIA TODAY, Chaurasia confirmed the incident. Says he: "The sandwiches were made with the blood of the patient operated upon just before the incident." In a statement to the college authorities, Chaurasia said Gupta had told one of his residents to put the blood from the Romovac (machine used for storing blood) on the bread.

Initially, Gupta confessed to the act before the medical college authorities and the local press, but later denied it. Says Dr Baldev Raj, principal of the MLN Medical College: "Dr Gupta admitted before me and other members of the staff

INSAAF PARTY

Lone Ranger

A world separates rhetoric from realpolitik. Syed Shahabuddin, the diplomat-turned-politician has always argued persuasively that instead of having a separate political party, Muslims should strengthen their lobby within the mainstream parties. So, when the firebrand leader launched the Insaaf Party last fortnight, he was only contradicting himself.

It was obviously the desire to reap political gains from the communal divide that made Shahabuddin do an about-turn. The MP from Krishanganj, Bihar, it appears, is caught in the cleft. After campaigning for V.P. Singh in the Allahabad by-election last year, he was expected to join the Janata Dal and bring in the Muslim votes. But that did not happen. Shahabuddin blames V.P. Singh's ambivalence on Hindu fundamentalism as the reason for the rupture of relations. Opposition leaders accuse him of getting close to the Congress(I).

This charge is not unfounded. Shahabuddin undoubtedly has links with some prominent Congressmen including AICC(I) General Secretary K.N. Singh. He, however, cannot afford to come out openly in support of the ruling party as it is blamed for the failure to prevent the massacre of Muslims in Meerut, Maliana and Hashimpura. Hence the subterfuge of the Insaaf Party.

Says Baseer Ahmed, the new party's general secretary: "Any poll alliance with the Janata Dal is ruled out in the event of its adjustment with the BJP—which is our enemy number one. The proposal from the Congress(I) can be considered depending on the implementation of its earlier promises to the minorities."

Shahabuddin

Shahabuddin, meanwhile, is at pains to insist that his new political party is not a platform for Muslims alone. "Our objective is to promote the ideals of the freedom movement and defend the secular order," he says.

The party will undoubtedly be another pressure group in Indian politics. Both the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal will have to redo their political arithmetic for the general elections as Shahabuddin has considerable influence over Muslims in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar—where they can tilt the balance in over 30 constituencies.

The response from both camps has been guarded. There was no official reaction from the Janata Dal though Mufti Mohammed Sayeed remarked that the Insaaf Party would "alienate the Muslims further (from the mainstream)". The AICC General Secretary Ghulam Nabi Azad cautiously said: "Insaaf means justice—there can be no objection as far as the name goes."

Immediately after launching his party, Shahabuddin went on a week-long tour of south India where he addressed a Muslim conventions. Next month he will tour western Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. Shahabuddin's aim appears to be to impress upon the two major centrist parties that even if he is unable to ensure victory for his own candidates he can at least ensure the defeat of his opponents.

—BHASKAR ROY

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R.K. GUPTA

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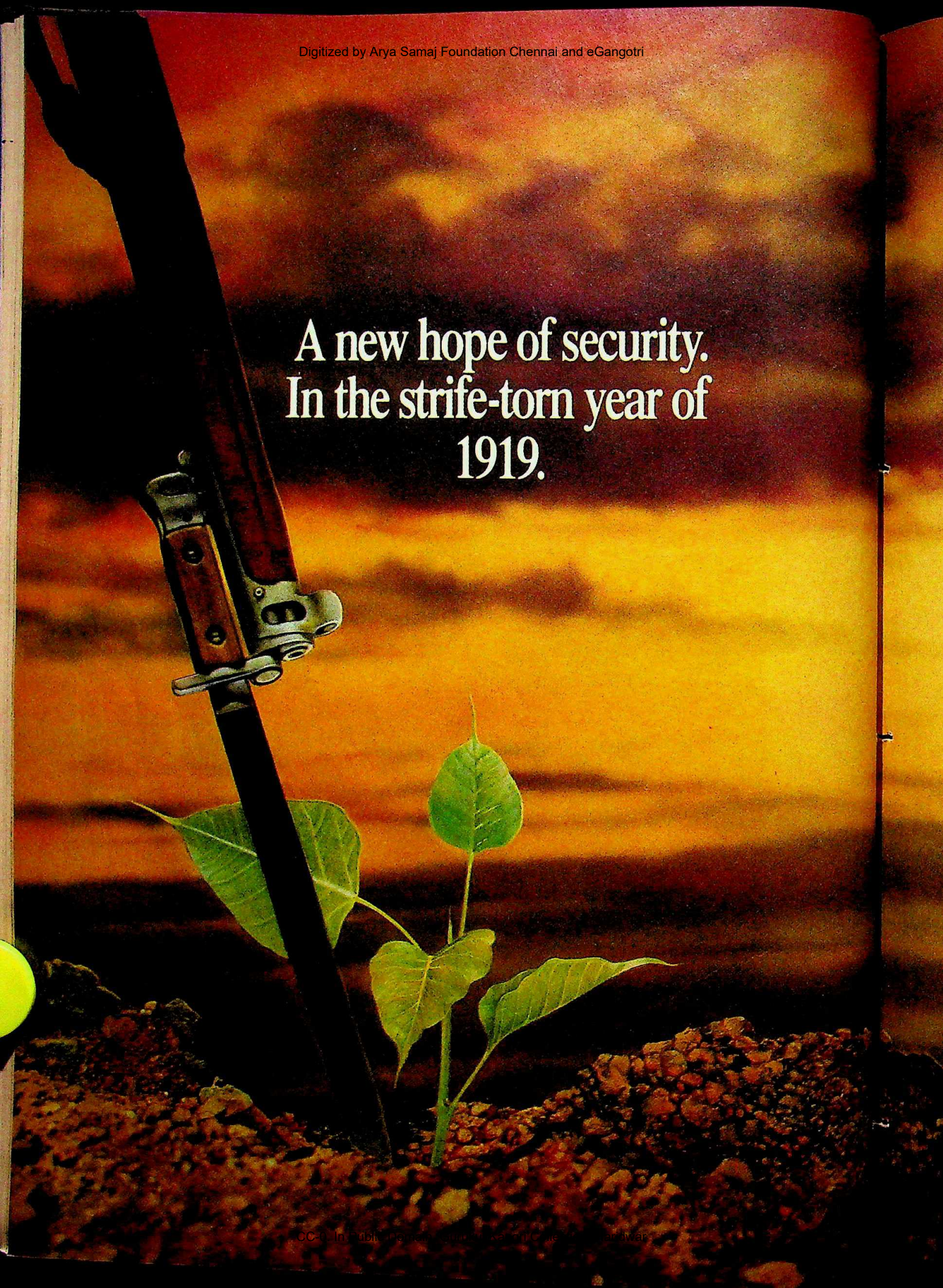

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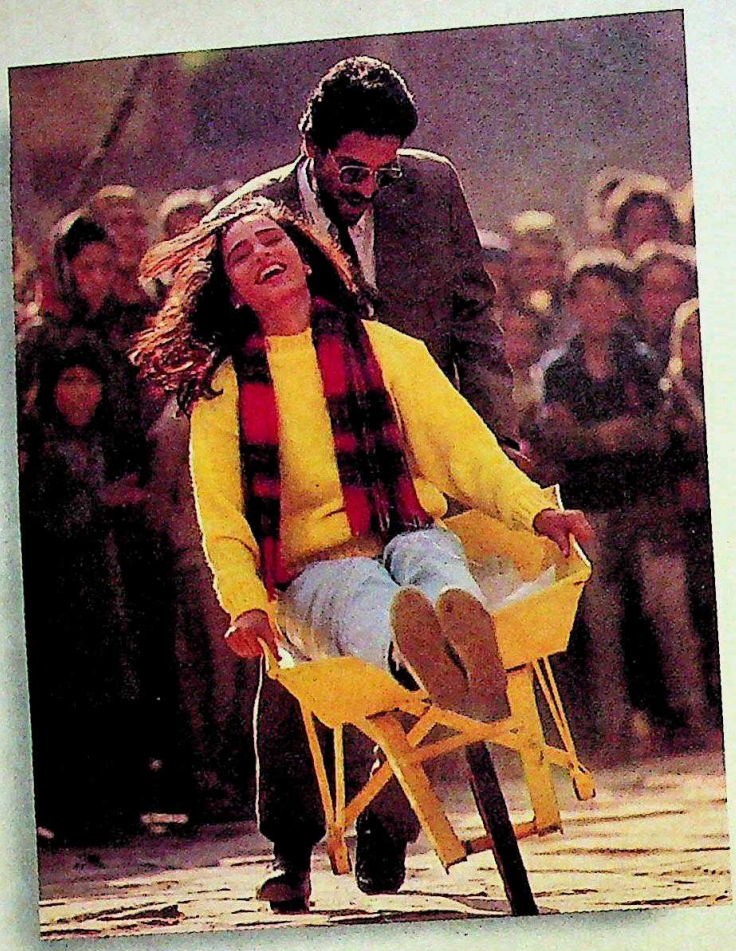

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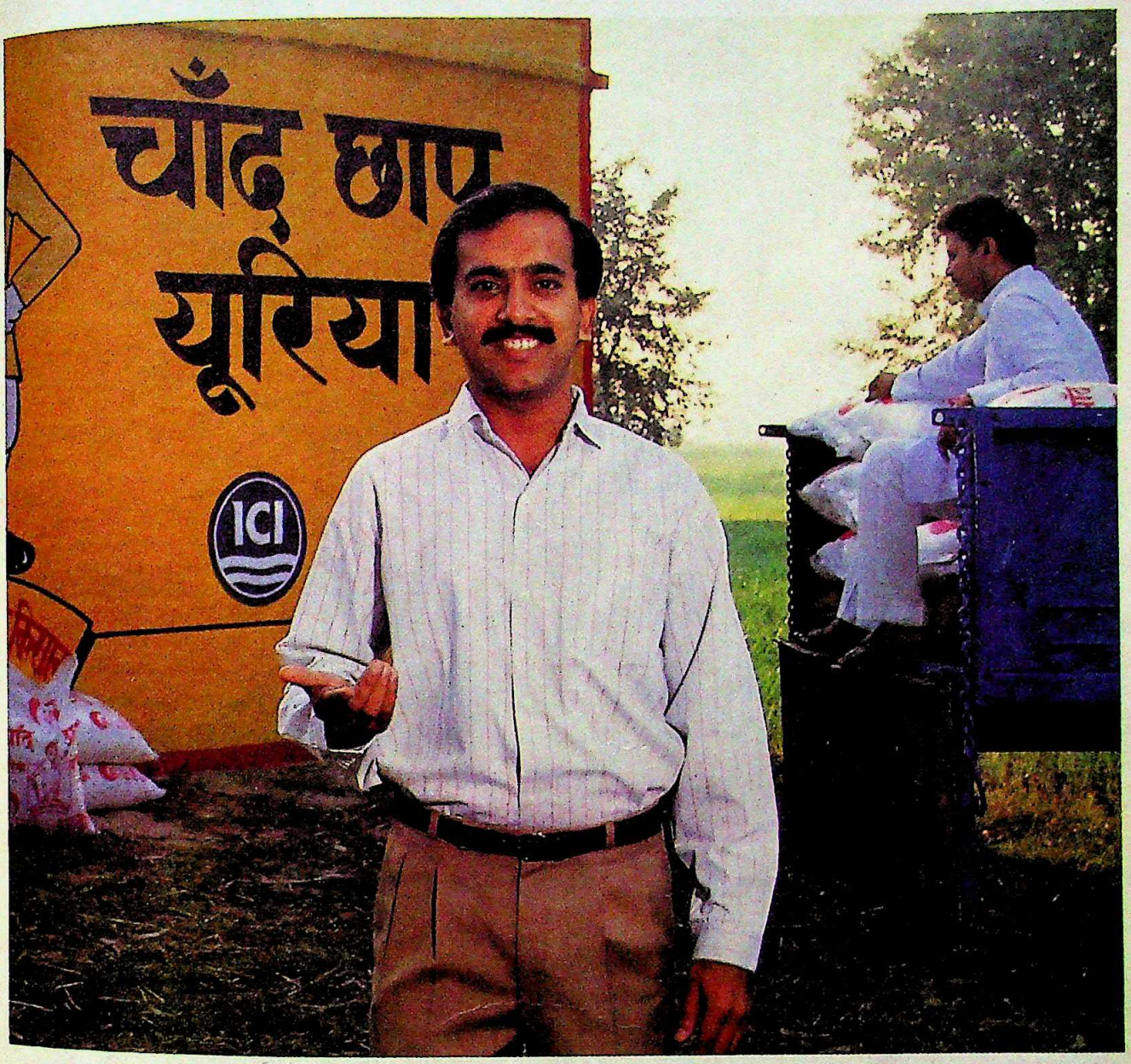

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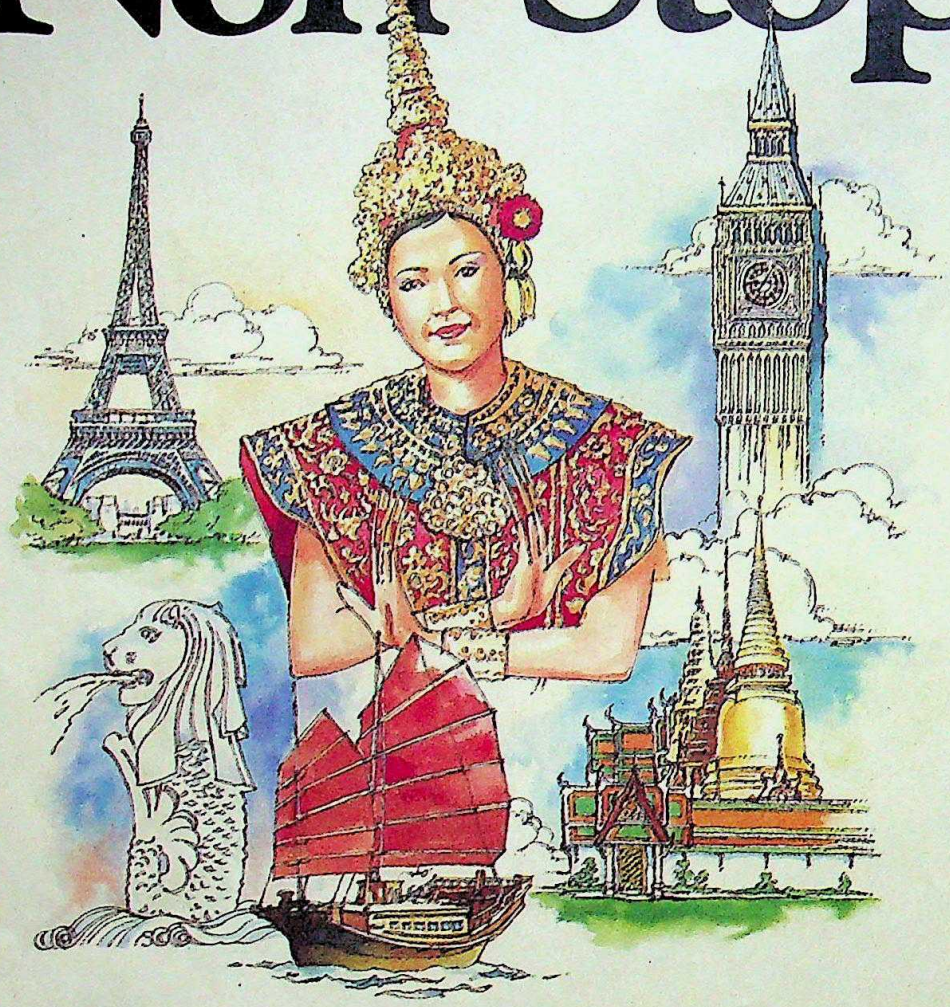

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Thai
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that he had given Dr Rautella a sandwich with human blood sauce. He said it was part of an experiment that he had been working on for many years."

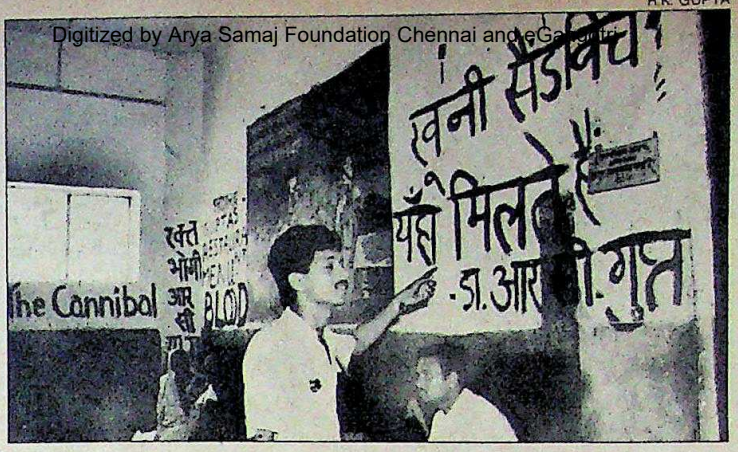
Gupta claims it is a conspiracy. He told INDIA TODAY over the telephone: "The Government was giving me an extension after my retirement on August 31. Some persons in my department, who do not want me to continue, have concocted this story." Questioned whether he had been conducting the experiment, he admitted: "I have been thinking on these lines for quite some time. But I have not yet tried it."

Outraged junior doctors have painted slogans describing Gupta as an *adamkhor* (cannibal) and his deserted chamber as *adamkhor ka gufaa* (den of the cannibal). Red-painted cardboard sandwiches can be seen hanging in corridors as junior doctors prepare for a statewide strike, demanding Gupta's punishment. Says an angry Dr H.S. Rawat, a junior resident: "Dr Gupta has no right to be called a doctor after such an heinous offence." Dr Gupta, who has been suspended by the state Government, faces a police case.

Meanwhile, Rautella undergoes treatment in the intensive care unit of the college hospital for gastric trouble, nausea and pyschological trauma. With acute revulsion towards food, he is being administered 'per-enteral' feeding. Says he, "Even if I drink milk, I feel I am drinking human blood."

—DILIP AWASTHI in Allahabad

R.K. GUPTA



Writings on hospital walls

BOTTOMLINE BY D. BUNKER

Drama Rao

Andhra Pradesh chief minister N.T.Rama Rao's face was suffused in saffron. "I am all the rage", he thundered, which translated from Telugu, meant he was very angry. The reason: Rajiv had just toured his state and let loose a flood of charges, leaving NTR shaking like a tendu leaf and invoking divine retribution on the prime minister. Summoning his son-in-law and other related issues, the chief minister ordered them to come up with a damage-control strategy. Here's how the strategy session, held in utmost secrecy, went.

NTR: We are not called the Telugu dishum dishum for nothing. We must find a way to hit back. How much damage has been done?

Son-in-law (SIL): About Rs 600 crore worth. That is only a provisional estimate...

NTR: Idiot. I don't mean the floods. I meant that brat and the lies he said about me. What is the people's reaction?

RI (Related Issue): We can't tell. That chap from the PM's office has told them to address their answers to the prime minister and not to you.

NTR: (shaking his trishul) This is a clear infringement by the Centre on the state's internal affairs. Can't we take them to court?

NRI (Non-related issue): They already have 200 cases filed against you. Any more, and they will have to set up a special court and change your name to Non Transferable Respondent.

NTR: But he can't be allowed to get away will all these lies. He accused me of being a traitor. Me? By the beard of Vishwamitra, I am....

SIL: Well, you did put up all those memorials of Naxalites.

NTR: That was my carrot policy. I can't help it if it went bust.

RI: What about all those arms you gave to the people?

NTR: You can't have carrots without sticks. How was I to know they would sell the arms to buy rice?

NRI: It's certainly put you out on a limb.

SIL: It also raised the price of rice. He is now accusing you of cheating the poor.

NTR: This is ridiculous. Next he'll be accusing me of the assassination of his mother.

RI: He did.

NTR: This has gone too far. I am shaking with rage.

NRI: That's not rage. That's your chief minister's chair.

NTR: You people are no help. I called you here to ask for advice, not listen to criticism. I need a hard-hitting speech attacking Rajiv Gandhi and it should read like a film script.

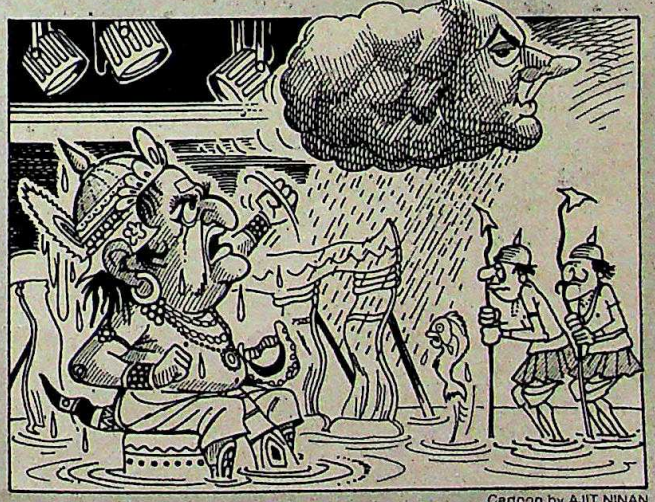
IB (Innocent bystander): How about this. "He is surrounded by cardboard walls. Inside, everything is rosy, everything looks green. But if you look beyond there is nothing. There is a world of difference between fact and fiction, myth and reality."

NTR: That's it. It's perfect. I'll use it.

IB: Actually, it has already been used by somebody else.

NTR: Never mind. I'll buy the copyright. Who is it?

IB: Rajiv Gandhi. That's exactly what he said about you.



Cartoon by AJIT NINAN

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BIHAR

Cash Conflict

● A 'banking war' is on in Bihar. And pitted against nationalised banks is the state cooperative bank. The bone of contention: the massive deposits the state Government has made in nationalised banks.

The indignant state cooperative bank has fished out a four-year-old government directive to different departments asking them to deposit government funds in the cooperative bank. Argues B.K. Sinha, managing director, cooperative bank: "There are advantages to making deposits in the cooperative bank. Not only do they provide more interest, but they also ensure that the deposits get invested in the state."

On the other hand, nationalised banks have lucratively invested a bulk of the deposits in other states. Sinha claims the Bihar Government is losing around Rs 20 crore in interest alone.

But last fortnight, a change in attitude was intimated when the Primary Education Department decided to transfer Rs 20 crore from the nationalised banks to the cooperative bank. The nationalised banks were naturally perturbed by the decision. As a result they tried to find flimsy pretexts to stall transfer of the money. Among the tactics to delay the transfer: it was claimed that the Director, Primary Education, M.M. Jha's signature had not tallied with the specimen in their possession.

Worse followed. Says Jha: "Numerous officials visited my office and hinted that for every crore of rupees deposited with their banks, they were willing to pay a sum of Rs 10,000." Curiously enough, Rs 20 crore had been released by the Centre towards the Operation Blackboard programme. However, instead of utilising the money, it was allowed to remain with the nationalised banks for almost six months.

MADHYA PRADESH

Dons of the Fourth Estate

R.C. SAHU

Journalists' demonstration: a split within

● THE fourth estate's credibility has hit a new low in Madhya Pradesh. Racketeers, masquerading as journalists, are bringing out rags to extract official patronage.

Last fortnight, they locked horns with professional journalists when the Hindi daily *Jansatta* described how editors of small weeklies queue up before the chief minister's office for advertisements. Campaigning for *Jansatta's* boycott, the local unit of All India Small and Medium Newspapers' Federation held a demonstration outside the newspaper's office, submitted a memorandum to the governor and tried to forcibly enter Patrakar, the headquarters of the Bhopal Working Journalists' Union.

Rallying to *Jansatta's* support, union member Shalabh Bhadoria said: "We have complained to the Government about the undue patronage extended to these newspapers. But they have their reasons for nurturing such elements." And the reasons needn't be spelled out.

UTTAR PRADESH

Another Star Sparkles

● FILM star Raj Babbar is now facing the arclights on the political stage. After the success of his visit to Lucknow University on August 8, he plans to address public meetings on other Uttar Pradesh campuses—including Gorakhpur and Varanasi in September—to mobilise students against the present *'raj'*.

Explains Anil Singh, former Jan Morcha activist and organiser of the meetings: "Babbar has been a student leader. He can communicate with them better than anyone else." At Lucknow, Babbar told a 5,000-strong audience: "The rulers have always been using you. Tell them this will not happen this time."

Speculation is rife that Babbar may be joining active politics. Denies Babbar: "I am only interested in the ouster of this government." Sounds familiar.

Babbar at rally: mobilising students

R.K. GUPTA

MAHARASHTRA

Posh Prostitutes

● PROSTITUTION has shifted to high-rise residential buildings in Bombay these days. Posh premises are increasingly being invaded by the practitioners of the oldest profession.

This year the Vigilance Branch officers of the Bombay Police have raided as many as 14 residential areas, compared to five last year. During the raids they found that flats in areas like Malabar Hill, Napean Sea Road, Bandra, and Versova are being booked by operators to entertain wealthy customers.

According to Joint Police Commissioner(Crime) Arvind Inamdar, who is directing the action against the brothels in the city, high-rise prostitution is high-paying too. Says he: "The same girl who would have charged not more than Rs 50 for a short-time rendezvous gets Rs 1,000 for the same."

NAMAS BHOJANI

A raid: high rise brothels

Those involved include married women and girls from respectable families. Says D.M. Khairnar, a senior inspector with the Vigilance Branch: "The younger clients prefer girls who can carry themselves well and speak in English." As for the girls themselves, once they get used to the luxurious life-style they cannot leave off.

And checking this prostitution is not easy, because it is carried out discreetly in residential areas by the rich, and is difficult to monitor.

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OFFICE AUTOMATION

The Great Shake-Out

The office automation industry is being turned on its head. New companies are furiously leaping into the fray, while some industry old-timers are fading out, amidst price wars and hard sell.

SITTING in his glass-panelled office in Delhi, Arjun Malhotra, vice-chairman of the Rs 170-crore office automation company HCL Ltd, looks pleased with himself. He has every reason to be happy. Innovative marketing and pricing have taken HCL to the top of the Indian office automation industry. This year, sales burgeoned by 70 per cent, from Rs 100 crore to Rs 170 crore.

But it's an uneasy perch at the top. Rivals are jostling to push HCL off. Says Malhotra: "Competition will be fiercer as new players get in while others merge with bigger companies."

"Competition will be fiercer as new players get in while others merge with bigger companies."
ARJUN MALHOTRA, *HCL Vice-Chairman*

That sums up the office automation—copiers, facsimile machines, computers, electronic typewriters, and office telephone exchange systems—business today. It's an industry that's being turned on its head. New companies are leaping in, some old-timers are fading out while others are consolidating their market positions. "Before, a lot of fly-by-night operators who assembled kits had entered the office automation industry," says Raghu Murti, managing director of Gestetner (India) Ltd. "Those who're entering now are serious players in the market."

The latest to plan a foray into office automation is Reliance Industries, which has tied up with Wang Laboratories of the US to turn out computers. It will join a growing band of big business players in

COMPUTERS

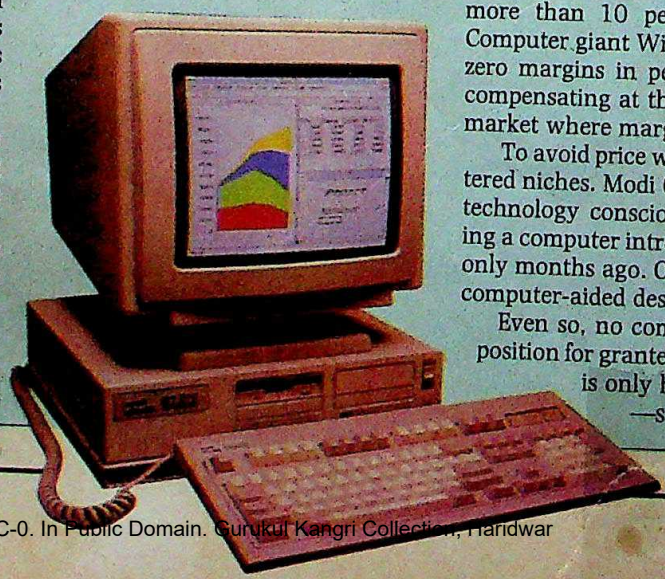
Tumbling Bits

COMPUTER companies have been going down like ninepins. Look at what's happening:

- In Bangalore, PSI Data Systems' sales dropped from Rs 18 crore in 1987-88 to Rs 15.3 crore last year. Says Managing Director Vinay Deshpande: "Our company fared poorly in personal computers. Ours was a high-performance, high-cost operation."
- In Bombay, the Rs 14-crore International Data Management went into a bevy of products. But it had spread its capabilities too thin. Last year, sales grew by just 4 per cent. This year, it was taken over by market leader HCL.
- In Delhi, the Rs 40-crore Pertech Computers Ltd saw turnover zooming by 515 per cent in a year, but finances have been sharply squeezed.

Across the country the squeeze is on. Companies are bowing out. Prices are tumbling. And some, to cut costs, are switching to buying products from low-cost small manufacturers.

The survivors are those who set the rules of the game, the Rs 600-crore mini and micro computer industry plays by. An example is the Madras-based Sterling Computers. Two years ago, it stormed the market with a personal computer 30 per cent cheaper than any comparable product. That set off a dizzy dive in prices. HCL, which was selling computers for Rs 1.20 lakh, is now selling them for Rs 25,000.



To push sales, firms are resorting to other strategies. Many have appointed dealers, instead of hawking computers directly. DCM Data Products is setting up a 100-dealer network. HCL is developing 24 dealers.

Then, DCM Data Products is granting higher discounts to dealers who sell more than 10 personal computers. Computer giant Wipro is operating on zero margins in personal computers, compensating at the upper end of the market where margins are higher.

To avoid price wars firms seek sheltered niches. Modi Olivetti, playing on technology consciousness, is launching a computer introduced in the West only months ago. Others are hawking computer-aided design systems.

Even so, no company can take its position for granted. The competition is only half a step behind.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

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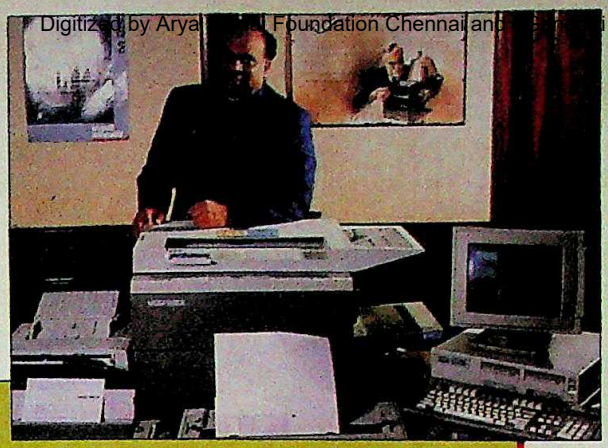
the market: the JK group (facsimile machines), Escorts (electronic private branch automatic exchanges—EPBAX), the Tatas (EPBAX), the Modis.

Amidst the heated action, HCL and Wipro, the Bangalore-based computer company, are busy working out strategies to maintain their pre-eminence in the market. Meanwhile, some of the older players have been bloodied. In computers (*see box*), the Bangalore-based PSI Data Systems Ltd has gone into a financial tailspin. So has DCM Data Products. And International Computers Indian Manufacture (ICIM), which has a major presence in mainframe computers, has seen business slow down by 24 per cent this year. Both DCM Data Products and ICIM are now trying to make a come-back. In copiers (*see box*), Gestetner had red ink all over its ledgers and had to seek a fresh infusion of cash. Newly-formed IDC Ltd—in which the company has a 40 per cent stake—is now taking a shot at the market.



To stay ahead of the competition many will segment the market and cater to specialised niches."
B.K. MODI, *Chairman, Modi Xerox*

The numbers provide some chilling evidence of just how high the casualty rate can get. In the early '80s, 18 companies started making copiers. Today there are only six. In 1984, 142 companies were given licences to manufacture personal computers. About 80 went into production. Only 42 still remain.

Rivalries are equally fierce in the electronic typewriter business (*see box*). Some 12 companies battle for the Rs 25-crore market, but just one—Indian Communications Network Ltd—accounts for more than half the market. And it successfully fended off challenges from mechanical typewriter manufacturers. A foray into the electronic arena met with mixed results. Facit Asia, for instance, has abandoned plans to set up a separate factory for electronic typewriters in Uttar Pradesh.

The story is much the same in computers. And in copiers. Cutthroat competition. Falling margins. And an unprecedented shake-out.

Why then is everyone dashing into the industry? "There's a massive market waiting to be tapped," says B.K. Modi, who heads office automation enterprises, Modi Xerox and Modi Olivetti. Valued at Rs 800 crore, the market is growing at an annual clip of 35 per cent. That's faster than the electronic industry's growth rate of 30 per cent or the engineering industry's 10 per cent crawl.

The din of competition has led to a wider awareness of office automation options. An independent survey done a year ago showed that more than 42 per cent of users now want more people to use computers in their offices.

Companies have to adopt a variety of strategies to survive. Some are cutting prices, content for the time being with lower margins—making up profits with higher volumes. Last year, HCL cut the prices of its copiers to below Rs 50,000. Result: its sales shot up by 60 per cent.

But low prices can be based only on low costs. Indigenisation is one way—and especially effective given the depreciation

COPIERS

Bruising Battle

"We made a mistake," admits HCL Vice-Chairman Arjun Malhotra. He's talking about the copiers war. HCL lost the first round to rival Modi Xerox last year, but round two promises to be bloodier.

Earlier, HCL priced its copiers high to reap high profits. Modi Xerox, however, operated on low margins to capture a large market share. The gambit paid off. HCL's didn't. It's believed that Modi Xerox raised its share of the Rs 200-crore copiers market by 5 per cent to the present 43 per cent. In 1987-88 HCL sold just 1,033 copiers versus 1,676 the previous year.

The second spot may have been grabbed by BEE Electronics, which manufactures Canon copiers marketed by Dynavox which commands 70 per cent of the market for shop-operated copiers.

Now HCL is hitting back. Its new game plan: retrain the sales force, offer a wider range of products, reduce price by indigenising and launch an advertising war. Two years ago, the company had only one model. Today, it has six. But it's mainly banking on low prices. It has introduced a copier priced at Rs40,000—about half that of its rivals—followed by an advertising blitz. HCL claims that post-campaign sales shot up by more than 200 per cent.

If that's true, rivals should be readying for another price war. But T.S. Ramakrishnan, general manager (marketing) of Modi Xerox says: "We have scored on our service network. We have avoided playing the pricing game." It's chosen to market specialised copiers.

Others are using similar strategies. Says W.T. Balaji, managing director of Dynavox Electronics: "We will not compete on price but on features."

Underdog IDC Ltd—an associate of Gestetner—is also planning a come-back by wooing a new customer: the Government, which buys more than 60 per cent of the copiers in the country. By year-end, it expects to corner 10 per cent of the market. Managing Director Raghu Murti is confident: "We could well be the dark horse in the market." But in the copiers war, there are no white knights to rescue companies in distress.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

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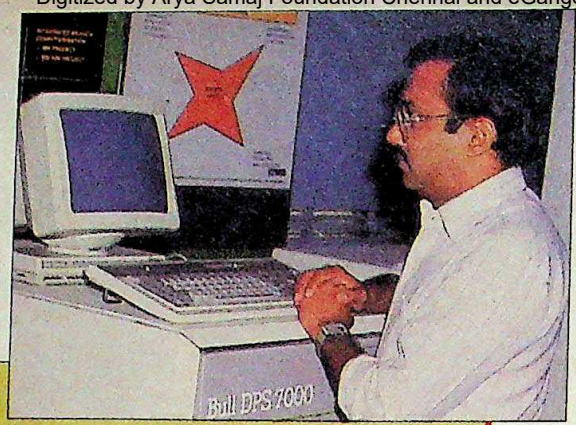
of the rupee against both the dollar and the yen. The Rs 12.51-crore Tata Telecom, which manufactures EPABX systems, has indigenised by as much as 30 per cent in just over a year. And Modi Xerox has achieved an indigenisation level which enables it to hold prices in check—even if the rupee continues to depreciate.

Low prices have to be backed by aggressive marketing. Says Deepak Maira, marketing manager of Network: "The consumer's need to buy automation equipment is a latent one. You have to go to him and push your products."



Our company fared poorly in personal computers. Ours was a high-performance high-cost operation."
VINAY DESHPANDE, *Managing Director, PSI Data Systems*

It's a solution every company has latched on to. Network has a 150-strong sales force hawking its electronic typewriters. Salesmen are provided with liberal incentives—hefty cash prizes, free foreign trips and Maruti cars. Others are going on an advertising blitzkrieg. This year, PCL jacked up its advertising budget by 40 per cent. And last year, HCL nearly doubled its advertising budget and got into a messy advertising war with rival Modi Xerox when it claimed that its products were superior.

But it's no cheap solution—selling costs amount to 18 per cent of the sale price. In computers, the figure is as high as 20 per cent of the sale price and in EPABX systems, 15 per cent.

So many companies are trying to avoid getting caught in profit-sapping competition by marketing products that are different. "To stay ahead of the competition, many will segment the market and cater to specialised niches," says Modi.

Many are discovering that there's money in add-ons. DCM Data Products is marketing PC-faxes, PC-telexes and computer-aided design systems which can be linked to its personal computer. The company expects its margins to go up by 5 per cent as a result. Says Chief Executive Veer Sagar: "Our margins have gone down very drastically to a mere 10 per cent. The market for add-ons is not so price sensitive."

But it's a game everyone can play. So it's necessary to constantly keep one step ahead of the competition. The other option is to create new market niches and retain control of them. Says B.K. Modi: "The tendency is to segment the market and cater to a particular consumer demand." So Tata Telecom is concentrating on the higher end of the EPABX market, namely, exchanges with over 250 lines. DCM is trying to get into large office segment needs by introducing a super-mini computer, employing technology made available in the West just three months ago.

The obvious beneficiary is the consumer. He gets access to the latest technology, a wider choice of products and of course, lower prices.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA with CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA in Bangalore, SHIV TANEJA in Bombay and bureau reports

ELECTRONIC TYPEWRITERS

Survival of the Fittest

LAST year, after a bruising war, Pertech Computers Ltd cornered 24 per cent of the electronic typewriters market. This year, the Delhi-based company is pulling out of electronic typewriters to concentrate on computers. The reason: profits in the Rs 25-crore market are not attractive enough. Usha Computers and Peripherals too has called it a day. Clearly, the electronic typewriters market is in the throes of a shake-out.

Until last year, one company—the Rs 16-crore Indian communications Network—dominated the scene with a 53 per cent market share. Second ranker Godrej straggled far behind with 25 per cent. Now rivals are preparing to dislodge Network from its vantage position.

The one-year-old Modi Business Machines is introducing a bilingual electronic typewriter and taking on manual typewriter manufacturers. A month ago, it introduced a model that cost under Rs 7,500. Says its Chief Executive Rajan Kohli: "Last year, one lakh mechanical typewriters were sold. We aim at making a 5 per cent dent on this market." Godrej too will launch an electronic typewriter that will compete with Network's high-tech product launched last year.

Companies are also switching marketing strategies and containing costs. Says Manu M. Parpia, vice-president of the electronic business equipment division of Godrej and Boyce: "The aim is to be the lowest cost producer so that in case of a price war, we do not suffer." The Modis are developing a network of 60 dealers instead of selling directly to consumers.

Not everyone can cope with such competitive pressures. Pertech and Usha have opted out. And mechanical typewriter manufacturers, Facit Asia and Remington Rand, are finding the market for electronic typewriters sticky. With sales of mechanical typewriters stagnating at one lakh a year, and expected to fall sharply, both had diversified into electronic typewriters. Clearly, it is a battle where only the fittest can survive.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

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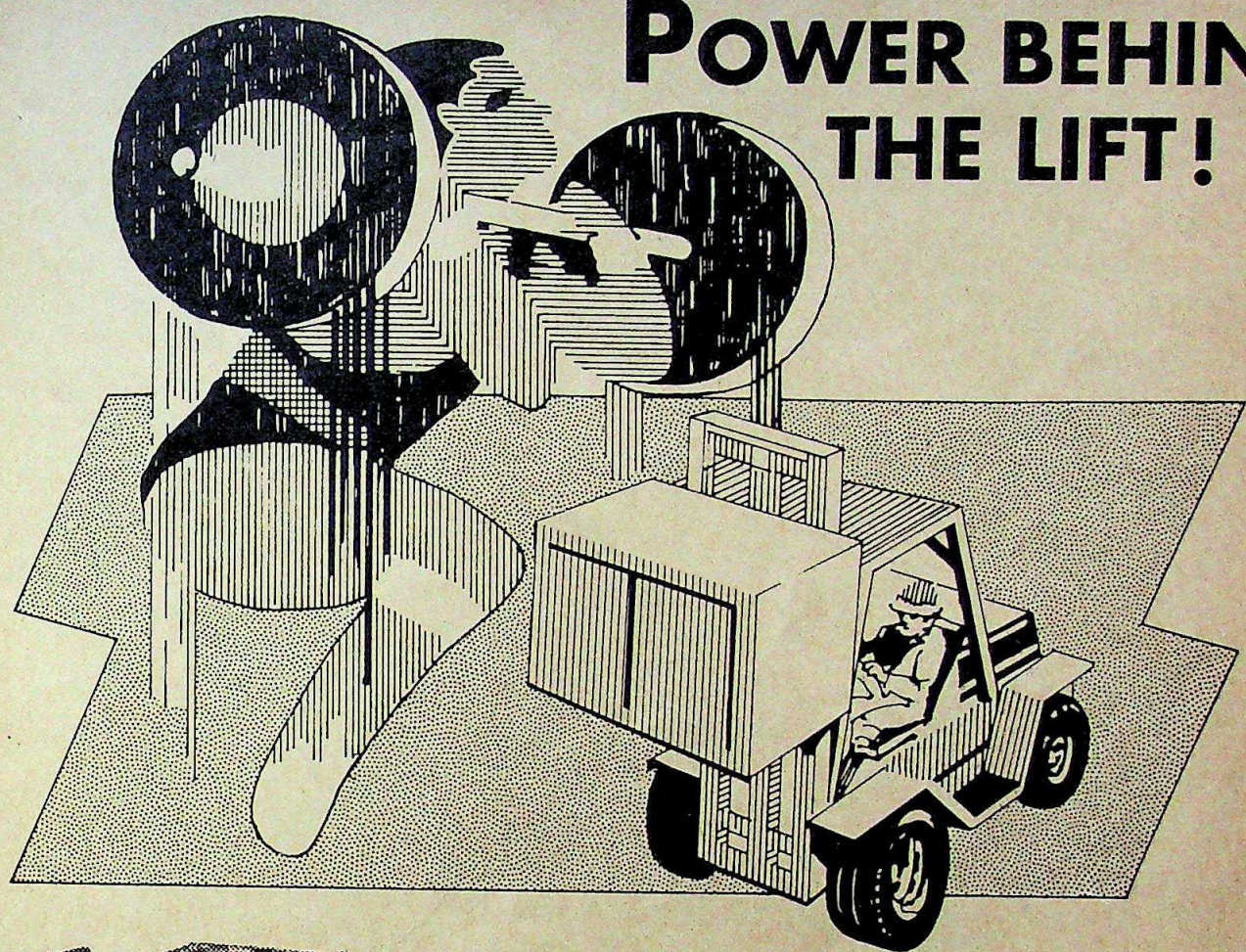

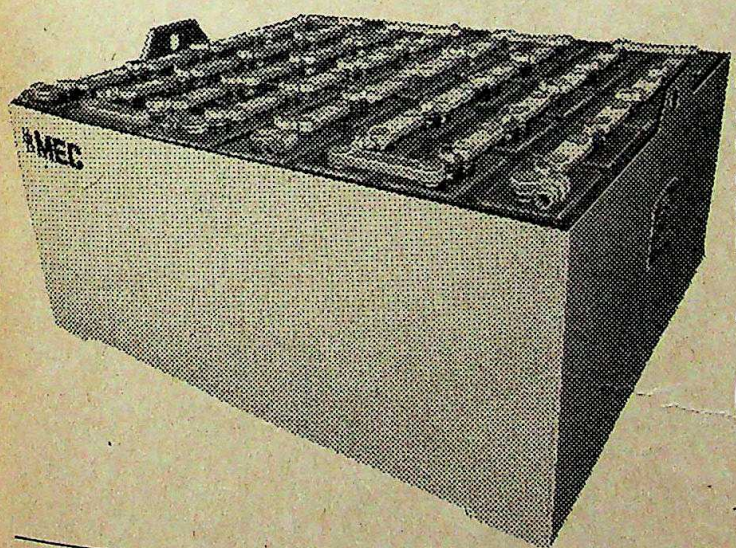

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INVITING FRESH BIDS?

IS Philips N.V. of Holland, which has a 40 per cent stake in Peico Electronics and Electricals, inviting a fresh round of bids for 10 per cent of the Indian bulbs and consumer electronics company's equity? Peico officials decline to comment, but financial circles say this is the case. After Peico landed in the red by Rs 20 crore in 1988, Philips decided to bring in an Indian partner, but a few months ago granted Peico a year's time to effect a turnaround (INDIA TODAY, May 15, 1989). Philips had also sounded out RPG Enterprises on a partnership, but the talks fell through recently. So it is believed to have put part of Peico's equity on the auction block again. Why it would change its mind is not clear, but Peico needs a major infusion of cash—which an Indian partner could provide. Peico recently appointed retired State Bank of India chairman D.N. Ghosh as its chairman, and roped other nominees of institutions on to its board—which is seen as a peace offering to banks disenchanted by its performance.

SPIRITED DIVERSIFICATION

WHAT do pistons and piston rings have in common with Indian Made Foreign Liquor? Plenty, if the company is Goetze (India) Ltd. The Rs 50-crore automobile components manufacturer has sought official clearance under monopoly laws to enter the liquor market. The idea: to produce and bottle 10,000 kilolitres of potable alcohol from grain in a backward district in Uttar Pradesh. The waste product is to be converted into cattle-feed. Expected annual sales from the Rs 10 crore project: Rs 60 crore. Keen on becoming a major player in food processing, Goetze has been exporting canned fruit and will be introducing cereal-based 'Muesli' bars coated with nuts or chocolate. It also plans to launch supermarket chains (INDIA TODAY, October 15, 1988). Clearly, it has much to toast.

DRINKS TO RESORTS

FROM soft drinks to hosteliery is but a short leap, as Campa Cola producer Pure Drinks—which runs Le Meridien hotel in Delhi—has shown. Now, rival Parle of Thums Up fame is planning to follow suit. Parle boss Ramesh Chauhan has registered a separate company to launch beach resorts, mostly for foreign tourists. Initially, just one resort outside Bombay is planned. The project is still largely on the drawing-boards. Parle officials are talking to foreign tour operators to assess requirements. Several details such as the project's cost have yet to be worked out. Also, after signing up to put up three bottling plants in the Soviet Union, Chauhan has clinched a deal for a fourth plant. Plainly, the Russians are going to 'taste the thunder'.

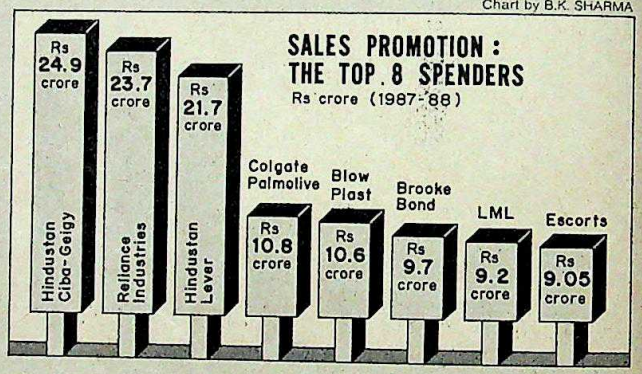
LOOKING OUTWARD

AFTER years of concentrating on the highly profitable home market, there are stray signs that big business is seriously eyeing overseas markets. The latest to do so is Indian Aluminium Ltd. The Calcutta-based company has a small presence in foreign markets, and has set up Indal Exports Ltd to take over the export functions of Indian Aluminium, and later become an export house. Estimated annual turnover: Rs 50 crore. RPG Enterprises is turning a small trading concern into a trading house. Food Specialities Ltd has an export house on the anvil, as does M.R. Chhabria's Dunlop, and the JK group Singhanias are toying with the idea. One reason for the rush: export profits are tax exempt. Another: the Government has been brandishing the stick.

BIG SPENDERS

AS rivalries in the market-place get fiercer, companies are spending more and more on pushing their products. According to a study by Calcutta-based financial daily *Business Standard*, 100 corporations in 1987-88 spent 26 per cent more on sales promotion (advertising, discounts, com-

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



missions) than in the year before, with advertising taking 57 per cent of total expenditure. The study picks 100 large corporations and ranks the big spenders of 1987-88. Logically, companies with huge sales turnovers would be expected to spend more. But this is not always the case. Hindustan Ciba Geigy leads, followed by Reliance Industries, Hindustan Lever, McDowell and Colgate-Palmolive (*see chart*). But, as the study points out, stepping up sales promotion expenditure doesn't always lead to higher sales.

NAME CHANGE

INDIAN Communications Network Ltd, which is promoted by promoters of computer company HCL Ltd, is readying to float a new company and merge with it. The new concern will be called Network India Ltd. Indian Communications Network is a closely-held enterprise, and these moves are part of a complicated, undisclosed financial exercise aimed at broadening its equity base—by going public. The change in name is due to its current and future business portfolio. The Rs 16-crore company started in the communications business—it used to hawk telephones—and moved into electronic typewriters. It is diversifying into desktop publishing systems, microprocessor-based industrial automation systems, computer peripherals and ribbon cartridges for electronic typewriters and computers. Network will join other corporations that are changing names; Glindia (back to Glaxo), IEL Ltd (ICI India), and United Breweries (the UB group).

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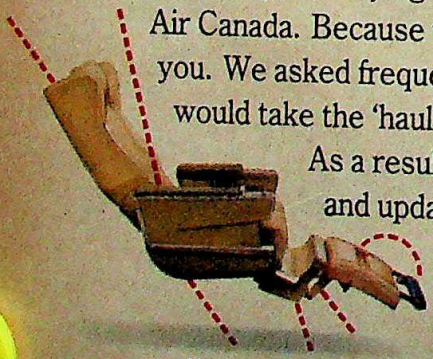

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L&T DEBENTURES

Contentious Issue

Questions are raised about the Rs 820-crore issue

IT was billed as the biggest issue in Indian corporate history, bigger than the Rs 593-crore Reliance Petrochemicals issue last year and the recent Rs 360-crore Tata Steel issue. But even before Larsen and Toubro (L&T) hit the stock-markets, its Rs 920-crore convertible debenture issue kicked up a storm, with questions being raised about the Ambani-controlled engineering company's intentions in floating the issue.

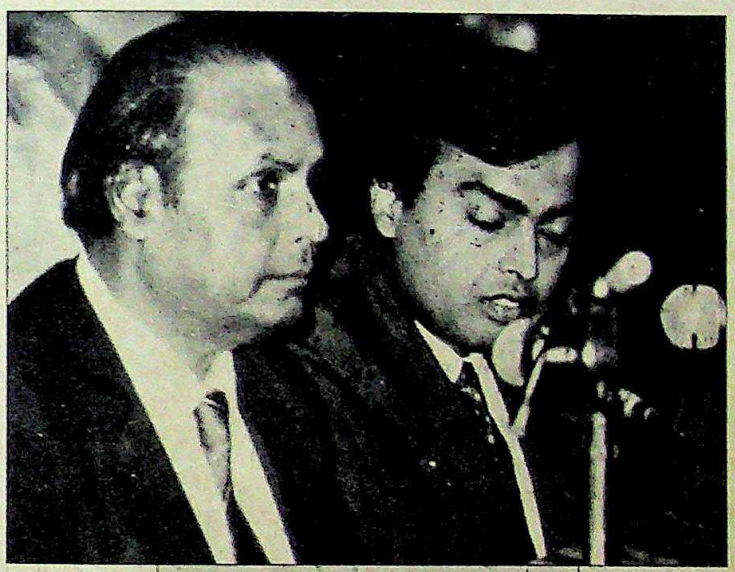
The debenture issue is scheduled for the last week of September. Approval for the issue at an extraordinary meeting of shareholders, convened by the company on August 21, seemed to have been a foregone conclusion.

And then the fur began to fly. In a series of articles in the *Indian Express* last fortnight, S. Gurumurthy, financial adviser to the newspaper's proprietor, Ramnath Goenka, pointed out that the convertible debenture issue would raise L&T's equity capital from Rs 75 crore to Rs 227 crore, after portions of the debenture issue were converted into equity. As a result, L&T's shareholding profile would change dramatically. The public's holding of roughly 58 per cent of L&T's equity would drop to 26 per cent; the 30 per cent stake of the financial institutions would fall to just 16 per cent; and most important, the holding of the Reliance group and associates of about 12 per cent would climb to over 32 per cent.

The implications were obvious: the Ambanis were increasing their stranglehold on L&T, at the cost of the other shareholders—and the financial institutions were helping them along by diluting their stake in the engineering enterprise.

Gurumurthy also set his sights on one of the resolutions on the agenda. Resolution 8 stated that the company's board of directors would be empowered to advance loans up to Rs 1,000 crore to other companies "in view of the proposed expansion of the company's business activities and the expected large volume of turnover, especially in view of the new growth strategy involving innovative financing for large turnkey projects..." The *Indian Express* charge was that the intention of the controversial resolution was to siphon off Rs 1,000 crore from L&T and that the resolution would transform the engineering company into a full-fledged financial institution.

Dhirubhai and Mukesh at shareholders' meeting: consolidating hold



The proposed debenture issue will raise the Ambanis' stake in L&T from about 12 per cent to over 32 per cent.

At last fortnight's extraordinary meeting, the Ambanis beat a retreat on one point. Resolution 8 was dropped. L&T Chairman Dhirubhai Ambani also announced that the size of the debenture issue would be scaled down from Rs 920 crore to Rs 820 crore, because the Government had informally declined permission to offer some of the debentures to international financial agencies. Said an L&T spokesman: "In the bargain, we felt that the issue should be made more attractive to shareholders. So we offered a discount of Rs 10 on the (Rs 300) face value of each debenture."

Still, the other resolutions sailed through. So the Ambanis' stake in L&T will go up. Two questions arise here. Why did the institutions dilute their equity holding? And why did the L&T management introduce the resolution seeking to lend up to Rs 1,000 crore?

While the heads of three financial institutions declined to comment on the first matter, a Reliance spokesman said: "People are reading too much into the resolution. We dropped it because we did not need it."

Many are unsatisfied by that explanation. Says a merchant banker: "The company does not have convincing reasons for reducing the size of the issue. And it arbitrarily introduces and drops a potentially damaging resolution." It is true that companies routinely introduce all kinds of resolutions as a matter of abundant caution. These are meant to give them the flexibility to take action if the need arises. But this does not seem to have been the case here.

Questions also persist on why L&T is floating an issue now. Most merchant bankers and stockbrokers argue that the objectives of the issue are vague. L&T (18-month income: Rs 1,107 crore) has amended its articles of association to permit it to enter all kinds of businesses, including farming, electricity generation and distribution, money-lending, real estate, petrochemicals and pharmaceuticals. Right now, however, L&T does not have major expansion plans on its drawing-boards. Though the L&T spokesman said that the company had received several letters of intent from customers to execute turnkey projects, he declined to divulge the nature of these projects.

One major project of L&T is the erection and civil work of the Reliance Petrochemicals Ltd (RPL) venture at Hazira. RPL is implementing a Rs 750-crore project to manufacture a range of commodity plastics. The company had a mega issue in August 1988. Today there are charges that the RPL project has fallen way behind schedule. Says an industry observer: "They will be lucky if they can implement the project by 1992." The Reliance spokesman replies

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that the charge is not new and the company's past record of implementing projects on time should speak for itself.

Nonetheless, the rumour mills have been working overtime. Two market rumours: the money is meant to help fund the general elections; and that it's meant for repairing Reliance's damaged Patalganga complex. There has been talk too that the cash raised for RPL has not been utilised for the venture.

All this is probably wild speculation. Certainly, the Ambanis have been quick to deny that the RPL money is being utilised for anything other than the project. And Dhirubhai Ambani has officially stated that the L&T debenture issue was meant to fund working capital needs to the tune of Rs 300 crore, leaving a balance of Rs 643 crore for investment in several undisclosed new projects. Says a Reliance spokesman: "The institutions will not allow any company to raise money arbitrarily. The L&T issue will be appraised by them thoroughly." The institutions, however, say that the L&T management has not approached them so far.

The company has, however, approached the Finance Ministry's controller of capital issues formally to seek approval for the issue. Says a merchant banker: "The ministry should be more rigorous. The terms of the issue are scandalous. Do they expect shareholders to blindly invest money?" Whether the Finance Ministry will raise tough questions on the issue is unclear. Controller of Capital Issues P.G. Mankad was abroad and so unavailable for comment. But the Ambanis have had more successes than failures in the corridors of power, and their track record spells hope for the L&T issue.

Nevertheless, these are not exactly the best of times for the Ambanis. Last month, senior Reliance executive Kirti Ambani was arrested—and later released on bail—by the Bombay Police in a conspiracy case to murder Bombay Dyeing chief Nusli Wadia. Then, the *Indian Express* in a series of articles identified Umesh Katre, son of the Central Bureau of Investigation Director Mohan Katre, as a major dealer in linear alkyl benzene, which Reliance produces. And now, they've been caught in a messy controversy about a share issue.

L&T officials claim that the preparations for the issue are proceeding "full steam ahead" and that the controversy is nothing more than a "malicious" campaign of sabotage. Come September, and it will be known whether investors feel the same.

—S.N. VASUKI

BUSINESSPEAK

JAYATIRTH RAO

Foreign Banks

Jayatirth ("Jerry") Rao, 37, Citibank's chief executive officer for India, is a persuasive presenter of the case for foreign banks continuing in India. Recently, however, the Government has signalled its intention to slap stiff new conditions on foreign banks, including increased lending to the priority sector. That could discourage more foreign banks from setting up shop in India. But Rao told Assistant Editor PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI *last fortnight that while higher priority sector lending requirements could squeeze profits, the new rules wouldn't discourage most foreign banks.*

FOREIGN banks in India represent just 2 per cent of the banking system. But we get disproportionate publicity because we operate in the metropolitan cities. The media sees us as being sexy.

We're a private sector island in a public sector ocean. We're also seen as being privileged. If the chairman of a nationalised bank says that foreign banks are privileged, he's really saying that he is denied flexibility and autonomy in decision-making. The nationalised banks feel they're as smart as the foreign ones, but are being held back by the Government.

They should be pleased that the Government has asked foreign banks to: step up priority sector lending from 10 per cent of deposits to 15 per cent over a three-year period; retain 20 per cent of annual earnings in India; and pay for new office space in foreign exchange.

Also, some percentage of a foreign bank's capital in foreign exchange may have to be kept in India. This is not unreasonable, if like elsewhere in the world, India permits forward cover against currency fluctuations (now allowed only to importers and exporters). If a foreign bank gets into trouble, the Government will have to get involved; so some of its capital might as well be kept here. The 20 per cent retention requirement already exists in the Banking Companies Regulation Act.

Yes, increased priority sector lending will affect our profits. There'll be lots of rethinking by many foreign banks that have applied for licences to open branches in India. But profitability is only one issue. The question arises: is this the beginning of a new regime for us, some kind of a concerted attack? If so, there's a problem. I don't think this is the case.

Here, it's important to look at who's rooting for us. First, there are the Indian corporations. They feel that we set a standard and that they can go to other banks and say, hey, Hongkong Bank or Citibank is offering such and such, what will you offer? The second set comprises people who're interested in joint ventures and foreign trade. They understand the value of saying that a foreign bank is their banker when they go to their collaborators. Lastly, there's an important group in and out of government who've come to the conclusion that "Fortress India" has to go, that India has to open out to the world and that we're an important link in this.

In the unlikely event that we're forced to leave India, non-resident Indian inflows would take a beating, a lot of domestic customers wouldn't be able to shop around and get a better deal, and the nationalised banks would largely lose the incentive to innovate.

Right now, the Government should try and get in eight or 10 investment banks (Wall Street banks and Japanese securities companies). That's the really interesting issue about the proposed guidelines. The foreign exchange laws exclude service industries from India, except branches of foreign banks. Merchant banks and mutual funds are not bank branches. I suspect the Government's focus is not really on us but on these new banks and firms. It wants to attract them—but only good ones. By imposing these requirements, the Reserve Bank is saying that it's separating the men from the boys. The new restrictions won't discourage the serious guys.

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THIS IS THE STORY OF A BORING MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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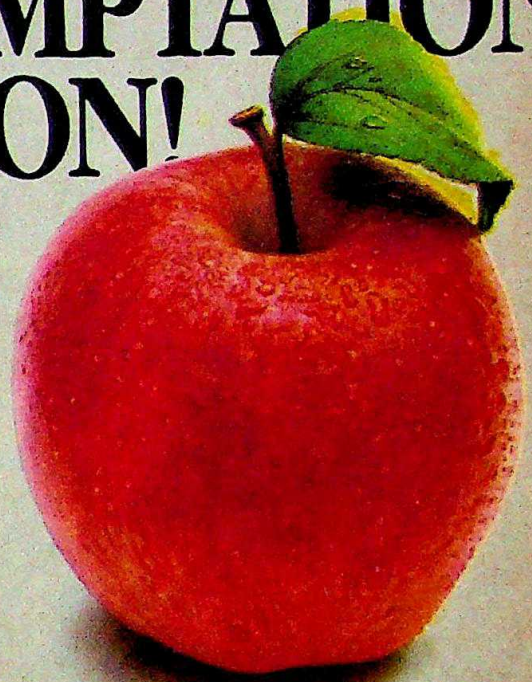

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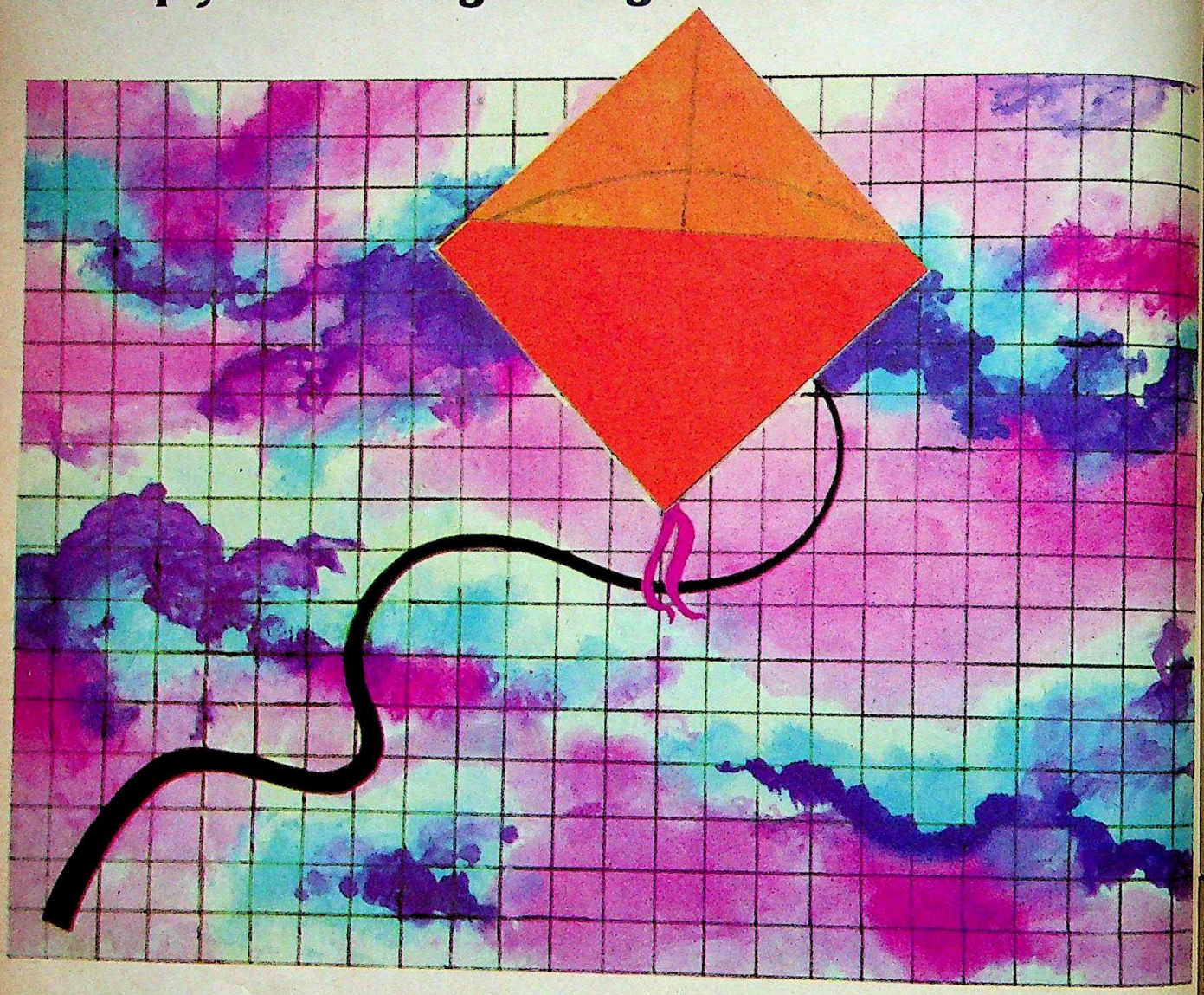

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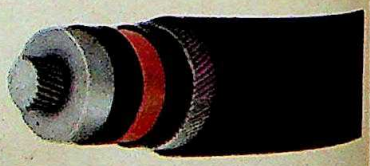

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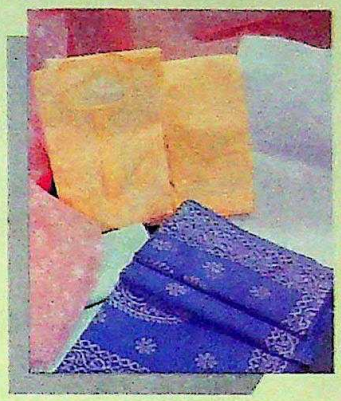
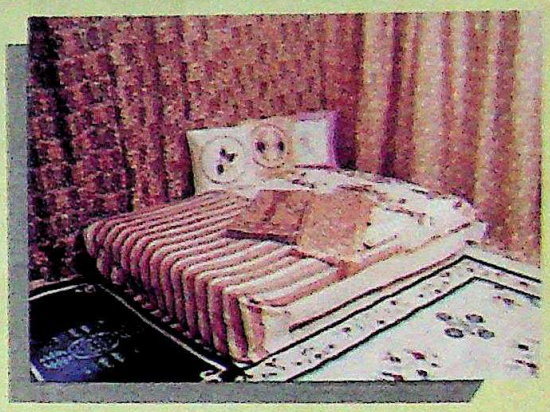
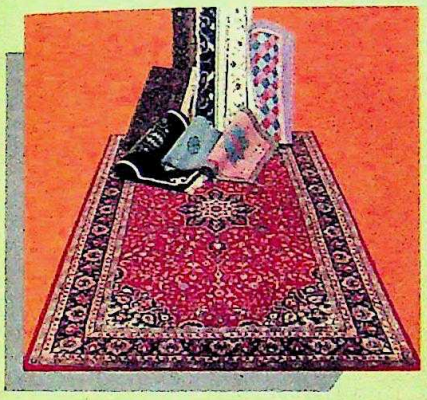

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BACKWARD INTEGRATION

Building a Base

Self-sufficiency drive by giants

WHAT do synthetic yarn and fibre giant J.K. Synthetics, steel producer Mukand Ltd, adhesive manufacturer Parekh and Apollo Tyres have in common? At first sight, they're a disparate lot. But look at the projects on their drawing boards, or those just off the ground. Each of these companies is either setting up or planning to set up a project to reduce its dependence on others for raw materials or components.

The name of the game is backward integration, and it's the hottest game in town. In industries as diverse as petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, tyres, steel, paints, automobiles, packaging, detergents, adhesives and consumer electronics, companies are scrambling to protect their raw material flanks. Though its now widespread the rush was triggered off barely two years ago by the private sector leap into an industry that readily lends itself to integration: petrochemicals.

J.K. Synthetics is but one example. The synthetic yarn and fabric company is investing Rs 850 crore in an aromatics complex which will enable it to produce purified terephthalic acid (PTA), a crucial raw material for its products. Then the company will no longer be at a disadvantage vis-a-vis competitor Reliance Industries, which has its own PTA plant.

Says Viren J. Shah, chairman, Mukand Ltd: "The uncertainty of metal scrap imports has prompted us integrate backwards. We get only 30 per cent of our scrap requirement." And short supplies have also meant skyrocketing prices. After a 40-per cent price rise last year, Mukand applied to the Government for permission to put up a 750,000-tonne plant to manufacture sponge iron—an alternative route to steel-making.

Backward integration is the buzzword in the tyre industry too, where nylon tyre cord accounts for nearly 35 per cent of the production costs. Both Apollo Tyres and its rival company Ceat, are setting up their own captive nylon cord plants. Says Apollo Chairman Raunaq Singh: "The entire industry is in the clutches of just three or four tyre cord producers. And they have raised their prices by 26 per cent last year. We are left with no option but to set up our own captive unit." The company's proposed Rs 150-crore plant is meant wholly for captive use. Expected reduction in production costs: a substantial 15 per cent. Ceat is also setting up a Rs 150-crore subsidiary nylon tyre cord unit, half of whose production will be used for captive consumption. Besides the assured supply, There is an added bonus: no sales tax need be paid on the cord since it is to be used in-house.

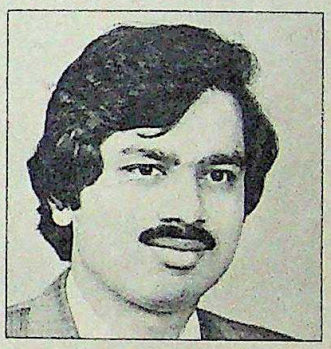
For some companies, the decision to integrate backwards is forced upon them. Television tube manufacturer Samtel India, for instance, decided to set up a Rs 80-crore plant to manufacture glass tubes because of pressure from its Japanese suppliers. They refused to sell particular varieties of glass shells to prevent Samtel from exporting to certain countries. Says Managing Director Satish Kaura: "We're setting up a glass tubes plant because we were becoming too vulnerable to our suppliers. Now they can't pressure us." And with glass shells contributing 50 per cent to production costs, the company will save on prices too, especially since the yen is appreciating rapidly.

For others, backward integration is part of a continuing process. Says Sanjeev Goenka, vice-chairman of RPG Enterprises: "Backward integration gives you a certainity about raw materials. So Ceat is setting up a nylon tyre chord plant." But even in acquiring new companies, the group seems to be adhering to a plan. New acquisition Harrisons Malayalam, for instance, assures it of a supply of rubber in case natural rubber becomes scarce in the market. Another group company Phillips Carbon Black supplies carbon black, to be used in tyres.

Sometimes, companies integrate because if they don't and rivals do, the disadvantage can be disastrous. So both Hindustan Lever and Nirma Chemicals applied to set up plants to manufacture linear alkyl benzene (LAB)—the raw material for detergents. Both projects were cleared recently.

Backward integration can also provide companies with a degree of flexibil-

"Backward integration gives you a certainty about raw materials. So Ceat is setting up a nylon tyre chord plant."
SANJEEV GOENKA
Vice-Chairman, RPG Enterprises



"We're setting up a glass tubes plant as we were becoming too vulnerable to our suppliers."
SATISH KAURA
Managing Director, Samtel India

"Producing monoethyl glycol will give us the flexibility to sell it if the polyester staple fibre market is down."
AJIT SINGH
MD, Swadeshi Polytex Ltd

"The uncertainty of metal scrap imports has prompted us to integrate backwards. We get 30 per cent of our needs."
VIREN SHAH
Chairman, Mukand Ltd

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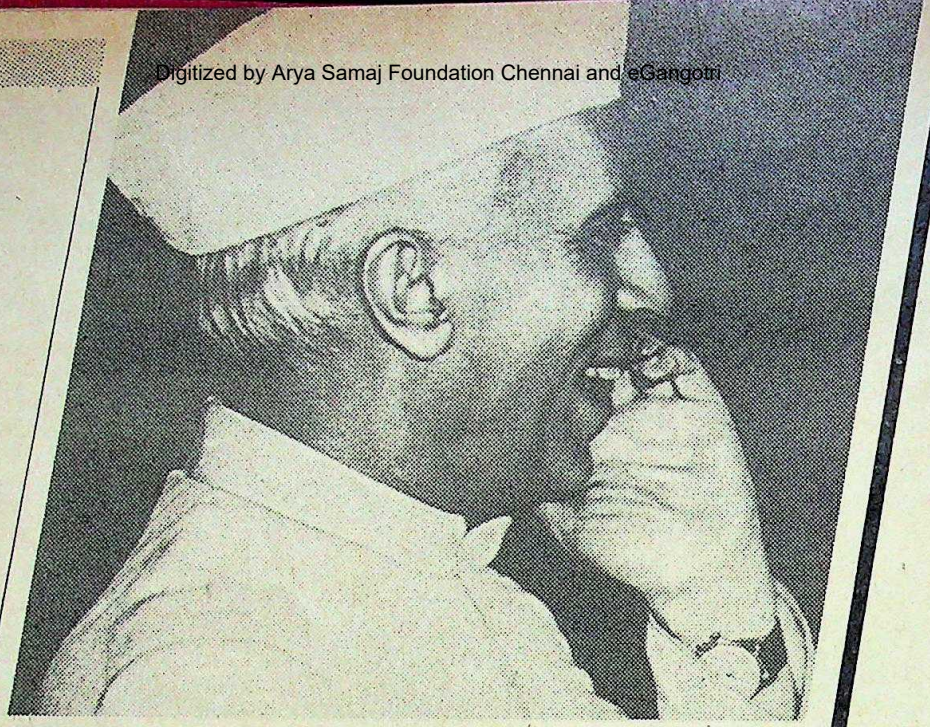

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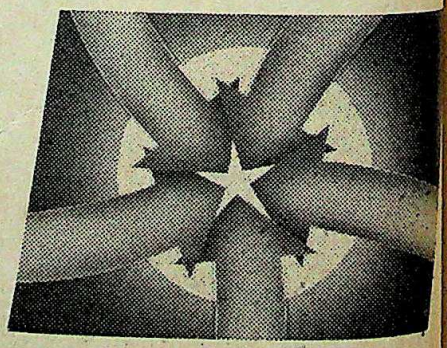

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ity. Swadeshi Polytex, the synthetics textile company, makes polyester staple fibre (PSF). It's now planning to produce monoethyl glycol (MEG), a raw material for PSF. Managing Director Ajit Singh says: "If the PSF market is not in good shape, we can reduce PSF production and sell MEG in the market."

The Rs 23-crore Nuchem Plastics—manufacturers of adhesives and moulding powders—is integrating backwards for another reason. Says Managing Director R.C. Barar: "The small sector does not have to pay sales tax. How can we compete with it without saving some raw material costs?" So the company is setting up its own plant to produce methanol—its principal raw material.

But the same argument could work against backward integration. Big companies tend to have large overheads, so it might be more cost effective to buy raw materials from small manufacturers.

Worse, the fortunes of both the original company and the backward integrated unit get inextricably linked. Says S. Ganesh, president of petrochemicals company India Glycols Ltd: "If market demand for your finished product falls, your captive unit also suffers. The fortune of one company is tied to another."

Lastly, huge surplus capacities can be created in the same industry just because many companies are eager to ensure captive input supplies. In some cases, exports are an answer. A Hindustan Lever spokesman said that the soaps and detergents giant would be exporting half its LAB production to Pakistan and other nations through the network of its UK principal, Unilever.

Despite all the dangers inherent in backward integration, the Government is gung-ho. Says a senior Industry Ministry official: "We are for it. It is time for specialisation in industry. And backward integration will surely help."

Official policies are intended to accelerate the process. For instance, pharmaceutical manufacturer Ranbaxy Laboratories, has floated a new company to manufacture amino penicillin acids—which were imported until now—used in the manufacture of penicillin tablets. Says Chairman Bhai Mohan Singh: "Once indigenous manufacture grows, the Government increases the import duty to make imports cost ineffective."

With encouragement from the Government forthcoming, many companies have decided that the advantages of backward integration far outweigh the disadvantages. The rush continues—clearly a case of one step backwards being two steps forwards.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

PHARMACEUTICALS

Legal War

A small unit takes on a giant

THE relationship is common in industry. A big enterprise is faced with a host of government controls on pricing and manufacture. It farms out production to a small unit which is free of such restrictions. The big company then markets the products.

But such arrangements don't always have a happy ending. It certainly didn't for the Rs 250-crore plus Ahmedabad-based Ambalal Sarabhai Enterprises (ASE) and small-scale drug producer S. Jayant. In 1979-80, ASE transferred its rights to manufacture seven drugs to two of the Bangalore-based Jayant's companies (combined sales: Rs 1 crore), but later tried to reobtain these licences after the Government relaxed restrictions. Jayant, a 38-year-old engineer, fought back. The result: a welter of court cases.

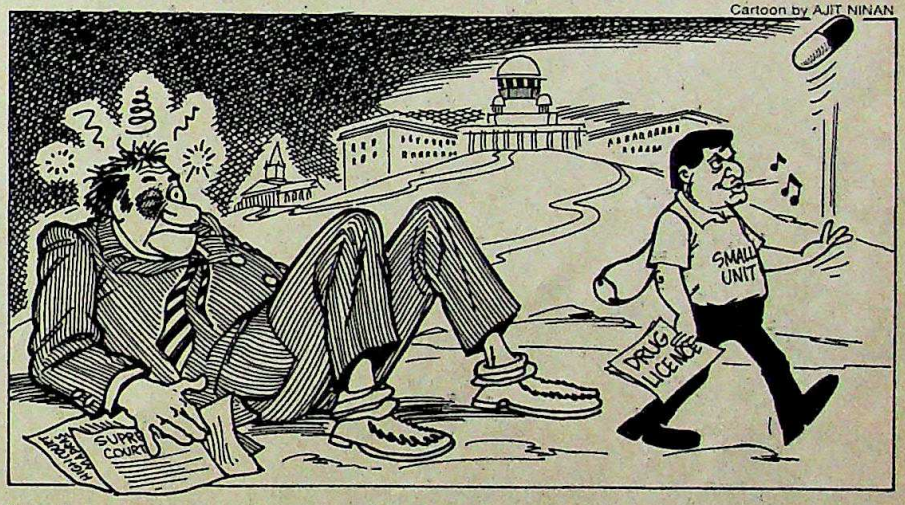
Last month, the David versus Goliath story moved to a denouement. ASE virtually pulled out of the battle when it withdrew a petition from the Madras High Court to quash a lower court's order. The lower court had summoned ASE's directors to explain why they should not be prosecuted for manufacturing drugs without a proper licence.

Evidently, problems cropped up between ASE and Jayant four years after they struck their deal. Jayant claims that ASE delayed payments. In 1982, the Sarabhai company wrote to Karnataka's drugs controller saying that it wanted to withdraw its letters permitting Jayant's companies to produce the drugs. It also obtained licences from Gujarat's drugs controller to manufacture them, without stating that it had given up the licences to Jayant.

By the end of 1986, ASE began making the drugs. Charges Jayant: "ASE's actions indicate that from around 1986-end to September 1988, it had manufactured these seven brands of medicines valued at not less than Rs 26 crore."

So a flurry of court cases followed. Jayant filed suits last year in the Madras High Court arguing that ASE's transfer of licences to him was irrevocable. He also challenged ASE's right to produce the drugs when he held licences for them. In September 1988 the court restrained ASE from producing the drugs. ASE got the stay vacated this March. In May, Jayant successfully petitioned the court's bench to reimpose the injunction and withdraw ASE's products from the market. ASE appealed to the Supreme Court. Finally, the Supreme Court dismissed ASE's special leave petition in June.

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



These were not the only legal battles. ASE successfully complained in March 1989 to a joint district judge in Baroda that Jayant's companies were infringing trademark laws by making these same drug brands. In June, Jayant got permission from Tamil Nadu's advocate general to file a contempt of court case against ASE for pursuing its application in the lower court at Baroda while the Madars High Court was deliberating on the subject.

That case is to be resolved, and an ASE spokesman declined to comment on the disputes with Jayant saying they were sub-judice. But small drug manufacturers feel Jayant's battle is unique. "Lacking financial and marketing muscle, small drug units are often at the mercy of large companies," says C. Rajagopalan, president, All India Small Drug Manufacturers' Association. In a world where Goliath normally emerges the victor, a David has won a round.

—PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA
with bureau reports

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BATA

Stepping Out

The footwear giant diversifies

BATA is a shoe company, right? Well, at the moment, yes. But pose the same question a couple of years down the road, and the answer will be an ambiguous 'maybe'. In a bid to diversify its business portfolio, the Rs 259-crore shoe company is striding into an amazing range of products—fashion garments, sports goods and sports wear, and uniforms—and promoting "fitness centres". The gambit is to use Bata's retail outlets to market an array of upscale family products—and change its profile. Footwear now accounts for an overwhelming 98.4 per cent of sales, but the goal is to initially trim this to 90 per cent in the next few years, and possibly more later.

Bata has already begun marketing clothes, under the North Star and Ambassador labels. Sales are estimated at around Rs 5 crore at present, but are expected to touch the Rs 50-crore mark by 1992. The company also hawks sports goods like cricket bats and balls, footballs, wrist bands, and Power carry bags for sportsmen. It has set up a "fitness centre" in New Delhi, plans to set up more in other cities and is negotiating franchising arrangements with hotel chains like ITC's Welcomgroup.

Though the new businesses still account for under 3 per cent of the company's turnover, future plans are ambitious. Bata has tied up with Adidas of Germany to produce sports shoes (for export) and gloves. Besides, it has test-marketed school uniforms in three cities and plans to make uniforms for factory workers and defence personnel, if it receives bulk orders. It also plans to market hi-fashion garments, specialised sports wear—tennis wear, golf wear, swim wear—belts, ties, jackets and possibly electronic goods.

The name of the new Bata game is "multiple retailing". Quite simply, this means that the company's outlets won't sell just shoes but a whole lot of other wares too. Says a company publication: "The old idea of a retail store with a counter, four walls and racks of shoes which all customers would buy is no longer sufficient today." So Bata aims at setting up "family stores" catering to the entire family. Two such outlets have already been set up in Bombay and in New Delhi. Indeed, Bata's 1,300-strong retail chain is to be strengthened by franchising hundreds of new stores by next year. Officials from Bata are playing their cards close to their chest, but Vice-President (Legal and Corporate Affairs) K.V.S. Shanbhogue explained in a written response to questions: "The object of diversification is to become the most skillful retailing and distributing organisation."

It's a gambit that makes sense. Production costs in the organised footwear industry have soared over the years. Competition has turned fierce with small, low-overhead units flourishing, and the company has often found itself at the mercy of a disgruntled work-force. To cut costs, Bata has trimmed its work-force from 18,000 at the beginning of the '80s to less than 11,000 now. And it has increasingly farmed out production to small units. Yet these were not permanent solutions.

Multiple retailing was the answer. Bata's shoe-shop chain could be used to market other goods—an extension of a business in which Bata has decades of experience. And market surveys showed that a sizeable population with a large disposable income was willing to spend money on trendy products.

Still, it will be some time before the new divisions bring about a noticeable shift in Bata's product blend. Says Shanbhogue: "Footwear will continue to be the core business."

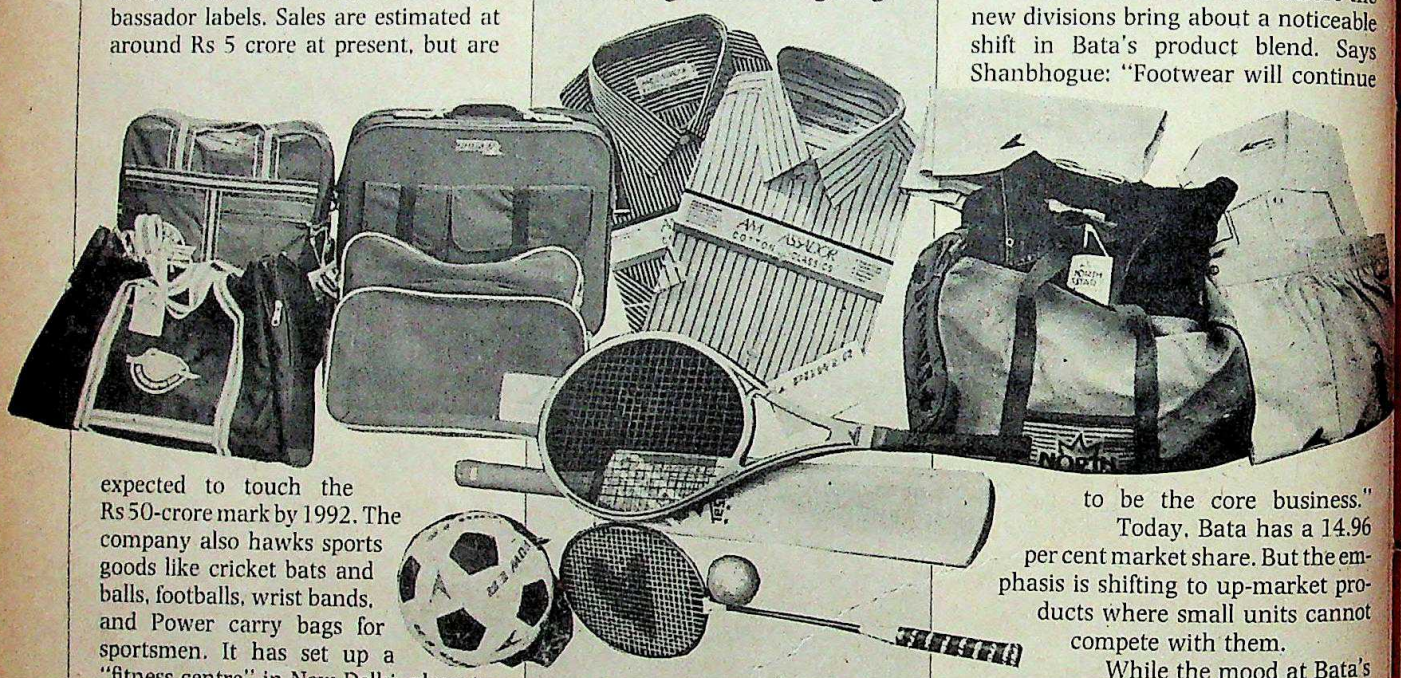
Today, Bata has a 14.96 per cent market share. But the emphasis is shifting to up-market products where small units cannot compete with them.

While the mood at Bata's corporate headquarters in Calcutta is upbeat, the company's workers are not so joyous. Nine months ago, they were forced to accept a humiliating deal after a 124-day lock-out. Says Rabin Majumdar, Bata Mazdoor Union leader: "The saddest part is that the management is taking delight in becoming traders and commission agents."

A member of Bata's management committee replies: "The purpose of getting into retailing is very simple. Bata's retailing network has a high reputation and credibility. We are just trying to exploit our goodwill and earn profits. What's wrong in that?" The workers apart, the company has a more pleasant headache. Its old slogan—"Bata understands shoes"—has held good for years. For a company that's stepping out in style, that clearly won't do anymore.

—KAMALJEET RATTAN

Retailed goods: amazing range



From just shoes, Bata is moving to retail an amazing array of upscale family products.

Bata

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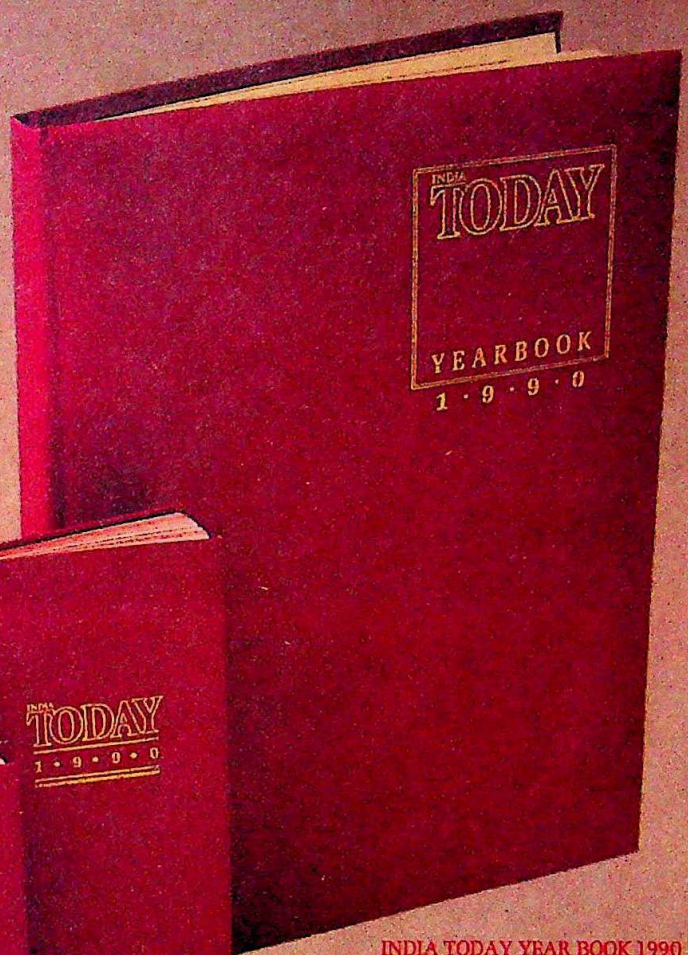
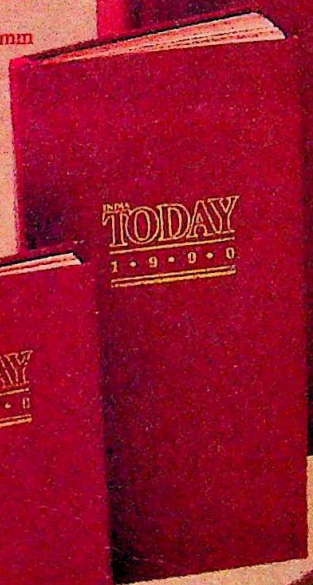
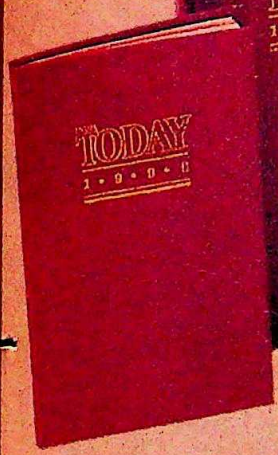
An exclusive start to a new decade



SLIM-LINE DIARY 1990
Code: IT 102
Size: 82 mm × 177 mm
Price: Rs. 65





INDIA TODAY YEAR BOOK 1990
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POCKET DIARY 1990
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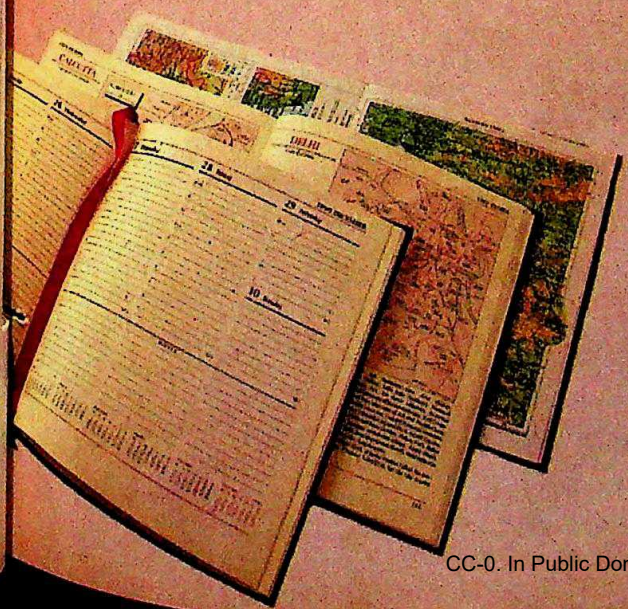

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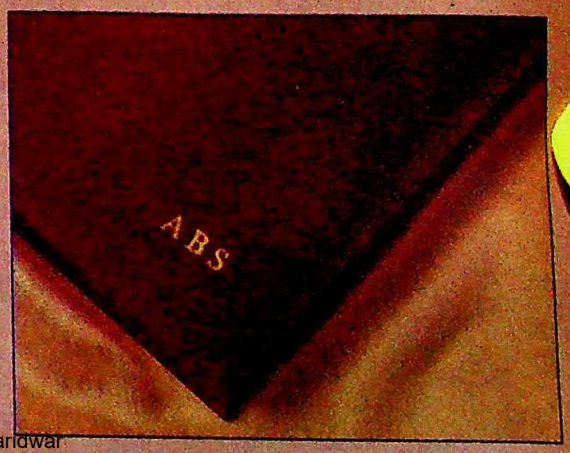

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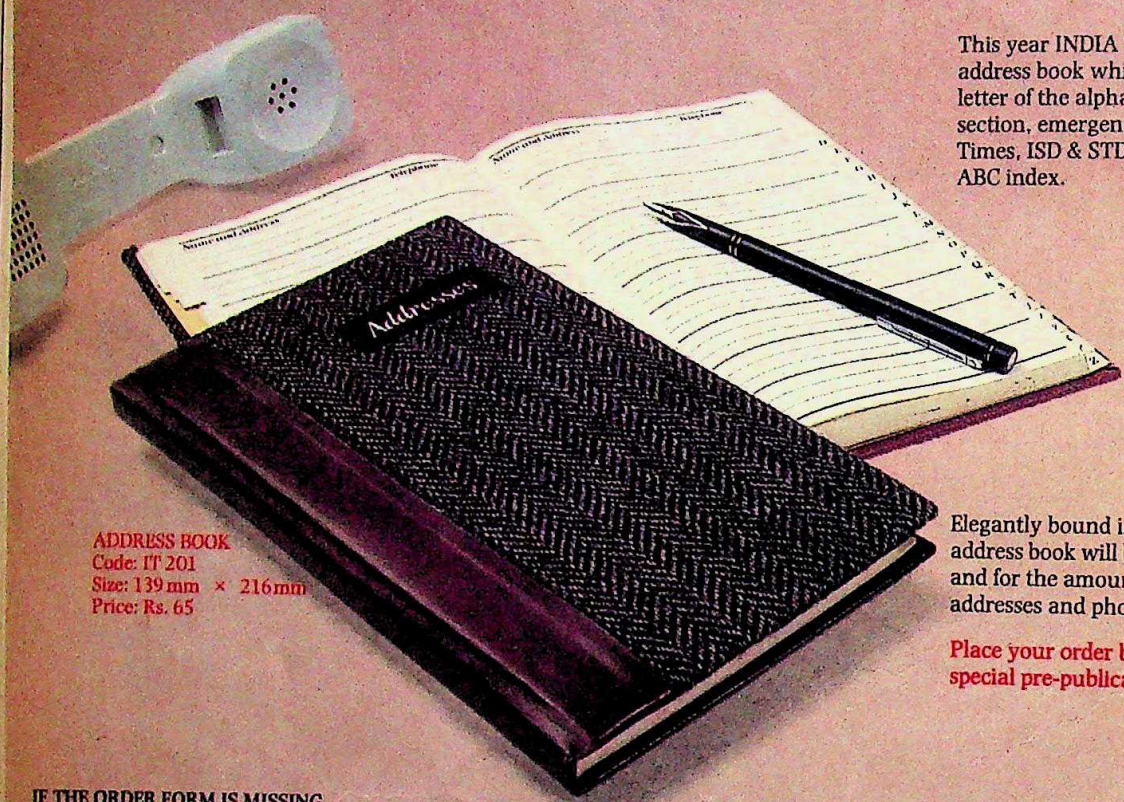

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Product Code	Product Details	Regular Price (in Rs.)	Spl Price for Orders Recd. Before Oct. 15, '89 (in Rs.)	Qtty Ordered	Total Amount (in Rs.)
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IT 102	India Today Slimline Diary	65	58.50		
IT 103	India Today Pocket Diary	35	31.50		
IT 201	Address Book	65	58.50		
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RX-CW55F
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- 4-Band FM/MW/SW1/SW2 Radio
- 5-Band Graphic Equalizer
- Double Auto-Reverse
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Compact Super VHS Movie Camera
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- Video/Audio In and Out Terminals
- 30-Position Auto Tuning

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Esquire Service Centre Tel: 479507
Bangalore: Associated Electrical Agencies Tel: 220275/225577
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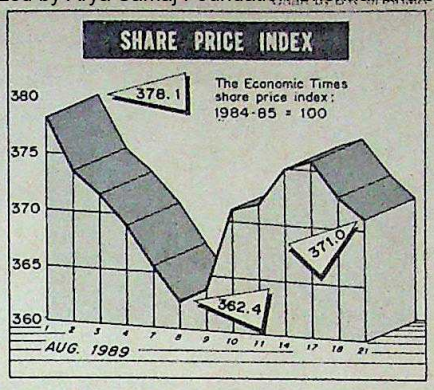
THE MARKETS

On a See-Saw

Institutions aid recovery

IT'S a scene that's becoming familiar on the country's stock-markets. Share prices plunge, the financial institutions step in and buy stock and the precipitous price drop is arrested. Last fortnight saw a replay of this tired drama. The Galahads that bailed out the share markets were—you guessed it—the Unit Trust of India (UTI) and, to a lesser extent, the Life Insurance Corporation of India and the General Insurance Corporation. UTI alone reportedly bought shares worth Rs 25 crore.

As a result, share price indices began climbing. *The Economic Times* all-India share index went to 372.9 on August 18, up from 362.4 on August 8. The Bombay Stock Exchange's (BSE) 100-scrip national index rose to 371.20, from 362.94. Nevertheless, the markets are in a bear hug. Late in the fortnight, price indices had begun slipping once more. While a further drop may be averted by the institutions intervening in the market again, the overall mood seems to be momentarily downbeat.



Adding to the market's problems, a major Calcutta broker nearly defaulted on payments at the time of settlement of business, to the tune of Rs 1 crore. The Calcutta Stock Exchange was compelled to suspend trading for two days. The broker did finally meet his dues.

There is no denying that few punters are buying equity, apart from the institutions. Trading on the floor of the stock exchanges has been reduced to a trickle.

It's a scenario that's in sharp contrast to that in July. According to BSE figures, the value of 30 per cent of the 937 scrips traded in July appreciated, the prices of 30 per cent remained more or less the same, while the prices of 40 per cent of the shares dropped. The reason, quite simply, is that 45 companies whose results were announced in July reported an upswing in profits and sales. Clearly, the fundamentals remain sound.

What is more, after the institutions entered the market in a big way, the stock-market authorities have cut contago charges—the interest imposed for not taking delivery of shares bought on a forward basis—from over 30 per cent per annum a couple of weeks ago to under 12 per cent. Logically, this should encourage speculative buying and serve as a deterrent to such selling—so helping to prop up share prices.

Nonetheless, a contrary trend could emerge over the next few weeks as companies approach the public with huge share and convertible debenture issues. With most issues being offered at below-market prices, the punter will be tempted to subscribe to the new issues and then hawk them for a profit. That could spark off a selling wavelet.

What all this means is that the share markets are in for a period of uncertainty. The next fortnight could provide some clues to the direction in which they are headed—provided the financial institutions don't influence the outcome, as they commonly do.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1989 HIGH	1989 LOW	1989 CLOSE 21.8.89	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	84.00	61.00	62.00	4.00 –
Associated Cement	345.00	230.00	241.00	5.00 –
Asian Paints	226.25	165.00	192.50	1.25* –
Atlas Copco	53.00	32.00	34.00	1.00 –
Bajaj Auto	450.00	310.00	322.50	7.50 +
Baroda Rayon	582.50	285.00	550.00	25.00 +
Bata India	89.00	60.00	64.50	2.00 –
Bayer	910.00	580.00	725.00	45.00 –
Bharat Forge	202.50	70.00	83.75	1.25 +
Birla Jute	73.75	41.50	50.00	1.00 –
Bombay Dyeing	162.00	104.00	123.00	5.50 +
Britannia Ind.	120.00	89.00	102.00	10.00 +
Brooke Bond	155.00	75.00	79.00	3.00 +
Century Spinning	2050.00	1230.00	1995.00	45.00 +
Chloride India	88.50	72.00	80.50	0.50 –
Colgate Palmolive	371.25	281.25	307.50	nil
Cyanamid	92.00	55.00	77.00	1.00 +
DCM	85.00	31.00	55.00	3.00 +
Dunlop	95.50	70.00	79.00	5.50 +
E.I. Hotels	68.00	50.00	58.00	nil
Escorts	75.00	58.00	74.00	7.75 +
Finolex Cables	430.00	312.50	317.50	nil
Food Specialities	224.00	154.50	158.00	1.00 +
Garware Nylon	50.50	36.00	45.00	3.00 +
G.E. Shipping	46.50	33.75	40.25	1.75* +
G.S.F.C.	177.50	123.75	157.50	2.50** ±
Grasim Ind.	137.00	75.00	108.50	4.50 –
Hind. Aluminium	327.50	155.00	235.00	17.50* –
Hind. Ciba	1090.00	600.00	800.00	5.00* +
Hind. Cocoa	126.25	98.75	115.00	nil
Hindustan Lever	99.00	69.50	94.50	3.00 +
Hindustan Motors	52.50	26.75	32.60	2.00 +
ICI India Ltd.	68.00	39.00	58.50	5.50 –
Indian Organic	46.50	23.00	38.50	1.25 +
Indian Rayon	106.00	75.75	77.00	0.50 –
Indrol	335.00	218.75	282.50	15.00 +
Ingersoll-Rand	423.75	267.50	405.00	25.00 +
ITC	129.00	46.25	120.00	9.00 +
J.K. Synthetics	92.00	66.00	75.00	0.50 +
Kinetic Engineering	395.00	130.00	137.00	2.00 +
Kirloskar Cummins	88.75	54.50	65.00	6.00 +
KSB Pumps	445.00	305.00	370.00	nil
Larsen & Toubro	128.00	81.50	107.50	6.50 –
Lipton	85.00	65.00	68.00	1.00 –
LML Ltd.	28.00	12.50	17.00	0.75 +
Madura Coats	104.00	92.25	97.00	nil
Mahindra & Mahindra	113.50	76.50	87.50	1.25* –
Milk Food	300.00	180.00	190.00	3.75 –
Motor Industries	695.00	560.00	595.00	5.00 –
Mukand Ltd.	140.50	75.00	126.50	1.50 +
National Organic	1080.00	710.00	975.00	15.00 +
Nirlon	17.00	8.00	9.50	1.75 –
Orkay Silk Mills	29.00	13.50	15.00	0.50 +
Pelco Electronics	30.50	16.50	20.00	nil
Pfizer	80.00	58.00	60.00	1.00 –
Ponds	212.50	151.25	161.25	1.25 +
Premier Auto	65.00	40.00	54.50	2.50 +
Raymond	85.00	65.50	83.25	0.25 +
Reliance Industries	158.00	105.00	106.00	4.50 –
Siemens India	95.00	65.00	70.00	3.00 +
Shaw Wallace	103.25	62.00	87.00	7.00 +
Shriram Fibres	94.00	64.00	81.00	3.00 +
SKF Bearings	3020.00	1140.00	1200.00	20.00 +
SPIC	67.00	39.00	45.50	0.25 –
Tata Steel	1580.00	1062.50	1212.50	72.50 –
Telco	1075.00	657.50	1017.50	20.00 +
Vam Organic	178.00	136.00	150.00	8.75 –
Videocon Int.	137.50	55.00	110.00	10.00 +
Voltas	885.00	470.00	845.00	10.00 –
Wimco	32.00	15.00	17.00	1.00 +

* Ex-dividend ** Ex-right

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	12.6503	12.5246
Austria	Schilling	1	1.2117	1.1988
Bahrain	Dinar	1	43.8626	43.7322
Bangladesh	Taka	100	52.9621	52.8810
Canada	Dollar	1	14.1679	14.0200
Denmark	Kroner	1	2.1908	2.1680
Egypt	Pound	1	6.25	6.10
France	Franc	1	2.6420	2.5773
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.1422	2.1206
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.0900	0.0850
Iran	Rial	100	22.5300	22.4500
Italy	Lira	100	1.1560	1.1020
Japan	Yen	100	11.8624	11.5607
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7500	0.7200
Kuwait	Dinar	1	54.2660	54.1060
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.2257	6.1616
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.0700	1.0500
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6590	0.6200
Netherlands	Guilder	1	7.5512	7.4729
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7996	0.7528
Singapore	Dollar	1	8.5253	8.4363
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1299	0.1106
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.5126	0.5000
Sweden	Kroner	1	2.5154	2.4896
Switzerland	Franc	1	9.8832	9.7792
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.1160	0.1000
Thailand	Baht	100	60.000	59.0000
UK	Pound	1	26.1028	25.9134
USA	Dollar	1	16.7224	16.5563
UAE	Dirham	1	4.9000	4.6500
USSR	Rouble	1	25.8200	25.7600
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	8.6580	8.4388

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 21.8.89.

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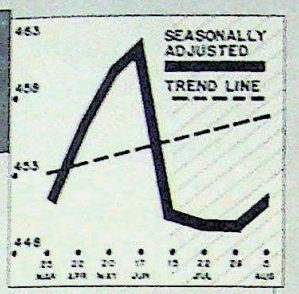
Following a short respite, prices have started going up once again in spite of a good monsoon. Macro conditions continue to remain in control and are a good sign for prices in the long term. Devaluation continues and despite the fact that exports are responding well, the J-curve effect keeps imports rising faster in the short run. The stock exchange stagnation has caused a mild flutter in the bullion market.

All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.

Wholesale Price Index

1970-71 = 100

Current Trend
2.1% p.a.

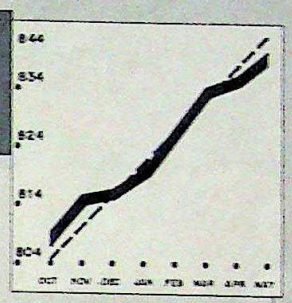


Last fortnight saw another spurt in prices—rising at an annual rate of 9 per cent over the fortnight.

Consumer Price Index

1960 = 100

Current Trend
8.0% p.a.

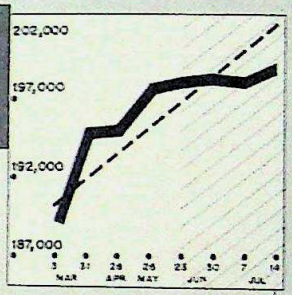


Consumer prices increased last month at a 6 per cent annual rate—below the long-term trend rate.

Money Supply

Rs Crore

Current Trend
16.3% p.a.

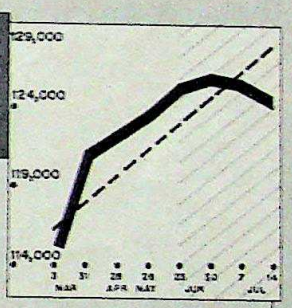


Money supply growth has slowed down considerably recently—auguring well for inflation in the future.

Commercial Bank Credit

Rs Crore

Current Trend
26.0% p.a.

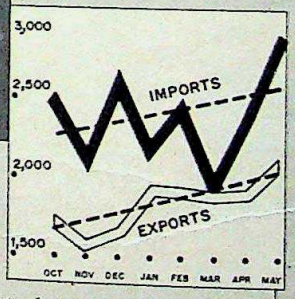


Credit conditions were very tight last fortnight with credit availability contracting by over 1 per cent.

Foreign Trade

Rs Crore

Current Trend
33.1% p.a. EXPORTS
21.8% p.a. IMPORTS

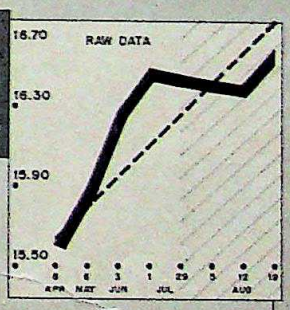


Although exports shot up by 10 per cent last month, the trade balance worsened as imports increased by 20 per cent.

Foreign Exchange

Rs per $

Current Trend
18.4% p.a.

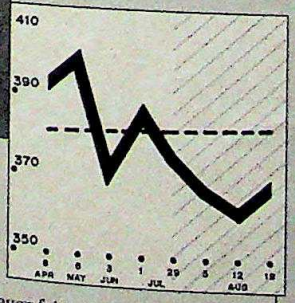


The rate of devaluation continues to be around 20 per cent per annum—at this rate the US dollar will cost Rs 20 next year.

Share Price Index

1984-85 = 100

Current Trend
1.2% p.a.

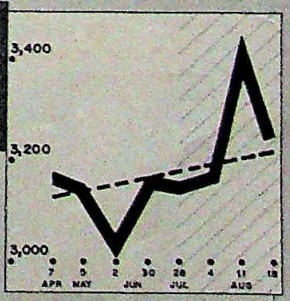


There were not even faint signs of recovery in the sluggish stock-market as share prices remained stagnant.

Closing Gold Prices

Rs per 10 gm

Current Trend
7.5% p.a.



With the stock-market dull, life has entered the bullion market with gold prices up sharply last fortnight.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 2nd fortnight of July 1989

	% Growth
Rubber	19.04
Tapioca	17.50
Whisky	11.42
Bananas	7.96
Fish	6.76
Ball Bearing	6.22
Jowar	6.18
Gur	5.59
Rape & Mustard Seeds	5.17
Khandsari	4.64
Solvent Extracted Oil	4.61
Paper	4.39
Mustard Oilcake	4.05
Betel-Nuts	3.81
Hides Raw	3.67
Silk Raw	3.47
Mustard Oil	2.89
Cotton Raw	2.65
Tea	2.52
Barley	2.34
Sugar	2.23
Nylon/Terene and Mixed Cloth	2.00
Bajra	1.95
Groundnut Oil	1.85
Gram	1.82
Tyres	1.70
Onions	1.66
Ragi	1.62
Urad	1.60
Maize	1.48
Groundnut Seeds	1.38
Tobacco Raw	1.34
Linseed	1.30
Jute Textiles	1.24
Synthetic Fibres	1.13
Trucks	1.04
Tubes	0.92
Ghee	0.88
Atta	0.81
Cashew-Nut	0.73
Cotton Cloth	0.63
Gingelly Oil	0.56
Dairy Products	0.54
Art Silk & Artificial Fabrics	0.44
Arhar	0.44
Linseed Oil	0.39
Cotton Seeds	0.37

Of the 138 series considered, 57 of them with a total weight of 43.309 had a positive growth and 20 of them with a total weight of 15.647 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1989	1988
Coal		
Thousand Tonnes, July	13880	13090
Saleable Steel		
Thousand Tonnes, July	709.7	727.5
Cement		
Thousand Tonnes, July	3289	3493
Petroleum Crude		
Thousand Tonnes, July	2835	2655
Petroleum Refinery Products		
Thousand Tonnes, July	4606	3635

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MADHYA PRADESH

Criminal Progress

The Madhya Pradesh 20-Point Programme Implementation Committees abound with murderers, rapists, underworld dons, land grabbers and profiteers. The committees have only a one point programme: to help their members.

THE Madhya Pradesh 20-Point Programme Implementation Committees must rate as one of a kind. Consider the luminaries who have been manning them. For example, there is one Ashok Vir Vikram Singh alias Bhaiya Raja, 39. A feudal overlord of Chhatarpur district, and dubbed the terror of Bundelkhand, he is reputed to have used pythons to terrorise women to submit to his will. There are other stories about him, a gory mix of fact and fiction—of murder, rape, plunder, and of corpses that disappear with the help of captive crocodiles. As many as 32 cases are registered against him.

Last month Bhaiya Raja, who was recently detained under the NSA, was arrested by the Uttar Pradesh Police in connection with a murder at the farmhouse of Janata Dal leader Akbar 'Dumpy' Ahmed. In a statement from his cell, Bhaiya Raj a sanctimoniously declared: "I am a committed Congressman and I shall continue to serve the party."

The Congress(I), however, quickly dropped him from the committee last fortnight; and he was not the only one to go. The state-level committee was reconstituted, and a massive exercise undertaken to induct new faces in district-level committees. Said Vidyadhar Joshi, minister of state for 20-point programme implementation: "We are purging the committees of criminal elements and troublemakers. It's a very difficult task."

The nature of the hurdles was more than evident as ruling party dissidents, led by former chief minister Arjun Singh, rushed to the prime minister to complain of political vendetta. Indeed, ever since the Motilal Vora Government came into power in the state early this year, an estimated 400 members have been sacked from the committees. Alleges Mukesh Nayak, a dissident MLA: "The Government has removed workers belonging to our group and has packed the committees with loyalists." Vora refutes this, asserting that complaints of indiscipline and nuisance at meetings had made the move necessary.

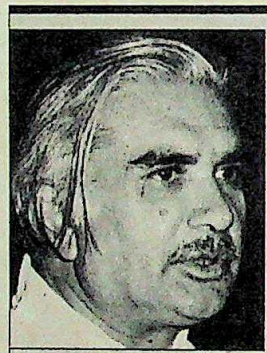
The fact of the matter is that though the committees—state-level, district-level and block-level—are meant to monitor the implementation of the 20-point programme, overseeing official execution and charting out fresh plans, they are actually used as vehicles for bestowing patronage by chief ministers, whose prerogative it is to nominate the members. The committees are packed with criminals and dubious elements, who lobby hard for nominations as the attractions of committee membership are many, and the responsibilities none. Office-bearers of the state-level committees are given ministerial 'status' and the impressive perks and privileges that go with it—allowances, free house, car, telephone, office and office staff. But what members cherish above all is the access they gain to the bureaucracy, and the licence they earn to approach officials to get work done.

This accounts for an unmistakable pattern that Vora's protestations cannot explain away: that the committees inevitably transform—new faces edging out the old—each time there is a change of chief ministers.

Routinely, each chief minister declares that his predecessor has packed the committees with criminals, economic offenders and self-seekers. Examples:

"Police screening is a must for committee membership. We will not allow criminal elements to become members."—Vora, March 11, 1987. As many as 1,300 members were dropped.

"Several persons with criminal records have been appointed to various boards, 20-point committees and other bodies. They should be removed immediately."—Singh, August 19, 1988, in a note to the chief secretary. The subsequent official dossier, a copy of which has been obtained by INDIA TODAY.



The committees should be disbanded. Else they will harm the party's image.
SURESH SETH
former Congress(I) minister

We are purging the committees of criminals and trouble makers.
VIDYADHAR JOSHI
Minister of State for 20-point programme implementation

Wanted criminals rub shoulders with officials at committee meetings.
BHAI VERMA
freedom fighter and former MP

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NAVIN SOOD

A member of the Chhindwara district committee, he was arrested in a rape case.

K.K. MISHRA

An expelled member, he warns that no more meetings will be allowed in Indore.

VIR VIKRAM SINGH

Dubbed the terror of Bundelkhand, he has as many as 32 cases registered against him.

RAKESH SHARMA

Arrested and expelled by Singh's government, he was reinstated by Motilal Vora.

contains 429 names with criminal tags.

"Indiscipline and nuisance will not be tolerated. The committees are not a platform to create a nuisance, but to implement the prime minister's national programme."—Vora, June 21, 1989.

On the face of it, the sentiments have been laudable. But that they have been no more than lip-service is clear: the committees still abound with murderers, rapists, underworld dons, land grabbers and profiteers.

In Indore, every 10th member has a criminal record—19 out of 190. In Khandwa, every sixth member has a police record. Among the criminal 'stars' of the 20-point committees are:

▶ Akhtar Beg: member of the Indore district committee. Police dossiers describe him as the "uncrowned king" of gambling operations in the town. Nine cases registered against him. Once convicted on the charge of attempt to murder.

▶ Ratan: member of the Indore district committee. Involved in 38 criminal cases. History-sheeter and a listed political goonda.

▶ Gopal Das: member of the Gwalior district committee. History-sheeter. Has 45 criminal cases, for murder, dacoity and sodomy, registered against him. Once convicted on the charge of looting.

▶ Sunil Goyal: member of the Indore district committee. Ten cases registered against him. The day he was nominated to the committee last year, he was in jail on the charge of rioting.

▶ Navin Sood: member of the Chhindwara district committee. A liquor contractor. Arrested in connection with a rape case in the MLAs' rest house in Bhopal two years ago.

▶ Abdul Rashid Siddiqui: member of the Surguja district committee. A murder convict.

▶ Om Nahata: member of the Ujjain district committee. Was held for murder.

▶ Anand Bahadur Singh: was removed from the Sidhi district committee after his arrest on the charge of misbehaving with the collector's wife.

Committee memberships are highly sought after, for their attractions are many, and the responsibilities none.

EXPECTEDLY, these stalwarts lack concern for the 20-point programme or its implementation. Committee members are known to allot plots meant for landless labourers to their family members. In Raigarh district, forest contractors, notorious for illegal felling of trees, are members.

Points out Janata Dal leader V.C. Shukla: "The committee has only a one-point programme: to help its members." For the 20,000 ruling party members, accommodated at the state, district and block levels, the help has been in the way of sharing the spoils of power. Says S. Thakur, former convener of the committee's publicity cell: "If the panchayat-level committees are also constituted, we can accommodate about 1.80 lakh party workers."

From a national programme, the 20-point programme has been blatantly turned into a party programme. And the implementation is at the cost of the state exchequer. About 70 per cent of the state Government's total budget allocation (Rs 3,678 crore in 1979-80) is spent on the programme. A crore is spent every year on running the committees.

The Opposition has no participation in the programme and no say in the running of the committees. Points out state Janata Dal General Secretary Vinay Dixit: "Since the money comes from the state exchequer, all political parties should be involved."

But as far as the Government is concerned, membership of the committees is meant only for those with "full faith in the programme", which is a euphemism for those belonging to the ruling party. Says Vora: "The Opposition does not have faith in the programme." Questioned about communist parties, which supported the programme even during the Emergency, the chief minister declares: "Constitution of the committees is the Government's prerogative."

The Government presumption has been that faith in the programme can last only as long as an individual is a member of the ruling party. The moment he leaves—as in the case of V.C. Shukla—he is kicked out of the committee.

On the other hand, the committees continue to grow in size. The reason, as Shukla points out, is that: "Every chief minister wants to pack the committees with his favourites." And with changes in the Government, members with allegiance to an opposing group are dropped. In 1987, Vora reconstituted the district-level committees, purging it of Singh's

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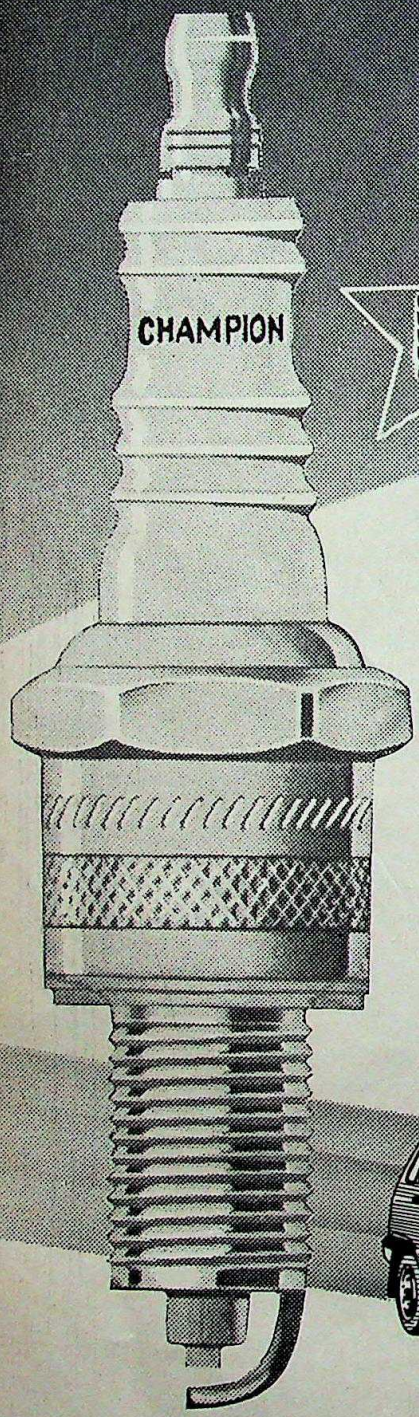
Modi Champion bags an Indian star

Modi Champion Bi-metal Spark Plugs Now come as OE with Maruti



MARUTI

After a roaring approval by Bajaj Auto, Kinetic, LML Vespa, TVS Suzuki, Hero Motors, Hindustan Motors and others for fitment in their vehicles as Original Equipment,

Modi Champion Bi-metal spark plugs now come as OE with the Indian favourite Maruti.

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MODI CHAMPION® BI-METAL

The Petrol Saver

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supporters. When Singh returned to power last year, he brought in 1,200 new members, increasing the committees' strength to 3,000. Now Vora is again dropping the pro-Singh elements.

Consequently, the committees have been reduced to a farce. Some of them have as many as 200 members as against the norm of 40. In fact, only one of the 45 district committees has at present less than 40 members. During Singh's regime, even young students were included in the Indore committee. And as the committees grow, there are more and more nominated members wandering around, trying to arm-twist officials into doing all sorts of odd-jobs for them.

Apparently, there is some official realisation on this score, even if it yields next to nothing. The vice-chairman of the state-level committee, Y.D. Sharma, told members of the Raipur district committee: "If any member is under the illusion that he has become a political dada and he has got a licence to intimidate officials or get anyone transferred, he is vastly mistaken ...I've noticed that after the meetings are over, the members approach the officials either for some personal work or for transfers and postings."

Says Prakash Joshi, permanent secretary of the Indore city Congress(I) and member of the district committee: "The members talk of everything except the programme at the meetings." Not long ago, some members at Indore moved a resolution hailing Arjun Singh's 'victory' in the Churhat lottery case. Not to be outdone, the minister presiding over the meeting, S.B. Solanki, moved a counter-resolution congratulating Vora on his election to the state Assembly.

THE Indore committee made other absurd recommendations: Congressmen with more than two children should not be given election tickets; and a minister with two or more children should be sacked from the Cabinet for aggravating the population explosion.

The committee meetings are not only forums for plain politicking, but are also arenas for rampant displays of rowdiness. Says Solanki: "No one talks sense and no one is willing to listen." Members frequently insult officials who attend meetings, and in fact, the Madhya Pradesh Gazetted Officers' Association has threatened to boycott the committee meetings if the members continue to misbehave with them. Says association President Brajesh Shrivastava: "The officials are duty-bound to discharge their responsibilities. But they have self-respect and will not tolerate humiliation and insult."

Last year all government employees of Sagar went on a one-day strike in January after a member, Rakesh Sharma, misbehaved with an engineer at a committee meeting. Sharma, who belonged to Vora's camp, was arrested by Singh's government. He was also expelled from the committee.

However, soon after Vora returned to power, the engineer was transferred and Sharma reinstated. Asked to explain the reason, a brazen Vora told INDIA TODAY: "He was included in the committee because I decided to do so."

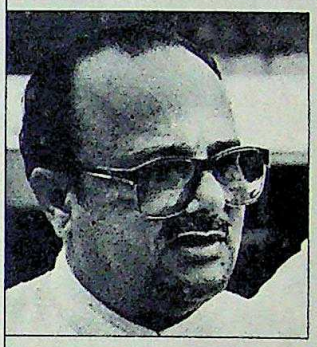
The 191-member Indore committee has not been able to hold its monthly meeting properly since last January because of gross indiscipline. The Government took action by dropping seven of the members. The expelled members retaliated by throwing chappals and eggs at Solanki's car in June. K.K. Mishra, an expelled member, threatens: "They cannot hold the meeting in Indore now." Similarly, at Gwalior, unruly Congressmen prevented a meeting from being held after 40 Singh-supporters were expelled.

Although Vora maintains that the committees serve a useful purpose, insiders point out that they have almost nothing to do with the implementation of the programme. If anything, the committee members prove to be a hindrance. For instance, programmes related to land reforms are hardly appreciated by big landlords and those violating land ceiling laws and the minimum wages act.

It is not surprising then that honest and sincere workers feel cheated. Says Suresh Seth, former Congress(I) minister: "The committee should be disbanded. Otherwise it will do immense harm to the party's image." Ram Singh Bhai Verma, 81, well-known freedom fighter and former member of Parliament and the state Assembly, makes a plea for reverting to the old system when officials fulfilled the targets on their own. Says he: "Wanted criminals whose proper place is behind the bars, rub shoulders with officials at committee meetings." Similarly, asserts a collector: "Rather than helping us implement the programme, most of the members are a nuisance. No officer wants to attend the meetings."

Complains a disillusioned Verma, who is a member of the Indore committee and has not missed a single meeting: "People object when I speak at the meetings and I am shouted down." Probably that is because the old Gandhian talks about subjects like poverty that are irrelevant to them. Says he: "They claim that nine lakh families were helped to rise above the poverty line in the district. But, on the other hand, the number of families below the poverty line has risen from 22 lakh in 1984 to 37 lakh in 1988. I've been trying to raise this issue, but no one is willing to listen." That is, literally, a case of criminal neglect.

—N.K. SINGH in Indore



Several persons with criminal records have been appointed to the committees.
ARJUN SINGH

Police screening is a must. We will not allow criminal elements to become members.
MOTILAL VORA

The committees are used simply as vehicles for bestowing patronage by the state's chief ministers.

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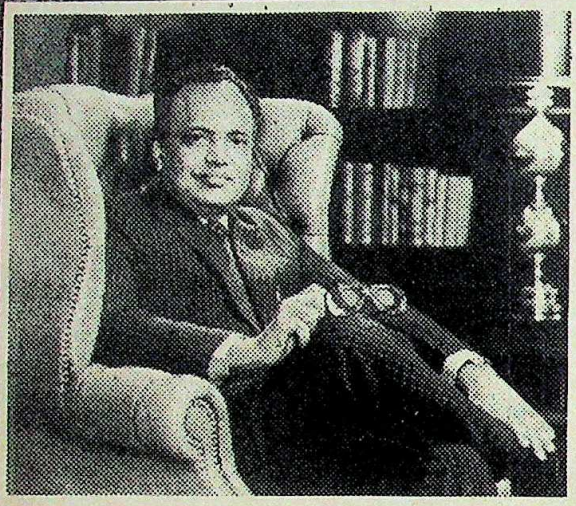
JINDAL



CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH AT THE 18TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS ON 5.8.1989

SHRI O.P. JINDAL, CHAIRMAN

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to extend to all of you a warm and cordial welcome to the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Company.

The Annual Accounts and the Directors' Report highlighting the operations of the Company for the period ended 31st March, 1989 is already in your hands and with your permission, I shall take it as read.

A New Era

Your Company has entered a new era of growth and profitability based on a strong foundation in terms of net worth and gross block. Financial results for the period under review bear ample testimony to the same. Your Company achieved a remarkable growth of 79% on an annualised basis in total revenue to Rs. 140.33 crores **(9 months).** The growth can be seen in better perspective when you also take into account the growth of 39% in the previous year and 34% in the year before. Thus, over three accounting periods since the Company went public, the gross revenue has gone up from Rs. 59 crores to Rs. 140 crores **(9 months),** an aggregate growth of 137%, & gross profit has gone up from Rs. 4.10 crores to Rs. 9.06 crores **(9 months),** a growth of 121%. I hope the shareholders will consider this adequate vindication of the faith they reposed in the management at the time of public issue. As of 31st March, 1989 the Company's net worth was Rs. 23.06 crores, its gross block was Rs. 40 crores against the paid up capital of Rs. 3.30 crores. From this strong base, your Company is launching new projects which, along with ongoing modernisation, will sustain the tempo of growth in turnover and profits, and pave the Company's entry into the league of the topmost companies in the country.

Bonus 1 : 1

In keeping with the higher profits achieved during the nine month period, the Directors have decided to declare a dividend of Rs. 2.5 per share which works out to 33.3% per annum as compared to 25% in the last year. Further, the Company has decided to make a liberal issue of Bonus shares in the ratio of 1 equity share for every share held by capitalising Rs. 3.30 crores out of share premium account and general reserves subject to your and other consent.

Business Environment

After failing consecutively for three years, the monsoon was bountiful in 1988 and it has had a tonic effect on the economy. Growth in industrial production during 1988/89 has been estimated at around 8.5% and the economy as a whole has also grown handsomely. The Government policies continue to be pragmatic and we look forward to a very healthy business environment even if it means more competition in the market place. Very recently, the Government has announced major changes in steel policies which will enable free growth.

Your Company's business consists of manufacturing stainless steel and mild steel cold rolled strips. In both the business lines, there has been a fair amount of competition all along and more capacity is coming up, particularly in the case of M.S. cold rolled strips. In a growing market, this is a welcome development. Our country faces a difficult foreign exchange position and it would be ideal to achieve self sufficiency in steel products.

I would like to share with you your Company's strategy for the future. Briefly stated it consists of cost control, modernisation and research. I can state, with a fair degree of confidence, that the capital cost of our projects and the production cost in our factories are amongst the lowest in the

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STRIPS LIMITED

stry. We have been modernising regularly including the current phase, the mpany has spent substantial amounts on dernisation. What probably sets your mpany apart from the rest is its emphasis esearch and innovation. Whether it be chine building, process technology or new ducts, your Company is striving all the e.

IR YEARS' REVIEW

Rs. in lacs

culars	31.3.89 (Nine Months)	30.6.88	30.6.87	30.6.86
l Income	14034	10428	7417	5911
s Profit	906	814	603	410
Profit	577	487	173	139
Generation	798	722	397	284
end — share	2.5	2.5	1.8	0.6
y Capital	330	330	329	80
Value Per e Rs.	69.90	54.63	41.02	15.36
al Employed	6182	4445	3414	2982
s Block	3792	2697	2251	1811
Block Current ts	3067	2199	1744	1467
s Profit/ s Sales%	2991	2125	1554	1425
fit/ s Block %	6.5	7.8	8.1	6.9
ings Per e Rs.	15.2	18.1	7.7	7.7
/Equity Ratio	17.48	14.75	5.25	17.38
	1.67	1.46	1.53	1.43

ew Projects — Pig Iron & ponge Iron.

major development out of these efforts been a new technology to manufacture on and sponge iron by reduction of Iron with non-coking coal through Rotary Kiln. e is a tremendous potential for Sponge and Pig Iron and your Company has, fore, decided to straight away mercialise the new developed technology h, on trial runs in a pilot plant set up at r, has given excellent results. These s will be set up in Raigarh, M.P. an area ample iron ore and coal reserves. We d all feel proud of the work done by the pany's engineers in this regard. While untry has ample reserves of non-coking which the Company proposes to use in ants, it is scarce in coking coal presently by the integrated steel plants for the manufacture of Pig Iron through blast furnace route. The project cost of these new plants is estimated to be a mere Rs. 25 crores, one more instance of the management's emphasis on low cost projects.

Your management is continuing to look at new investment proposals, particularly in areas which provide business synergy. Your directors have also proposed to raise Rs. 25 crores by way of fully-convertible debentures on a Rights basis to finance the new projects and to augment long-term resources. The management, in consideration of suggestions received from many shareholders, has now decided to raise the entire sum of Rs. 25 crores from **Rights Issue of Fully Convertible Debentures** instead of partly Rights issue and balance Public Issue. Now it has been decided to offer **One** Fully Convertible Debenture of Rs. 140/-each for every two shares held on Rights basis. It is proposed to convert the said debenture into two shares at a premium of Rs. 60/- per share after 6 months from the date of allotment subject to necessary approvals. Necessary amendments in the earlier Resolutions are proposed accordingly. The proposal will hopefully meet your approval.

Performance during the current year

In the first four months of the current year i.e. from April 1989 to July, 1989, your Company has achieved a sales turnover and other income of Rs. 76 crores compared to Rs. 40 crores during the corresponding period in the previous year. We expect to improve the performance further to achieve our targeted sales turnover of Rs. 260 crores for the full year.

Industrial Relations

Any industrial unit is a product of several factors such as entrepreneurship, technology, finance etc. but the single most important factor is the human factor which may take the form of a worker on the shopfloor, his Engineer, Supervisor, the General Manager or a member of the Board of Directors. We are extremely proud of the highest quality of this human effort at the **Jindal Organisation.** While the management tries to look after the needs of its employees as a matter of topmost priority, it is to the credit of the loyalty and purposefulness of our staff that industrial relations, or should I say human relations, are of the highest order at **"JINDALS".** My whole — hearted appreciation for their co-operation.

Acknowledgements

It is my pleasure to express our sincere thanks to the Central Government, the Governments of Haryana and Maharashtra, All India & State Level Financial Institutions, Banks for their guidance, co-operation and financial help in full measure. I am grateful to my colleagues on the Board, specially the Nominee Directors — for their enthusiastic participation and wise counsel at all times.

JAI HIND

Note : This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the 18th Annual General Meeting.

JINDAL

Sobhagya/291/89

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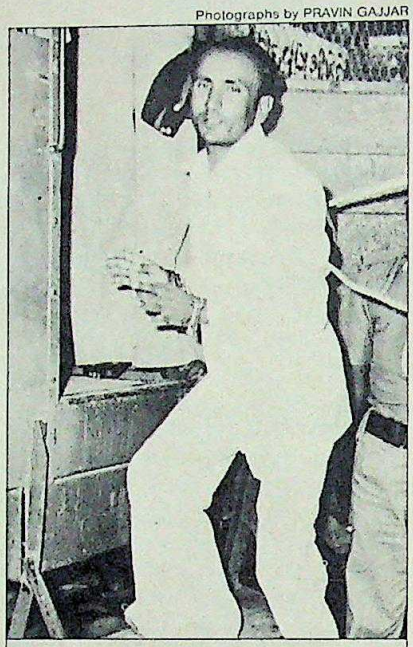
GUJARAT

Popular Prisoner

After seven reprieves, Parmar is condemned to hang

Photographs by PRAVIN GAJJAR



THREE murders. A death sentence. Seven reprieves. Chief ministers appealing for mercy. Donated eyes, kidneys and body. National sympathy. Public sainthood. These are snippets from the fascinating story of Shashikant Keshav Parmar, a murder convict who has been condemned to the hangman's noose but commands tremendous public attention today for what are being recognised as inherently humane qualities.

Parmar was condemned to the gallows in 1981. The death sentence was confirmed by the Gujarat High Court. The Supreme Court rejected an appeal in 1982, paving the way for Gujarat's first execution in 25 years.

In the intervening years, Parmar had built up an admirable track record in human service and sacrifice:

- He has already donated his kidney to Rushikimar Mittal, a wealthy businessman. Although poor, he even refused to accept hefty compensation.
- He has also willed away his eyes.
- The Jamnagar Medical College is to receive his body after his execution. A few days before his scheduled hanging on June 23, Parmar gave up eating solids to ensure that his body reached the students clean.
- When Haribhai Panchal of the Sadvichar Parivar—a voluntary organisation which has been espousing Parmar's cause—met him on June 22, a day before his scheduled hanging, Parmar expressed his last wish: percolation tanks should be constructed for 56 *talukas*.

When the Gujarat High Court granted him a fresh lease of life on June 22, around 200 prisoners in Rajkot jail broke their fast—in prayer for him—to celebrate.

His sacrificial qualities induced prominent citizens to board the save-Parmar bandwagon in hordes. On August 5, former Gujarat chief ministers, Ghanshyam Oza and Babubhai Patel, noted dancer Mrinalini Sarabhai and Congress (I) leader Sanatbhai Mehta appealed to President Venkataraman for mercy.

Parmar's transformation as a person while in jail waiting for the noose prompted many prominent citizens to make an impassioned plea for his life.

Soon after, the Gujarat High Court deferred the hanging to allow Kanchanben, Parmar's sister, to tie him a rakhi on August 17. Most recently, Parmar was blessed with his seventh reprieve when the Supreme Court stayed his August 18 execution. The court further stayed the execution on August 22 since a fresh petition for Presidential mercy has been moved keeping in view Parmar's kidney donation. But the Supreme Court finally dismissed Babubhai Patel's petition on August 25 and once again cleared the way for Parmar's hanging.

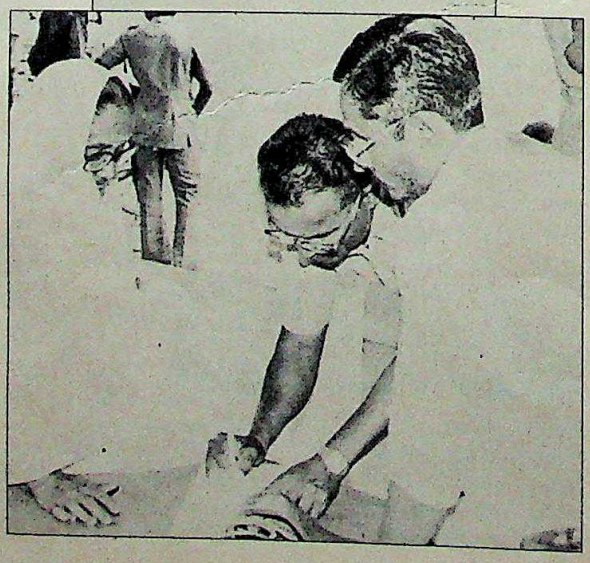
Parmar, a boiler attendant at a fishing plant in Verawal, challenged the factory owner in an effort to wrangle a better deal for his fellow-workers. In 1977, he lost his job for engaging in trade union activities. His mother, Triveniben, 70, says: "He could never tolerate injustice." A Rajkot labour court directed his reinstatement in 1979 but awarded a mere Rs 1,000 to compensate for the 22-month lay-off. In protest, Parmar decided to begin a fast unto death in the court premises. The President of the Rajkot Bar Association, Hashubhai Dave convinced him to end the fast, promising to take up his case.

When the court marginally raised the award to Rs 1,300, Parmar felt let down. He now suspected that Dave had betrayed him to favour the factory owner. Enraged, he reached Dave's house. Not finding him, Parmar emptied his frustration on the lawyer's family members: he knifed to death Dave's father, sister-in-law and six-year-old niece on October 17, 1980. Known to be prone to bouts of hysteria as a child, he was considered sober as an adult till his murderous frenzy when he was 29.

The family of Parmar's victims argued that the man did not kill in cold blood. Recently, former Gujarat chief minister, Hitendra Desai, has supported the hanging. Pitted against him are current Gujarat Chief Minister Amarsinh Chaudhury and his predecessors, Oza and Patel.

Parmar's supporters had based their case on his transformation as a person while in jail awaiting the noose. Meanwhile, Parmar remains unruffled. He told his mother: "I have been telling you not to waste your time and money after me. I will get whatever is written in my *kismat* (destiny)."

—UDAY MAHURKAR in Rajkot



Parmar (top); and his mother and brother signing the form donating his body: reformed

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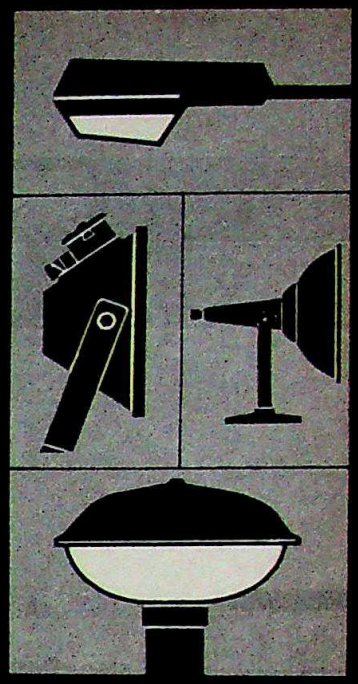

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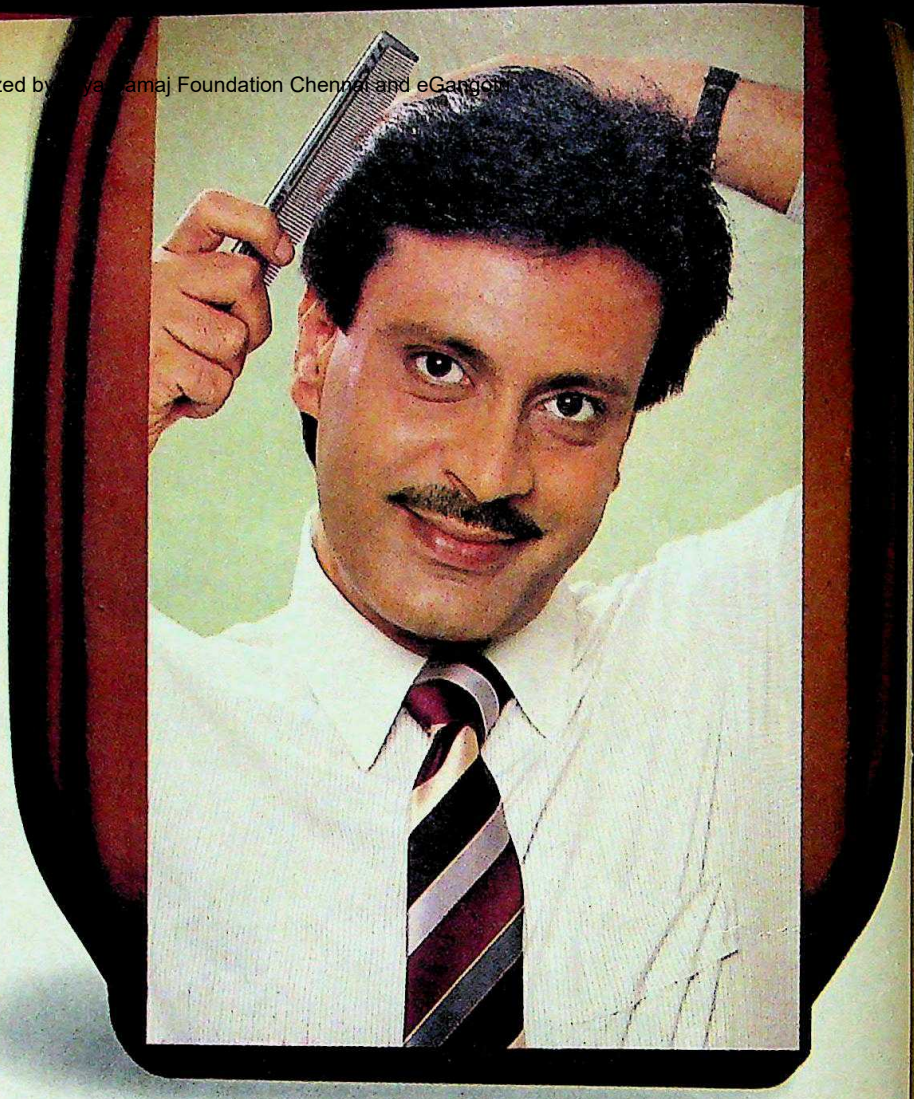

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Indian Medical Gazette 118, 223 (1984)

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INDIAN AIRLINES

In a Tailspin

Exodus of pilots to international carriers

AT Indian Airlines problems keep soaring. Armed with a fleet of the hi-tech fly-by-wire A320s, it had boasted only in July that its bad days were over. But now there is a fresh crisis: a crippling shortage of pilots.

In an unprecedented exodus, 27 pilots, including some of its best, have resigned from the corporation in the past year and have joined international carriers. And at least a dozen more are likely to follow suit. Since all of them flew the Boeing 737, the work-horse of the airlines, their sudden exit has led to a desperate shortfall in cockpit crew. R. Prasad, the airline's managing director, admits: "We are just about maintaining normal services. If more leave we would be hard hit."

The airline has already been hit badly. In a frantic bid to run its services, the management cancelled leave for all pilots. It then called on executive pilots (those who also hold administrative posts) to put in extra hours of flying, violating accepted norms. The result: pilots who were permitted to fly 30 hours a month, were logging 70 to 80 hours. Several of the Airbus pilots were also asked to put in additional hours flying the Boeing 737—another unsafe step as the controls of the two aircraft differ.

Alarmed, the National Transportation Safety Board last month pointed out these violations to the Civil Aviation Ministry. The Indian Commercial Pilots' Association, the airline's pilots union, has also lodged a protest. As an agitated spokesman of the association says: "Fatigued pilots are a hazard in the air and we have already warned the management that it could result in a crash soon."

His warning may be too drastic. But if the exodus continues, there could be a breakdown of its services. Already, subtle pruning measures are on. On routes that don't run full, flights are being clubbed together to save on crew. But if more pilots leave, the airline may be forced to ground many of its 30 Boeing 737s. And since these aircraft handle over 50 per cent of the traffic, it would shatter hopes of cutting down waitlists and flight delays.

The corporation, meanwhile, has tried to get tough with pilots who are resigning, but with little success. Last year, when there was no threat of a shortfall, it had accepted the resignations of three pilots. But this year, faced with an exodus, it refused to accept the resignation letters of 23 pilots. But this is no deterrent. In a veiled threat to potential "deserters" the management even dismissed a pilot who had joined another carrier without first resigning from Indian Airlines. But as a veteran pilot points out: "It is only aggravating the situation, not stopping the outflow."

If the airline finds itself in a tailspin, it has itself to blame. It failed to take cognizance of a global boom in commercial air travel that saw demand for pilots in the past decade leap from 3,000 a year to over 10,000. The result: almost all the major airlines are busy poaching experienced pilots from their rivals.

Indian Airlines, however, recruited pilots in brief surges followed by long inexplicable gaps. Now its Boeing 737 pilots are prime targets for foreign airlines who offer sky-high salaries. For instance, an Indian Airlines pilot with 10 years experience gets a basic of Rs 3,500 and with allowances grosses around Rs 10,000. Whereas airlines such as Malaysian Airlines and Gulf Air are offering $4,000 (Rs 66,400) a month plus perks like subsidised accommodation, discount travel for relatives and free education for children.

Many pilots have jumped at these offers even though most airlines assure only a three-year contract. But as one pilot, who has joined Malaysian Airlines, points out: "In those three years I'll save much more money than I could in 10 years here."

Members of the pilots association say that it is not higher salaries that are the main incentive. With Indian Airlines in a constant turmoil, man management was in disarray too. Says a senior Indian Airlines pilot: "We were being treated like dirt. Our authority was constantly being eroded. And we were getting blamed for all the lapses that the airline committed."

The association is now pressing for higher wages to stem the exodus. But the management has been adamant on that point. Says a senior official: "We certainly can't pay the kind of salary foreign airlines pay. And if we increase it now, their demands would keep going up." Instead, it has been concentrating on checking future erosion. It recently jacked up the bond money for pilots leaving before seven years of service from Rs 35,000 to Rs 7.5 lakh.

However, that doesn't help the current problem. One solution being worked out is to promote co-pilots to captains more rapidly. But if inexperienced pilots man flights, safety would be the first casualty. The other is to get the Government to ban pilots from taking jobs in other airlines. But the pilots would certainly challenge its legality.

With the airline's options severely limited, only turbulent times lie ahead for it.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

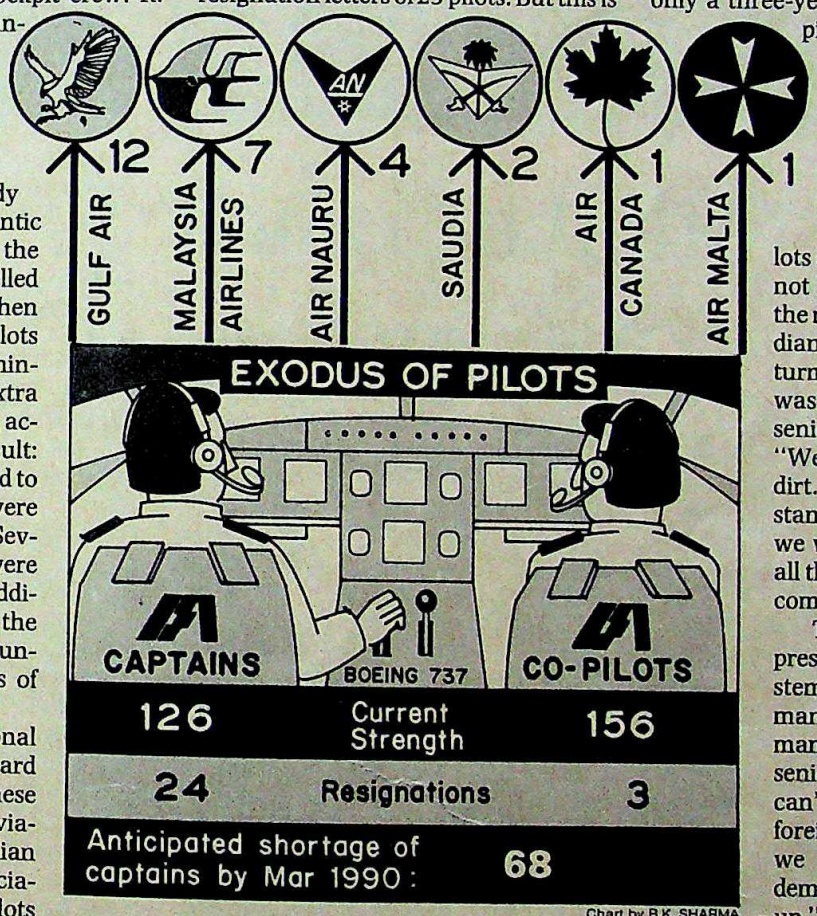

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

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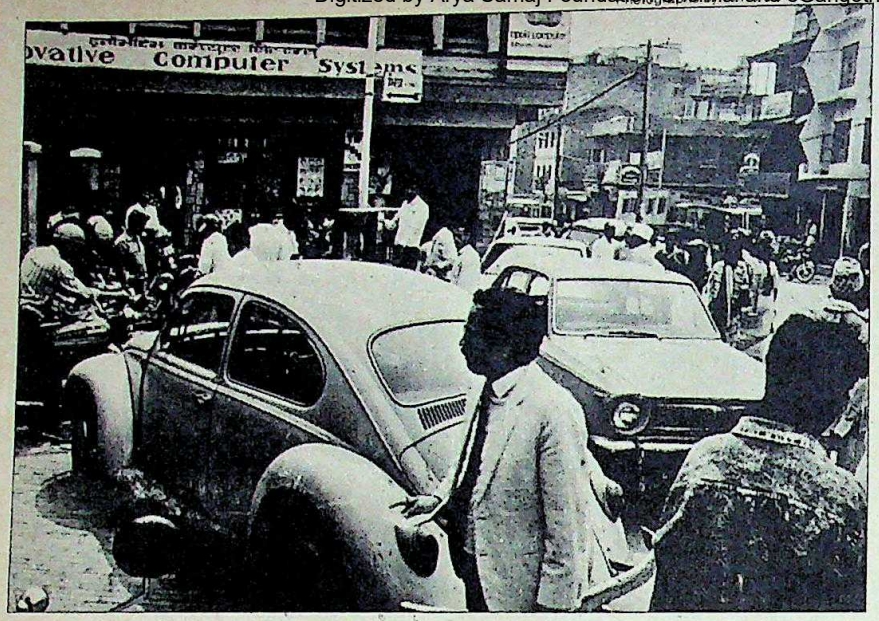
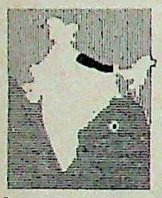


Cars at a petrol pump (above left); and fruits and vegetables being unloaded: living with less

NEPAL

Coping with the Crunch

A show of normalcy, but things continue to look grim



THE Himalayan kingdom has, after all, not melted. At least so far. Five months after the lifelines from India to Nepal were blocked, the country of 18 million still breathes, if spasmodically. In a remarkable show of resilience and defiance, the Nepal Government has weathered the crisis caused by non-renewal of its trade and transit treaties with India. But a heavy toll has been taken of the kingdom's economy and the people's suffering is enormous.

At a time when there should have been panic, there are deceptive signs of normalcy in Kathmandu. Buses taking tourists to Pokhara run down the mountains from Kathmandu. Goods-laden trucks groan uphill. Mitsubishi buses and Toyota cars are back on the roads. Japanese motorcycles are roaring again. Even Tribhuvan University, closed in April due to acute shortages, has re-opened. Nepal Oil Corporation tankers trundling up from Amlekhganj, Nepal's main petroleum storage centre, indicate the availability of petroleum products. In Kathmandu, queues for kerosene are rare. And at Pauka Bazaar near Moongling in central Nepal, shops seem to be doing well.

Foodgrain and fuel supply has indeed improved. Says an Indian doctor working in Kathmandu: "For two days in May my orderly didn't have fuel to cook food. Now supplies are more regular." A Nepali Communist partyman put the improvement in another perspective: "We're stoical by nature and don't display our emotions. Hence the superficial normalcy."

It's not clear how long this enforced normalcy will last. The Government has withdrawn the rationing of petroleum products introduced after the expiry of the treaties. But this may just be a sign of overconfidence. After rationing was introduced, panic spread and people feverishly hoarded fuel. Says B.P. Poudial, a businessman: "It is due to hoarding till late July that you find so many vehicles on the road. A few more weeks without supplies will revert us to the situation in April."

But even after withdrawal of rationing, fuel prices have risen by 40 per cent. Transport charges and bus fares have skyrocketed. Rues Ram Sharma, a cigarette seller near Moongling: "Earlier we used to get a bus every 20 minutes, now we have to wait hours." Adds K.P. Bhattarai, leader of the Nepali Congress: "Now I can't afford to either pay or wait for taxis."

Nepal dismisses these as minor irritants. On Durbar Marg, Kathmandu's stately avenue leading to the royal palace, a Nepali official surveys the Sunkosi restaurant teeming with tourists and remarks: "We haven't collapsed, have we?"

But the surface normalcy hides the enormous price Nepal has already paid to ensure supplies. And things outside the pampered capital of Kathmandu are ve different. A retired Indian Army havilda Pupna Bahadur Gurung, now settled Darechowk in Nepal's Chitwan distric complains: "Even clothes are being sold the black market. *Kya karega?*"

Nepal has in fact been importin goods in huge quantities. Border custom officials confirm that on an average trucks enter Nepal daily, with goods im ported from countries other than India goods which could be more easily im ported from India even after paying th normal taxes levied after the expiry of th treaties. Everything from sugar to cycl from Japan, China and Singapore hav filled the stores. Asks an incensed Bhatta rai: "Who needs clothes from Hong Kon and shoes from Bangkok? The commo ers usually go to the border to buy cheap Indian clothes. The Brahmins and Ksh triyas in the hills need dhotis which can come from Singapore."

Nepal's effort to show it can survi without India's help has evinced sarcast reactions. "This is perhaps the first time country has cut its nose to spite its neigh bour," comments an Indian official. Med cines, sugar, textiles and bicycles are ju some of the items Nepal could import fro India but is now buying elsewhere.

In a bid to breathe life into the gaspin economy, Nepal has liberalised impor disbursed open general licences and di ped into its meagre foreign exchange re erves to stock up whatever petroleum could with its limited storage capacity Said a member of the Rashtriya Pancha yat, Nepal's parliament: "The Govern

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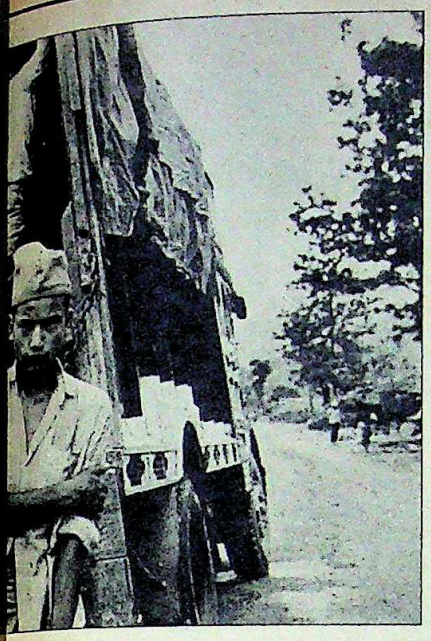

"Even clothes are being sold in the black market. What are we to do?"

PUPNA BAHADUR GURUNG
retired Indian Army havildar

"Earlier, we used to get a bus every 20 minutes, but now we sometimes have to wait for hours."

RAM SHARMA
cigarette-seller

ment has ruined our economy for years to come. Funds have been diverted from development works to finance imports and provide cash incentives for exports."

The Government has announced cash subsidies to promote export of things like noodles, biscuits and ginger which it can afford to send out. Earlier Nepali goods were not levied import duties in India. Now after paying import duties, these goods cannot compete in Indian markets. Nepal hopes subsidised goods will sell in Pakistan and Bangladesh. "Subsidies ranging from 10 to 25 per cent have been announced to export semi-finished leather for which there's tremendous demand," says a member of the Nepal Chamber of Industries and Commerce.

THE situation is indeed grim. The Nepalese Government itself admits to a revenue loss of Nepali Rs 100 crore (Rs 59.5 crore) and a production loss of Rs 200 crore (Rs 120 crore) during the last three months of the last financial year that ended in June, due to the expiry of the treaties with India in March. And Finance Minister Bahadur Pradhan says the situation could worsen in the current year.

The fuel bill for Nepal which stood at around Nepali Rs 80 crore in the first nine months of the last financial year is projected to rise to Rs 160 crore this year due to the higher cost of imports. And Nepal owes India over Rs 2 crore for petroleum.

Pradhan admits that Nepali Rs 400 crore (Rs 240 crore) earmarked for development could not be spent last year and that funds were diverted, presumably for import of essential goods. Taxes have been imposed on even vegetables and fruits, airport taxes have been hiked and tourists and film makers are charged more. Nepal is looking to Pakistan and Bangladesh for goods supply and trade talks with the two countries have been described as optimistic. Nepal is also increasing its storage capacity to lessen dependence on India.

In the absence of coal from India, coal-based industries like cement and brick kilns have closed down in Nepal. The Hetauda cement factory near Birganj has been closed for one and a half months, rendering 500 workers unemployed.

Yet, the Nepalese tenacity has taken New Delhi by surprise. The Nepalese economy has been so dependent on India, it was inconceivable that it could withstand the pressures of imports at considerable cost. Nepal's rear-guard action has only underscored the length it is ready to go to assert political independence.

A section of the Nepali press and anti-India coterie in the palace suggests that Nepal wait for Rajiv's possible defeat in the forthcoming polls, then negotiate treaties with the new government. Till then, Nepal should survive by begging, borrowing and scraping the barrel. But beneath this impressive show of defiance is a lurking sense of defeat. Says a Nepalese politician sadly: "You can fight history but it is futile to fight geography." Concurred a Nepal-watcher: "You cannot even draw the map of Nepal without drawing either India or China." For a poor country hemmed in by two giants, solace it seems, lies in conciliation, not confrontation. —UTTAM SENGUPTA in Nepal

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QUALIFICATIONS

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DATE OF COMMENCEMENT

July 1, 1990.

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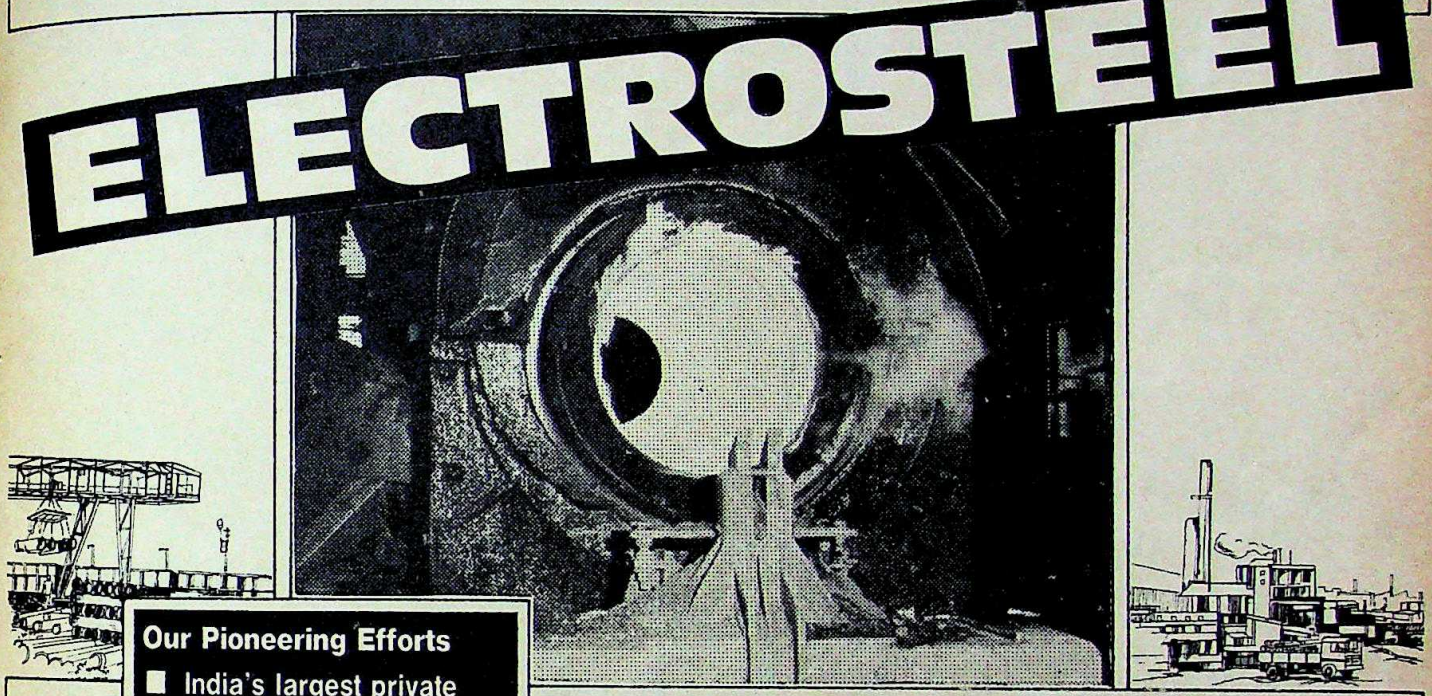

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UNITED KINGDOM

Spreading Tentacles

Two gangs of Indian youth have links with major crime syndicates

IT began last January as a routine low-level police probe into street-fights between two Asian gangs in Southall, London's largest Indian settlement. Five months into the investigation, Scotland Yard sleuths realised that beneath many street-scuffles, were the dangerous tentacles of mafia-like syndicates that operated far beyond Southall's High Street, in Birmingham, Bradford, Bombay and Karachi. Worried Yard detectives soon formed a crack team of 14 officers to launch a secret inquiry codenamed Operation Shampoo.

The results, announced last month, were astounding. The warring second generation Indian youth seemed to be part of an Asian crime syndicate with a finger in every sleazy pie—drugs, illegal immigration, credit card thefts, protection packets and frauds involving building societies, banks and insurance. The police swooped down upon 190 youths and, quite suddenly, Indians were on the list of mafias in the jungle of London's cosmopolitan underworld.

Clearly, Operation Shampoo was a sensitive project. To start with, it involved strict secrecy—arrests are still being made in a bid to bust a syndicate involving operatives in nine countries and Scotland Yard has been acting in tandem with authorities not only in India and Pakistan, but also in Canada, West Germany and Belgium. Yard detectives privately admit that booking the well-connected and wealthy bosses of the mafia may be a different proposition altogether.

At the centre of the racket are two gangs—the Tooti Nungs (have-nots) and the Holy Smokes—who had clashed sporadically on the streets of Southall over the last decade, but without any serious fall-out. The gangs are offshoots of the Southall Youth Movement (SYM), which grew out of the early '70s resistance to racial attacks by the then powerful white right-wing organisation, National Front (NF). The first gang to be formed was the Tooti Nungs, whose members were unemployed youths. The Holy Smokes was a breakaway group formed by sons of well-to-do Indian businessmen.

Said Pyare Lal Khabra, Southall-based chief of the Indian Workers Association: "The two gangs began to take the colour of caste-based groups. The Holy Smokes seemed a jat-dominated gang, while the Tooti Nungs was said to comprise supposedly lower caste youths."

Over the last two years, the two gangs had begun to openly defy the law and mark their presence on the streets of Southall, worrying police officials like Inspector Geof Bryden, the community liaison officer in the area. Said Bryden: "They had their trade marks, they would go cruising in two or three cars—either black Capris or Stags—to stimulate trouble. They would often arm themselves with knives and pickaxes. There would be disorder in pubs but at other times, they would blend in with the local population. They seemed to affect no one but themselves."

But unknown to unsuspecting locals, the two gangs had begun to grow menacingly and had become involved in serious crimes. A stunned Indian community heard the Yard disclose that the gangs indulged in:

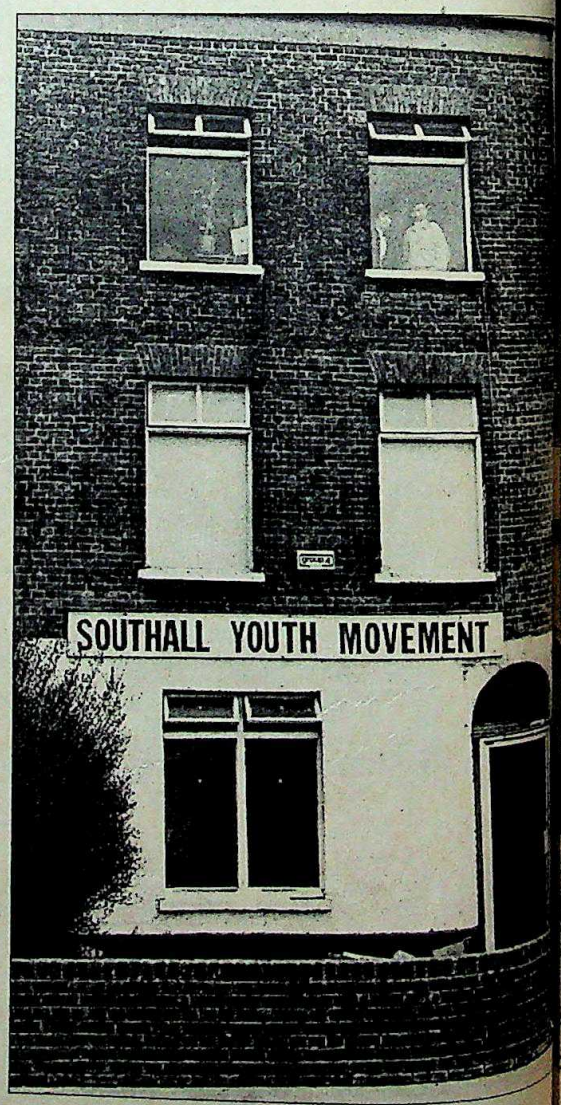
► Protection rackets: they had their territories of operation marked out and, within those areas, would extort protection money from shopkeepers and restaurant-owners.

► Illegal immigration: immigrants were smuggled in from the subcontinent with forged passports and documents. Twenty illegal immigrants were found sheltered by the gangs. According to Scotland Yard Detective Superintendent Roy Herridge who supervised the operation, Bombay was a major link in the smuggling in of Sri Lankan immigrants. The immigrants usually seek political asylum after entering a West European country.

► Credit card fraud: some of the illegal immigrants found jobs as postmen and stole credit cards which were used to buy goods that would be re-sold. The fraud was put at £200,000.

► Bank, building society and insurance

Scotland Yard has detected that the gangs are involved in drug running and immigration rackets



■ SYM building: embarrassing links

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frauds: police busted a £4 million fraud to obtain building society loans. Other frauds were unearthed, including one involving more than £ 12 million.

▶ Drugs: the gangs smuggled in drugs, including heroin and cocaine. Detectives recovered heroin with a street value of £ 500,000.

At the end of the six-month-long probe, Herridge declared that violent crime in Southall had dropped by 38 per cent and robberies by 26 per cent. But he knows that nabbing the bosses may not be easy. Though he is tight-lipped about their identity, the possibility is that they are not based in Southall and are influential men. But Herridge is optimistic: "I have received 100 per cent cooperation from authorities in India, who have written to me praising the operation and I have the people's support."

ACCORDING to well-placed sources, Tooti Nungs over the years has received the patronage of some powerful figures in Southall. Unconfirmed reports associate a slain Sikh moderate with the gang while others say Tooti Nungs was paid £16,000 by a well-known figure to intervene in a dispute over the trusteeship of a gurudwara and to illegally transfer money to India. The claim if true, could throw a very different light on the activities of the gang. But said Bryden: "The claim (about their links with militants) has never been substantiated and it's not something we are looking into."

Scotland Yard was quick to defend the Indian community as a whole. "The scale of the criminal activity did surprise me, but I strongly maintain that Indians in Britain are a very peaceful community. It's only a small number of youths who has taken advantage of British laws and the peaceful nature of the Indian community," Herridge said.

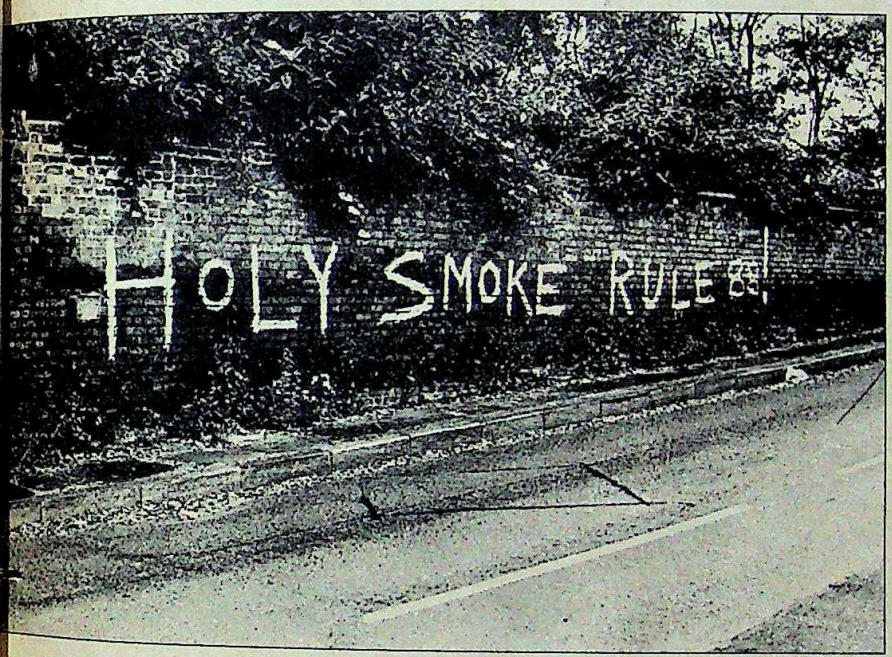
But one person who is angry with the media hype over the happenings in London is Khabra. As news of the Yard's success hit the front pages of national dailies and was highlighted with characteristic verve by the tabloid press, Khabra rejected the assertion that the gangs were part of a mafia. Said he: "These were unemployed kids picked up by outsiders to act as a cover and divert police attention. This was no Mafia. The gang leaders used Southall to make money while the small fries got the blame."

That's an argument which finds support. According to the last census taken in 1981, 9.1 per cent of Southall's male Asian population is unemployed—a proportion described by local politicians as "quite high". Also influencing Southall's perception of the arrests has been the fact that Tooti Nungs was involved in efforts to physically combat the NF in pitched street battles in the early '80s, especially in protecting Indian women from harassment by front members. Said Virendra Sharma, a leading Indian member of the Labour Party, Britain's largest Opposition: "People used Tooti Nungs to give them respectability. At one time, they were thought to be the best way to strike against racism."

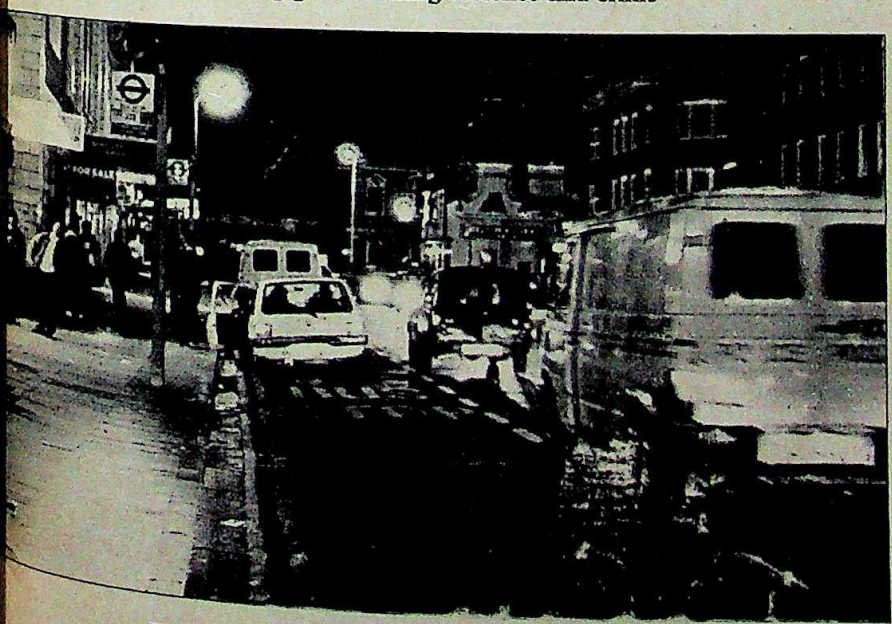
Sharma also admits that community leaders in the area have ignored the needs of the youth and that it was only a matter of time before the situation was exploited. "Local governments have ignored Southall for years. There are hardly any youth clubs and the pressure on youngsters to adjust to the differing life-styles at home and outside is enormous. On top of that there is the unemployment factor. We turned a blind eye to these gangs, thinking that things would be all right once they got jobs. We didn't anticipate anything like what has come out."

Operation Shampoo may have mopped up crime in the area, but it clearly has shocked Southall's estimated 80,000 Indians. Said a restaurant owner on Southall's busy High Street: "This has given us a bad name." Even so, it's an episode locals have begun to shrug off, unmindful of the heavy police presence on Southall's bustling, shop-filled lanes. It's the future they have to look to with apprehension.

—DIPANKAR DE SARKAR in London



■ Gang graffiti: rising violence and crime



■ A Southall street by night: strict police vigilance

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CRICKET

On the Front Foot

Banned cricketers challenge board decision

IT all ain't over till it's lost. Six senior Indian cricketers—Dilip Vengsarkar, Kapil Dev, Ravi Shastri, Mohammed Azharuddin, Arun Lal and Kiran More—have certainly picked up this baseball lesson during their North American sojourn last May which led the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to ban them from playing cricket for one year. For when the Working Committee of the BCCI met in Bombay on August 19, the stars displayed a resolve that would have done them wonders in West Indies. They sent the board a stiff, quasi-legal notice challenging the legality of the contract, and arguing that the offending Clause 7 only prohibited them from playing in South Africa.

Obviously, the cricketers had done a little homework—like reading the contract—and went on the front foot. They argued the ban was unjustified as the agreement was coercive; the players were prohibited from playing for private promoters only in South Africa; and only during the tour (three months). Their letter argued: "We have not contravened any provision of the contract in a manner that warrants this punishment or any punishment at all."

The board was momentarily stumped. Said A.W. Kanmadikar, member of the Disciplinary Committee: "We were taken aback by the tone of the letter. A sincere apology would have helped solve the matter." Officials said they would consult lawyers and decide on a course of action—even as the Supreme Court, hearing a writ petition against the ban filed by an official of the Delhi Cricket Association on August 23, observed that the board and players should arrive at a compromise if necessary with the attorney-general being "umpire". "Let's get on with the game," Chief Justice E.S. Venkataramaiah said.

The punishment did seem harsh as the board does not have a terrific record in enforcing discipline. As a board member sympathetic to the stars said, it let off Pataudi's team lightly after drunken street brawls in Nagpur in 1969, and failed to discipline a captain found drinking on a rest day in Australia, losing the match and the rubber subsequently.

The players were also divided. Kapil Dev—with his significant business interests—allegedly did not want to antagonise the board authorities. The five (Ravi Shastri is currently playing county cricket) met K. Srikkanth and Sunil Gavaskar to try and hammer out a strategy. But Srikkanth—who has captaincy aspirations—refused to issue a statement, and Gavaskar's suggestion that they shouldn't rock the boat didn't prevail.

Apart from the Clause 7 defence, advocates have pointed out that while the board reserved the right to select, punish and drop players, a player had no choice. Gavaskar adds: "The players have other things on their mind, like equipping themselves (when they are given the contract). They have no time to worry over it or chase lawyers." Board Secretary Ranbir Singh disagrees: "The agreement is given well in time."

Players argue that the ban is a restrictive trade practice, citing the ruling in Greig vs Insole—when Tony Greig and Mike Procter sued the Test and County Cricket Board which banned cricketers who joined Kerry Packer's World Series from first-class cricket in England in 1978.

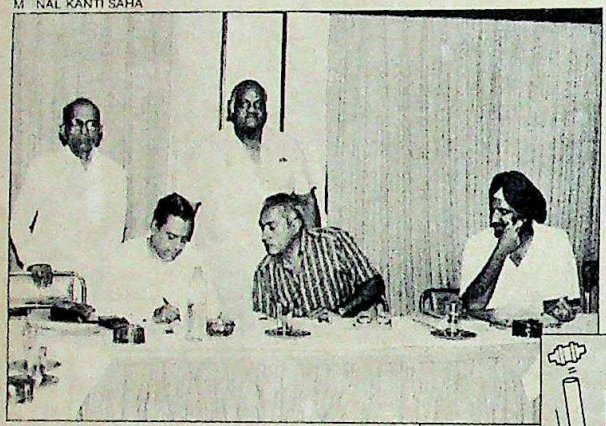
Board officials have retaliated by approaching former stars to find out if they'd return. Kanmadikar issued an open appeal to Sandip Patil and Gavaskar. Roger Binny, Anshuman Gaekwad and Syed Kirmani may also get a call.

Officials sympathetic to the players—including president B.N. Dutt—are few and their hands are tied. Lobbying with the Prime Minister's Office didn't help, nor was aid forthcoming from Board Vice-President Madhavrao Scindia and former president N.K.P. Salve. Reports about cricketers receiving offers from South Africa came in the midst of all this. London-based left-arm spinner Dilip Doshi, whose name cropped up as a possible contact man, told INDIA TODAY: "I don't believe any Indian would ever go to South Africa. The money offered is massive, but we can't sell ourselves."

The last ball has not been bowled. A cricket official admitted: "The ban stays as of today—I can't tell what will happen tomorrow." Either way, the match seems wide open.

—SALIL TRIPATHI

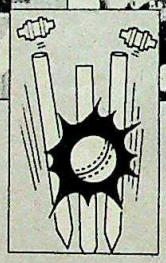
M. NAL KANTI SAHA



Disciplinary Committee: harsh decision

NAMAS BHOJANI

Vengsarkar and Kapil: new stance



The banned cricketers have sent the board a stiff, quasi-legal notice challenging the legality of the contract.

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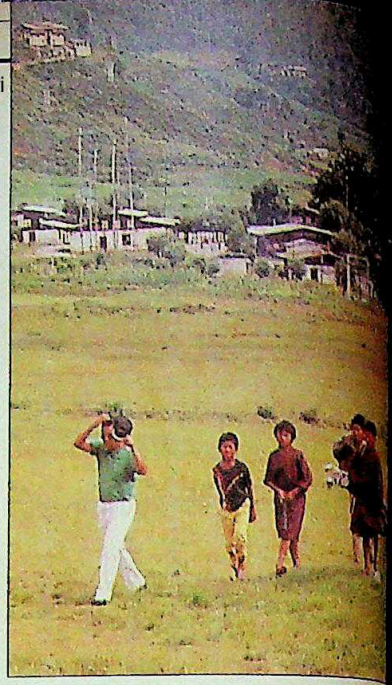
BHUTAN

Between Two Worlds

In less than three decades the tiny mountain kingdom has come full circle. From complete isolation to frenetic development—causing an erosion of culture—and now a conscious effort by the regime to revert to the traditional Bhutanese way of life.



NOT long ago, it was the mystery mountain kingdom with names as vivid as its scenery—"the land of the hidden treasures"; "the land of the thunder dragon". Then suddenly, in the mid-'60s, the doors of this Shangrila swung open. But the pace of the development that followed was so frenetic that somewhere down the line Bhutan lost its equilibrium. So when a few months back, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck launched 'Driglam Namza'—which means a revival of Bhutanese tradition and culture—Bhutan appeared to have come full circle in less than three decades. From complete isolation to rapid modernisation and equally suddenly, an attempt to return to the traditional way of life.

So inaccessible was the hill kingdom in the early '60s that Pandit Nehru had to travel for a week on ponies and yaks from Gangtok in Sikkim to reach Paro and Thimpu in Bhutan. After this arduous journey he gifted Bhutan its first road. With this, Bhutan was on the road to modernisation—often with Indian assistance. Bhutan's Foreign Minister for over 15 years, Dasho Dawa Tshering, says that before this, "there were no schools, no roads, no communication, no air link, no currency and no central administration."

The jump from the medieval to the modern was sudden—tiny Bhutan appeared to be in a mad rush to catch up with other countries, make up for lost time. In 1971 the barter system was ended and Bhutan introduced its own currency, Ngultrum; in 1974 it opened its doors to tourists; two years later it established a telegraphic network; in 1983 it launched its own airlines, Druk Air; and early this month Bhutan got an STD line.

But alongside the beginnings of modern communication, trade and industry there came an erosion of the Bhutanese way of life. Western norms became the rage. Commercialisation disturbed the tranquillity of yore. Says Chenkyab Dorji, a senior minister and secretary of the Planning Commission: "The transformation of Bhutan is too great. From nothing

JIGME SINGYE WANGCHUCK

"Haste to develop eroded our traditions"

EDUCATED in Darjeeling and Britain, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, 34, ascended the throne of Bhutan when he was only 17. He has set his country on the road to modernisation, even while trying to retain its centuries-old traditions. He spoke to Senior Correspondent KAMALJEET RATTAN *in his resplendent throne room. Excerpts:*

Q. *Bhutan was surging towards modernisation. Why the sudden halt?*

A. Since we opened up in the early '60s, modernisation has been our main aim. It still is. But the haste to develop was eroding everything Bhutanese. There was resentment from the clergy. We had to take steps.

Q. *Steps which were unpopular...?*

A. That is not true. The laws which are part of Driglam Namza were introduced after a lot of thinking. The clergy wanted it. Besides, modernisation may make the people happy materialistically but they won't be content in the long run. We must keep the youth aware of the Bhutanese way of life.

Q. *Won't it retard development?*

A. No. We consider the per capita contentment of people the yardstick of development. Gross national happiness is more important than gross national product. We are aiming at a perfect blend of modernisation and culture.

Q. *That's a Utopian task. Besides, won't it cause a lot of resentment?*

A. There shouldn't be. We are willing to change. Only values should not change. We are religious people who respect spiritual values, elders and the joint family. We must preserve this.

Q. *Why do you restrict tourists?*

A. Ninety per cent of tourists flocked to our monasteries. They invaded the privacy of the monks, barged into their living quarters, kitchens, everywhere. They disturbed prayer gatherings. The monks protested. So we restricted visits to certain monasteries and imposed a ceiling on the number of tourists.

Q. *But tourism can get Bhutan much-needed foreign exchange.*

A. If that were our aim we would have accepted the proposal to make Bhutan the Switzerland of the East long back. Unhindered tourist flow would lead to drug trafficking and smuggling. We've already lost 40 antiques.

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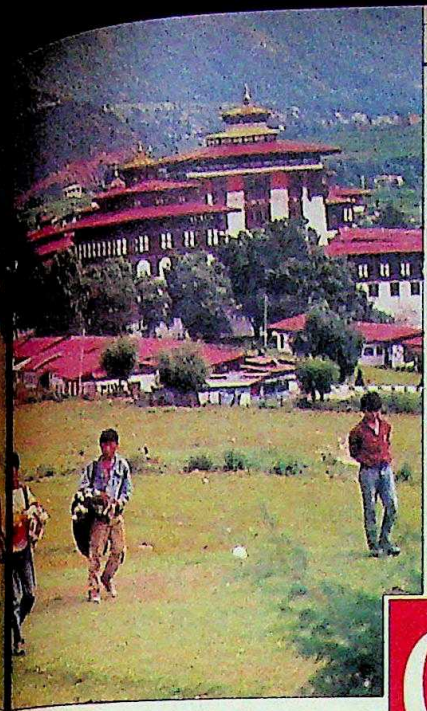


Golf replaces the national sport, archery (above); and youngsters put up posters of western stars

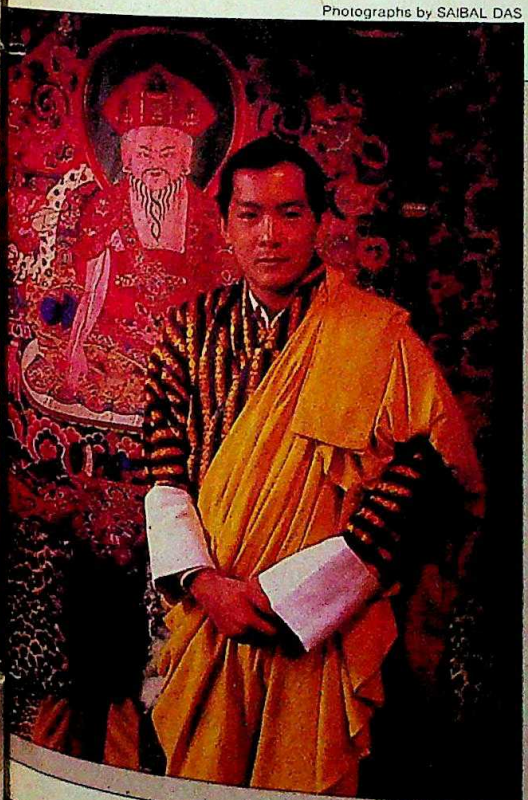
Change came so suddenly to the mountain-ringed kingdom that many of the country's youth today confuse modernisation with westernisation.

to everything would be the best way of describing the change."

Development always comes at a price and today Bhutan is paying it. Abandoning their dress, customs and lifestyle, many youngsters blindly ape the West. In the towns, the idols of the young are western rock singers and Indian film stars—two favourites are Vinod Khanna and Dharmendra. The elite have abandoned the national sport, archery, and are more comfortable playing golf. They speak English with an American accent. "The present generation is not inclined towards our folk songs and traditional mask dances. They prefer discos," laments a Thimpu elder. The advent of the dollar-wealthy western tourist has also led to the smuggling of priceless Buddhist antiques. Worse, the untouched Bhutanese have been exposed to drug abuse.

"Our people were very simple till we opened our windows to the outside world. They survived on subsistence farming and cattle rearing. No Bhutanese was in business or trade," says Dorji. The locals' ignorance of trade and commerce resulted in many Indian businessmen setting up shop in Bhutan in the late '60s and '70s. Indians not only monopolised business and trade but also grabbed most of the contract jobs. But along with building roads and a communications network, these businessmen also changed the demography of Bhutan as they brought

Photographs by SAIBAL DAS



Q. *Does Bhutan have trained manpower to ensure real modernisation?*

A. That's our greatest worry. Free education and health are our major investments. Our priority in the sixth plan is to build a cost-effective administration.

Q. *Why the ban on Indian TV?*

A. We are investing nearly $ 6 million on our own satellite. If people get used to Indian or Bangladesh TV they won't patronise Bhutan TV whose programmes will be inferior initially. Once our TV is on, they can see TV of neighbouring countries. Besides, a lot of western films are shown on Bangladesh television. We do not want youth to confuse westernisation with modernisation.

Q. *Have anti-India feelings grown?*

A. There are no anti-India feelings. That was played up by a section of the Indian press when we dismantled 29 illegal dish antennae. Some entrepreneurs without licences installed dish antennae for Rs 20,000 and gave connections for Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000. For 100 connections, they made Rs 2 lakh.

Q. *Even you have removed the antenna from atop your palace.*

A. How can I do something I do not want my people to do?

Q. *Do you see India as a big brother?*

A. Our friendship is based on mutual respect. Friends never bully each other.

Q. *What is the role of* SAARC*?*

A. We are a small country and want to coexist peacefully with neighbours. SAARC nations must trust each other. Smaller countries must realise that India offers a big market and opportunities to avail of the latest technologies.

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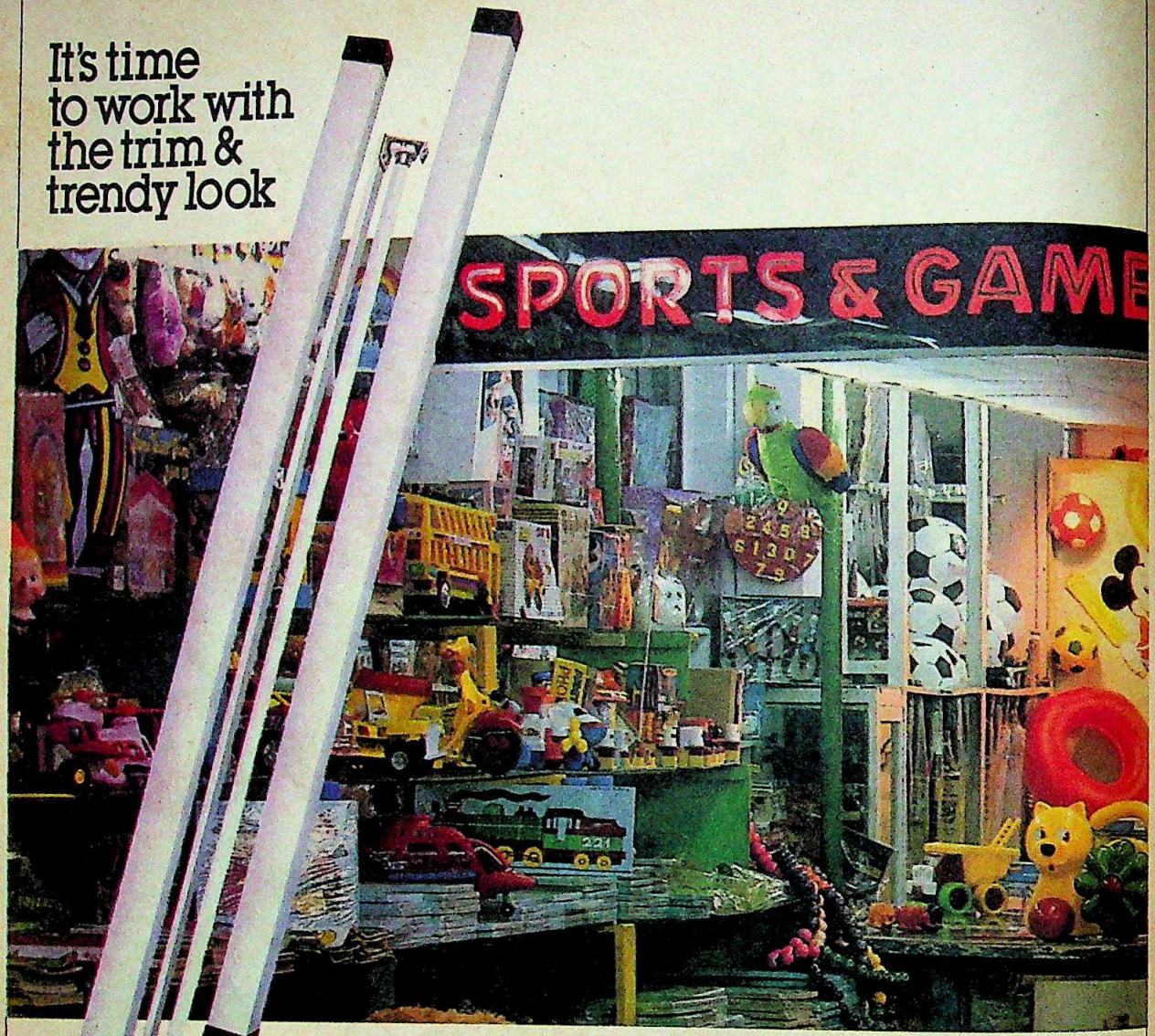
It's time to work with the trim & trendy look



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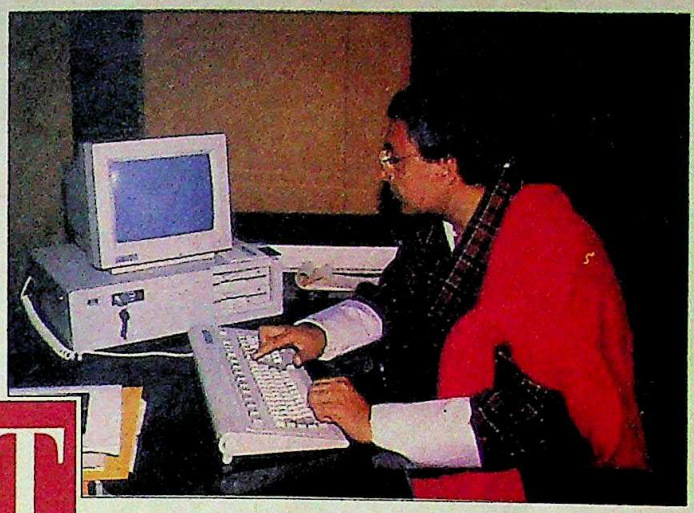
thousands of labourers from India and Nepal to work on these projects. And today, southern Bhutan has a larger population of Nepalis than Bhutanese.

All these changes have alarmed many—particularly the older generation and the Buddhist monks. "In the haste to develop we had almost neglected our distinct culture. We do not want to become dummies of the West or lose our identity," says a senior official, who welcomes the imposition of Driglam Namza.

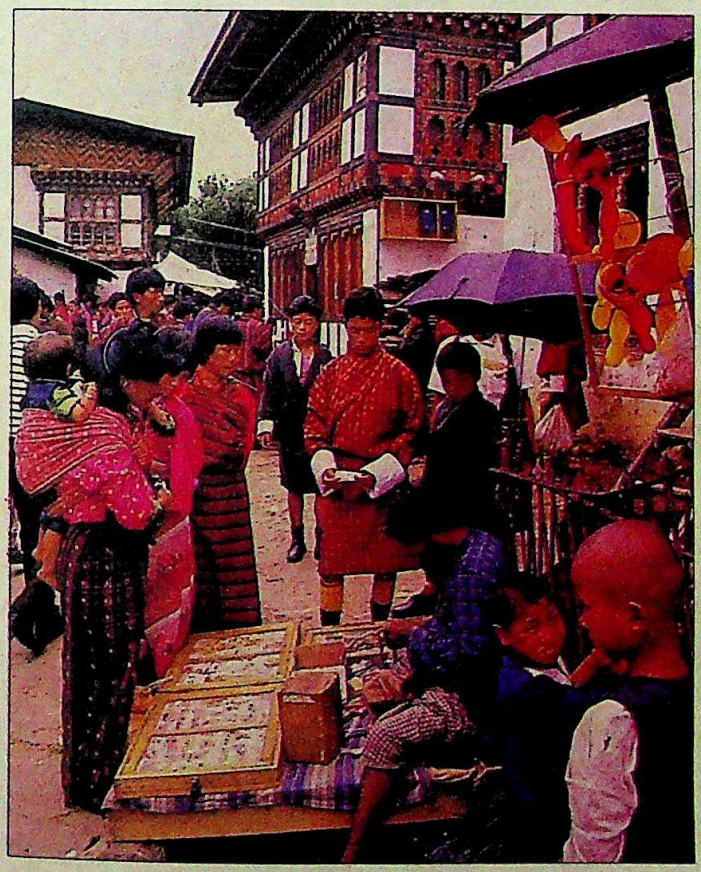
But if many of the changes in Bhutan are drastic, so are some of the rules laid down by the regime as part of Driglam Namza—a phrase which at best can be explained as a revival of Bhutanese culture, spiritual values and their distinct way of life. When it was launched in April this year, one of the first steps taken was to ban viewing of television—as Bhutan has no TV, viewers watched Indian and Bangladesh TV. It was an unpopular step, particularly with the Indians and Nepalis living in southern Bhutan. Says Pema Pradhan, a young Nepali woman: "Why should we be denied watching Mahabharat and Ramayan on Indian TV?"

Another controversial step was to make the national dress—*baku* for men and *kira* for women—compulsory for every Bhutanese national. Again, it was the Bhutanese people of Nepali origin who protested the most. Says Mani Rai, a resident of Thimpu: "We don't even know how to wear this dress." Many ethnic Bhutanese youth—who prefer jeans and T-shirts—too have not taken kindly to this rule. Tshering, however, says: "Every country has a national dress so why not Bhutan? This step has not been opposed."

More popular is the effort to develop the official language, Dzongka. It has been made the compulsory second language in all English medium schools and throughout Bhutan free evening classes are held to teach Dzongka to government employees.



Though much of the trade in Bhutan is currently in the hands of Indians, there is now a conscious attempt by the Bhutanese administration to restrict their numbers.



Computers gain currency (top); and an Indian sets up a pavement stall

Also part of Driglam Namza are the curbs on Indians entering Bhutan. Work permits are not being renewed and the Government has stopped issuing fresh trade licences to Indian businessmen. Besides, orders have been issued to businessmen, traders and factory owners to reduce the number of Indian labourers in their units. In a short span of time the number of Indians in Bhutan has gone down from one lakh to half a lakh.

Bhutan's monarch, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck is quick to clarify that he means no insult to India (*see interview*). Says he: "None of our decisions is anti-India. We are just trying to involve our people in all aspects of national development. We want more and more Bhutanese to get into trade as well as industry." He stresses: "All that we are doing is to see and ensure that Bhutan remains Bhutan."

That is more easily said than done. Though the sentiment behind Driglam Namza is laudable, punishing people for watching television or dressing as they please, is unlikely to restore Bhutanese traditions. And though certain values have been lost, Bhutan has also gained much from the three decades of modernisation. Methods of farming have, for instance, improved. Earlier, farmers refused to use improved seeds or fertilisers though they were distributed free of cost. Today, there are long queues for agricultural aids. The result: a jump in agricultural yields.

There's also an increase in the literacy level. Dorji recalls parents refusing to educate their children though the king would bear the cost of sending them to schools in India. "Now parents hide their kids' age and send them to school before they are six years old," he adds.

Though there has undoubtedly been a certain bastardisation of culture, just the fact that the regime has woken up to it, indicates that Bhutan could be one of the rare nations which reaps equally the benefits of both the ancient and the modern. —KAMALJEET RATTAN in Bhutan

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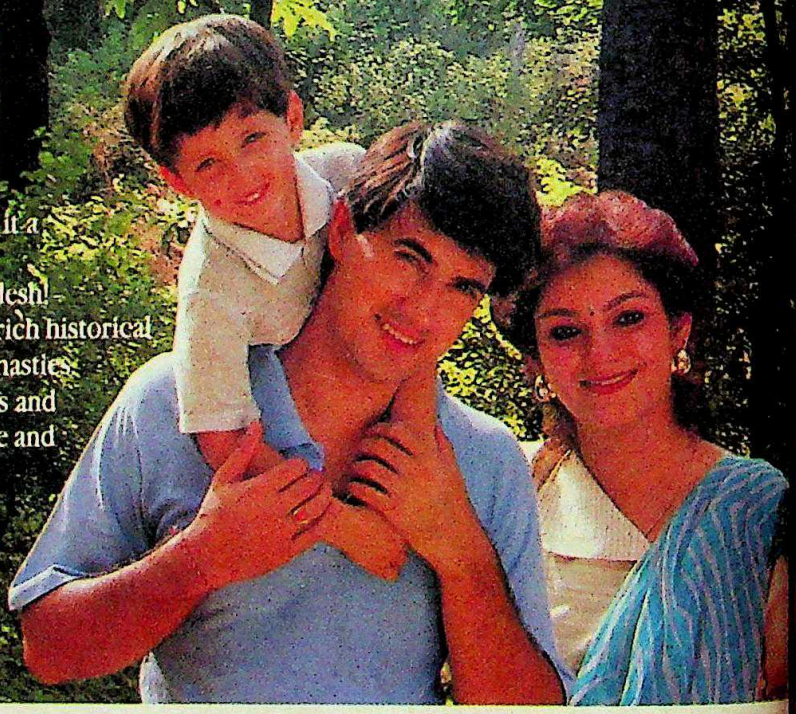
"How I gave my family a fascinating vacation without going North, South, East or West."



"No, we didn't stay at home. Neither was it a vacation to the middle of nowhere.

This year it was centre stage Madhya Pradesh!

And aren't we fortunate? We discovered a rich historical and cultural legacy. Ancient sites of great dynasties. Formidable forts that still echo battle sounds and tales of rare heroism. Legends of intense love and passion exquisitely chronicled in stone. Gorgeous palaces that still whisper the opulence, the style, the royal ambience.

Dense forests, the hunting ground of erstwhile emperors, transformed into vibrant wildlife sanctuaries."

"Madhya Pradesh!

It's where centuries seemed to be so charmingly preserved.

Unfolding great, golden moments everywhere we went.

Mandu — The City of Joy. The love of a poet prince for his beautiful consort is still alive in the many architectural wonders. You'll fall in love with Mandu. We did.

Gwalior Fort — This massive monument so inspired Emperor Babur that he called it the pearl amongst the fortresses of Hind.

Khajuraho — Magnificent. Beautiful. Sensuous. Khajuraho is many things to many people.

Sanchi — So serene! Glorious stupas and pillars stand as in deep meditation.

Pachmarhi — Enchanting. Tranquil. Myriad green shades embrace mountains. And everywhere there's the murmur of cool, crystal streams.

Amarkantak. Chitrakoot — Further, splashes of Nature's colourful canvas. And near Jabalpur wasn't the boat ride at the moonlit **Marble Rocks** a memorable experience.

Kanha. Bandhavgarh. Shivpuri — Wildlife reserves with such a profusion of species of birds, deer, antelopes, sambar, blackbuck. And, of course, the tiger.

Ujjain. Omkareshwar. Maheshwar — This is where a hundred gods have taken abode.

And **Bhopal** — The capital city. Hugging the shores of a magnificent lake. It is a quiet blend of mosques and museums, parks and gardens, broad avenues and modern buildings.

Madhya Pradesh!

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MILESTONES/MPT/15-[illegible]

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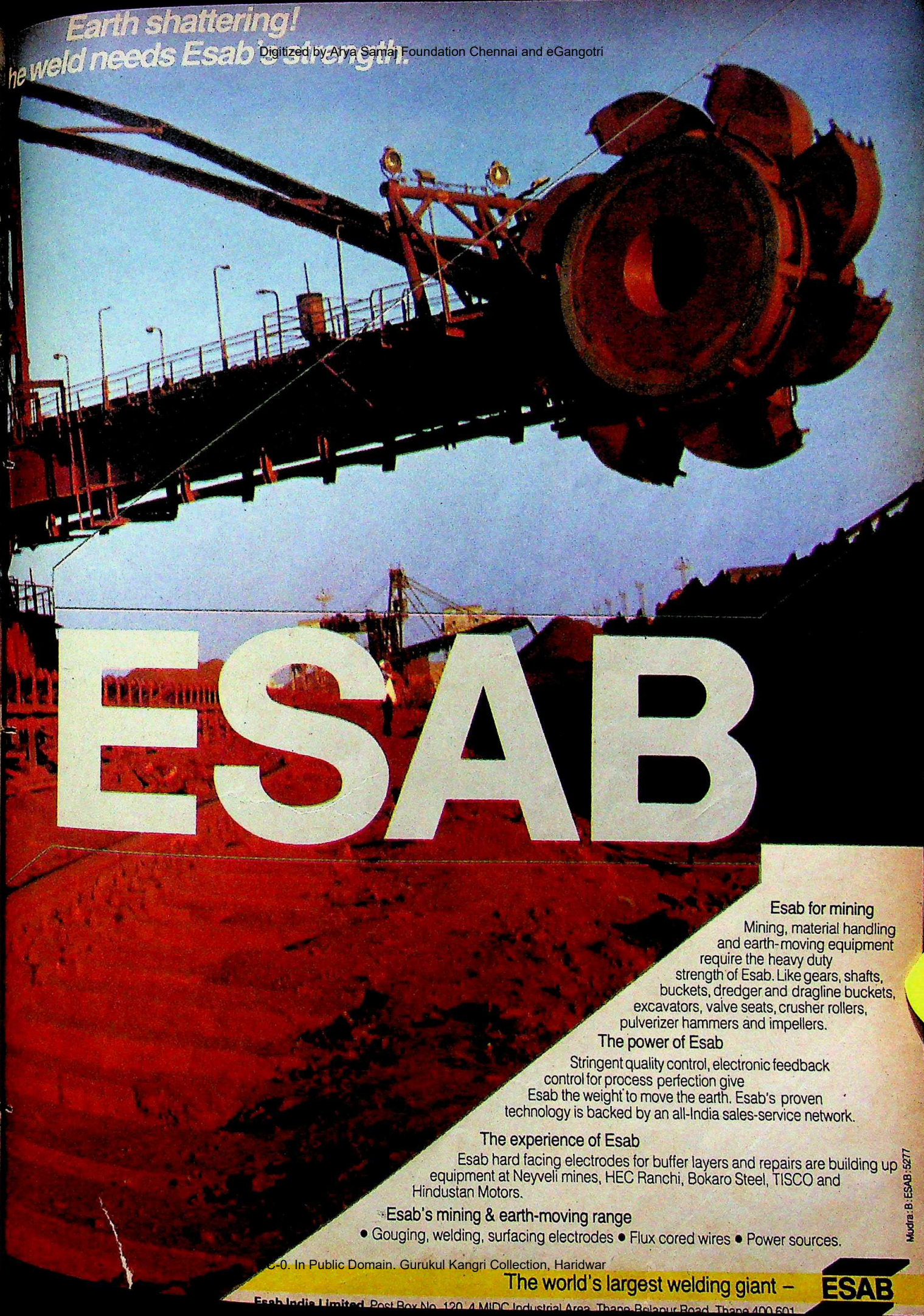

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Militant Menace

AS a national park, Manas in Assam has few parallels. It is not only one of the country's largest wildlife preserves but its vast grasslands and verdant foothills harbour as many as 19 of the most endangered species. Apart from tigers, it is home for such diverse animals as the hispid hare, the pygmy hog, the hoolock gibbon (India's only ape) and the clouded leopard.

Now, this magnificent park faces an unusual threat: Bodo agitators. Ever since the Bodo tribals locked themselves in a dangerous battle with the Assam Government, the problem has spilled over into the national park. Forest officials say that not only do militants use the park as a safe hide-out but frequently attack their staff. After 11 of its employees were killed, the department withdrew its guards from several ranges and S. Deb Roy, chief conservator of forests, admits that they have lost control over these areas.

PRITAM NARAYAN

Slaughtered rhino: increased poaching

That has seen both extremists and poachers going on a rampage: mowing down forests and killing animals. In just three months, four tigers, four rhinoceros, two elephants and over a dozen hog deer have allegedly been killed by the extremists or poachers. Widespread cutting of the forests for timber has been going on too. And the Government, busy quelling the agitation in other towns, has so far done little to stop the damage. If the situation continues, ecologists fear that Manas will soon be reduced to just a graveyard for wild animals.

Whistling Hunters

IN the '60s they were treated as vermin. State governments even offered hunters Rs 20 for producing their bushy tails as evidence of killings. Today, the dholes or Indian wild dogs are found only in stray forest ranges in India and are on the endangered list.

The dholes don't bark. Only whistle gently. And they are ferocious hunters. When they were in plenty few bothered to study them. Now as Naresh Bedi, noted wildlife film maker, would testify, it is difficult to even sight one. Bedi, along with brother, Rajesh, spent three years tracking the dogs and recording their life in the wilds on 16 mm film. Since the dogs bolt at the slightest suspicion of being watched, the Bedis used the overpowering stench of elephant dung to cover their tracks.

Mating dholes (above); and a pack feeding on a deer

Photographs by RAJESH BEDI

Their film on the dholes, *Whistling Hunters*, released last month, has some of the rarest footage ever taken of the animal. Among them: a sleek brown dhole bounding across emerald grasslands, a dramatic sequence of a pack hunting deer and rare scenes of the dogs' mating and breeding habits. There was also a moving shot of a bitch caring for her partially paralysed pup—indications that dholes are not as ruthless as they are made out to be. The Bedis' film has been telecast on the popular BBC programme *Wildlife on One*. Unfortunately, Doordarshan is yet to follow suit.

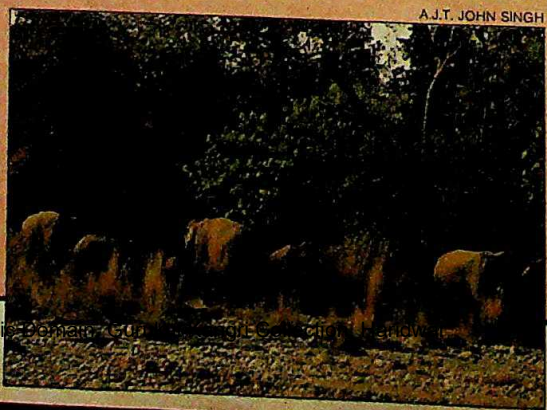
Cruel Corridor

FOR centuries wild animals had roamed freely in the forests ranging from Rajaji near Haridwar to Corbett at the Nainital foothills. Over the past two decades the crucial corridors linking these two major reserves have been steadily blocked. The Ramganga reservoir, an antibiotic factory, an army camp and a village to rehabilitate Tehri dam evacuees have come up on the dividing line between these reserves.

Now the only passage is the Chila-Motichur corridor, barely as wide as a cricket stadium and hardly three-km-long. The tract is a harrowing stretch for the 750 elephants, 140 tigers and herds of deer that are forced to use it. The animals have to climb a bridge across a channel, wade across the Ganges, cross four islands and walk past an army ammunition dump and a tiny village. Naturally, most prefer not to cross over at all. Only the more daring bull elephants and some tigers use the corridor. Worse, even the islands where animals stop to rest are being degraded.

Elephants in the passage: blocked

A.J.T. JOHN SINGH



The corridor is crucial for preventing inbreeding that weakens species. Fearing that it may be lost for ever, ecologists such as A.J.T. John Singh, joint director, Wildlife Institute of India in Dehra Dun, have been campaigning for the removal of the ammunition dump and the village. Two years ago, the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department promised to acquire the area and estimated that it would cost Rs 60 lakh. But so far the project has been only a lot of corridor talk.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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GUJARAT

Schools for Scandal

Stir against extortionate methods of private schools

JAVED RAJA

THE issue was the admissions-for-donations practice in the private schools of Vadodara. And the uproar was unprecedented, the agitators cutting across party lines and political affiliations. The people responded with alacrity; and gained by it. Those who lost were the city's private school managements.

The stir which began in May in Vadodara, and spread to other parts of the state last fortnight, has yielded much: 110 Vadodara schools have refunded Rs 25 lakh and promised to repay by end-August a staggering Rs 2 crore, collected since 1987.

The trouble began when Janata Dal worker, Yogesh Patel, drew attention to Vadodara schools compelling students to buy uniforms from specific shops. The management of one school, Zenith, went to the extent of asking the girls to buy their underwear from a particular shop. Says Yogesh Patel: "The school used to get a cut ranging from Rs 25 to Rs 50 on every dress sold. Some schools even changed their uniform every alternate year." Donations for admissions was the other alarming irregularity.

Patel floated the Vidyarthi Hitrakshak Samiti along with Congress(I) worker Suresh Rajput and the Janata Dal's Ajay Dave to redress disgruntled parents' grievances. The samiti aroused public opinion by organising street plays and demonstrations. It performed a mock *Shikshan Shuddi Yagna* to "purify the field of education". And it called for a bandh in Vadodara on July 12, which met with great success, with even five hotels agreeing to shut shop. The Vadodara stir's success had its echo in Bhavnagar, Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Surat and other towns of the state.

As the movement snowballed, the state's Education Department was forced to sit up. At the end of last month Education Minister Arvind Sanghvi despatched a team of 10 inspectors to look into the charges—and unusually, even gave official sanction to samiti members to check the schools' accounts. Declared sanghri emphatically: "We will not tolerate schools which compel parents to give donations. The district education officers have been directed to take strict action against them."

The stir against school donations in Vadodara has spread across the state and already yielded significant results.

Consequently, skeletons have been tumbling out of the schools' cupboards. A school called Little Flower had extracted Rs 14 lakh from parents, while another had collected Rs 20 lakh. A probe by District Collector Pradip Pujari and Municipal Commissioner S.K. Verma into the alleged use of the money for the construction of buildings revealed that nothing had been built.

Immediate action was taken. Show cause notices were slapped on the errant schools. Explained Pujari: "Our primary concern was to get the donations refunded. Now, we may also launch criminal prosecution against the schools." Finding that 110 schools out of a total of 192 were involved in the donation scandal, the state Education Department recommended that the Government terminate grants to 49 schools and derecognise another 26 of them.

Encouraged by the positive response, several parents lodged police complaints. Says Praful Patel, who had to shell out Rs 1,000 : "We are indebted to the samiti. Politicians are obsessed with issues like Bofors and do not care about the common man." The managements of kindergartens have been particularly guilty—charging an exorbitant monthly fee of Rs 150—because they do not come within the purview of the Primary Education Act. The samiti is now pressing the Government to redress this.

But the schools are in a Catch-22 situation: if the donations are discontinued they will be forced to close down while a fee raise will affect parents adversely. Says Sudhir Shah, president of the Ahmedabad Schools' Management Association: "Compulsory donations cannot be tolerated but the schools need funds to survive. So voluntary donations should be allowed." But then the dividing line between voluntary donations and coercive ones is razor thin, and private school managements can hardly be trusted to abstain from crossing it.

—UDAY MAHURKAR

VALLABH SHAH

Sanghvi: determined stand; and a mock *yagna*: purifying education

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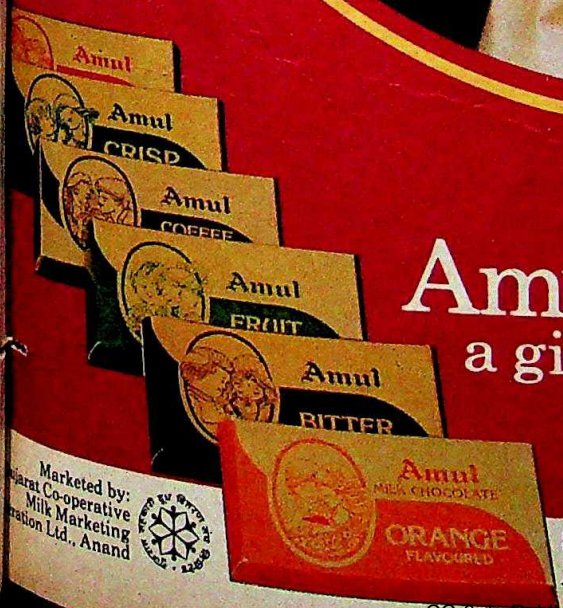

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The birds flew in from Siberia

Announcing the flight from Siberia.

After flying 5,000 kms, the travellers are settling in for winter.

It's Mother Nature's 'Event of the Year'. The coming of the Siberian Cranes to India.

Yes, the flight has arrived.

And so have the cars, vans, *de luxe* coaches, motorbikes and trains.

Bringing strange kinds of beings who don't give the wild life a chance.

Or a damn.

Tell that to the birds

Because of music which must be heard at 300-watt power.

Wild dances that must be accompanied by loud yells.

And the cat calls that are made when the creatures mate.

The birds can't tell us how they feel.

"But man is superior to animals".

You can tell that to the birds.

Help protect the heritage to which you belong

As you travel, you discover.

India's golden heritage, unparalleled anywhere else in the world.

पर्यटन विभाग भारत सरकार

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The animals came by car.

5,000 years of history in countless forts, monuments and shrines.
And the splendorous diversity of nature.
In myriad hues and colours.
Don't remain silent when someone defaces a monument, shows disrespect to a place of worship or pilgrimage, or in any other way damages or dirties the surroundings.

Persuade him.
Prevent him.
Report him.
Help protect your priceless heritage.
It's the only one you have.

We can & We will
Keep India Beautiful

Department of Tourism Government of India

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What did the Skypak Man say to the Chinese Buddha?

"Yes I know! It's always a great feeling to have delivered the message one has come to deliver!"

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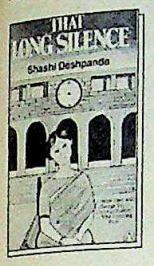
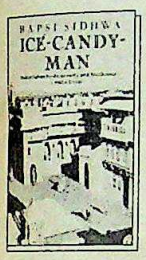
Sensitive Servings

Deshpande and Sidhwa fetch notice



THAT LONG SILENCE
by SHASHI DESHPANDE
Penguin Books, India
Pages: 193;
Price: Rs 55



ICE-CANDY-MAN
by BAPSI SIDHWA
Penguin
Pages: 277;
Price: Rs 111.75

IT'S the ladies' serve now. Fiction from the Indian subcontinent sparkled on the British literary landscape this decade: Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee. But more recently, fiction by women writers from the subcontinent seems to be in—and feted. Anita Desai won a Booker nomination a few years ago, and Nayantara Sahgal has been praised for her recent work of fiction. Feminist publishing houses like Virago and Women's Press have brought out works by half a dozen women writers in the last five years—though some were forgotten no sooner were they published...

Now, Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* and Pakistani writer Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* have both won wide critical acclaim. The two novels could not be more different. The Bangalore-based Deshpande has journeyed to the core of the stifling inner world of a middle class Indian woman, picking it apart with an almost brutal honesty. Sidhwa, who shuttles between Pakistan and the US where she teaches, has given what is probably the first Parsi look at the Partition in fiction. Yet the writers do have a few things in common: both are roughly the same age—late 30s, early 40s. And both navigate in what is fairly an uncharted terrain.

Ice-Candy-Man shows the Indian subcontinent being ripped apart—as well as a hilarious awakening to sensuality—through the eyes of Lenny, a young Parsi girl growing up in Lahore. There have been other books on the horrors of the Partition holocaust: *Train to Pakistan, Tamas, Freedom at Midnight*. But for us, this is the first fictional account to come from the other side of the Indus.

What distinguishes Sidhwa's account is the prism of Parsi sensitivity through which the times are depicted—a view from the outside, almost like watching a film. It is also filtered through the precocious innocence of the child. This is how Lenny sees an area go up in flames: "It is like a gigantic fireworks display in which stiff figures looking like spread-eagled stick-dolls leap into the air, black against the magenta furnace." Soon after, she picks up a "big, bloated celluloid doll....I turn it upside down and pull its legs apart."

Many Parsis, despite being in the eye of the storm, imagine themselves a community apart, close to the British. But even they are caught up in the violence, whether it is through their friends or servants. In Lenny's case it is the sensual Hindu ayah, who is like a "magnet" for the ice-candy-man and others. The Parsi dilemma is: whom do they cast their lot with? One of the community leaders, Mr Bankwalla ("precise as the crisp new rupee notes he handles at the bank"), reminds the congregation discussing Home Rule: "...We are to run with the hounds and hunt with the hare."

The choice is obviously difficult. Says an "impatient voice": "If we're stuck with the Hindus they'll swipe our businesses from under our noses and sell our grandfathers in the bargain: if we're stuck with the Muslims they'll convert us by the sword! And God help us if we're stuck with the Sikhs."

This is an enjoyable book, despite the grim subject, because of the author's effervescent mix of the ribald and the horrific—and her apt use of the vernacular slang, like "clucking clusters" of *Parsi* ladies who "go *goos-goosing* and whispering". Sidhwa's humour comes in *Ice-Candy-Man's* pungent one-liners and her style is highly visual: "the flashy woman with the blazing lipstick and chalky powder and a huge pink hibiscus in her hair, and unseeing eyes enlarged like an actress's with kohl and mascaraed eyelashes..."

Deshpande, too, is strong on the descriptive, with a made-to-be-filmed quality about her style. The novel *That Long Silence* unfolds in the mind of a woman (Jaya) cloistered in a seedy flat in Dadar, Bombay, into which she and her husband have moved, temporarily, while an inquiry into her husband's

EXCERPTS

The truth was that we had both lost the props of our lives. Deprived of his routine, his files, his telephone, his appointments, he seemed to be no one at all; certainly not that man, my husband, around whose needs and desires my own life revolved. There was nothing he needed, so there was nothing for me to do. My own career as a wife was in jeopardy. The woman who had shopped and coooked, organised and cared for her home with such passion...where had she gone? We seemed to be left with nothing but our bodies, and after we had dealt with them we faced blankness. The nothingness of what had seemed a full life was frightening.

THAT LONG SILENCE, S. DESHPANDE

There is much disturbing talk. India is going to be broken. Can we break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is? Or crack it further up on Warris Road? How will I ever get to Godmother's then? I ask cousin. 'Rubbish,' he says, 'no one's going to break India. It's not made of glass!' They'll dig a canal...' she ventures. 'This side for Hindustan and this side for Pakistan. If they want two countries, that's what they'll have to do—crack India with a long, long canal.' And I become aware of religious differences. One day everybody is themselves—and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian.

ICE-CANDY-MAN, BAPSI SIDHWA

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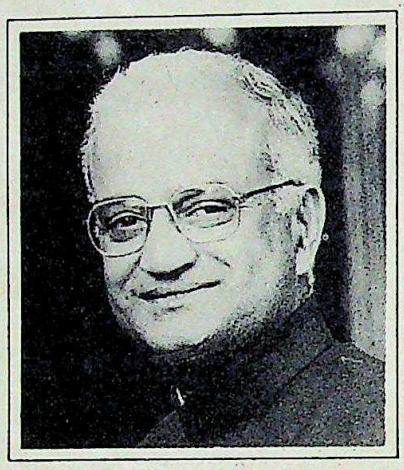
Dishergarh Power Supply Co. Ltd.

(A member of the Andrew Yule Group of Companies)

Speech of
Shri K.S.B. Sanyal, Chairman,
at the Annual General
Meeting on 23rd August,
1989.



Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this Annual General Meeting. The Annual Report of your Company has been in your hands for some time now. I am proud to be able to say that it reflects another year of successful operations, numerous constraints notwithstanding. Your Company has performed well in all spheres : generation and sales of electricity have grown, so have profits. This has enabled your Company to increase the pre-tax profit by 11% enabling us to finance replacements and augmentation projects through internal generation of funds and to recommend a dividend of 20% to the Ordinary Shareholders.

Sterling Performance

Your Company's sterling performance needs to be viewed against the backdrop of the broader social and economic objectives to which your Company is inalienably wedded. As a responsible licensee, your Company has maintained its base tariff structure during the last three years, even though its confreres in the power sector have enhanced their rates in tandem with cost escalations. Also, over the last three years, your Company has increased its supply to the West Bengal State Electricity Board by 12.5% per annum for township consumers at a comparatively cheaper rate. The power factor of the load for collieries has improved as well. Although measures such as these affect your Company's marginal revenue earnings, we welcome these trends as being commensurate with government policies on energy conservation and providing economic support to small consumers.

The point I would like to emphasize here is that despite these factors, and after absorbing escalations in operating and maintenance costs, your Company has been able to repeat its excellent financial performance. On the operational front, plant load factor has been maintained at a high of 66%, which compares very well indeed with the national average estimated at 56% for thermal power generation. Another significant figure is that transmission losses have also been held down to 3.7%. While on the topic of operations, I must add that fuel utilisation efficiency of our old stoker fired boilers has been further improved. I have consistently advocated that a normative approach to performance evaluation must be adopted as the basis for fixation of tariff. The way in which your Company has held the price line and yet improved performance only reflects the cogency of this view.

Private Sector Role

As you are no doubt aware, the Planning Commission has prognosticated that in order to achieve the annualised growth rate of 6% in the Eighth Five Year Plan, the country needs to generate additional power to the tune of 38,000 MW. Because of the long gestation period of hydel power projects, the country has no other alternative but to invest in thermal plants.

However, in view of the massive investment required in the power sector, a severe resource crunch seems inevitable. The Hon'ble Union Minister for Energy has rightly invited the private sector to participate in the power generation sector. We welcome the Government's constructive approach in this regard, particularly its dispensations which allow for a debt-equity ratio of 4:1, an enhanced rate of return at 15% subject to fulfilling a 62.5% plant load factor and the granting of licences for an initial period of 30 years with a provision for extension by another 20 years. These are positive and encouraging moves. I am confident that the private sector will respond to the government's initiative and take up the challenge of meeting the country's future power requirement needs.

Experience. Expertise. Efficiency.

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In this connection, I would like to take this opportunity to voice a plea on behalf of existing licensees. I would urge the government to recognise the yeoman services rendered by existing licensees, of which your Company has been one, over the past two decades in a difficult situation within statutory limitations of a low rate of return. As such, it would be in the fitness of things if the licence period of all existing licensees was to be extended by 20 years with immediate effect.

Small is beautiful

Last year, I had made the point that in the field of power, while big might be majestic, small is still beautiful. Indian industry provides plenty of scope in this regard, only if the extant opportunities are innovatively used. For instance, the fuel based captive power units installed by individual industrial units have proved to be rather inefficient and expensive source of power, not least because captive plants inevitably involve a measure of unutilised investment.

To ensure both optimum utilisation of resources and efficient capacity utilisation, I suggest private power agencies which have already developed expertise should be entrusted with the task of generating electricity for a group of industries. Industrial units could contribute to such power agencies via a pooled fund in return for a guaranteed quota of reserved capacity. By evolving such a method, users could significantly reduce their captive power costs.

Transmission Reliability

Another indispensable condition for alleviating the power problem is in toning up reliability of transmission. The importance of efficient transmission and distribution services cannot be over-emphasized. The Committee of Secretaries in the Union Government has already approved a proposal to set up a Transmission Corporation, which is a welcome move.

In the 618 sq kms licensed area served by your Company, a reliable transmission & distribution network has special importance considering the safety of miners working in highly gaseous coal mines. Your Company gives utmost attention to the reliability aspect inter alia by continuously augmenting and updating transmission & distribution system needs and also by attending to faults round the clock. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to handle our customers' increased power demand through an 11 KV network. Considering the need to provide a stable voltage to consumers, installation of 33 KV lines in our licensed area needs to be considered.

Chinakuri Project

I had also reported last year that your Company has entered into an agreement with Eastern Coalfields Ltd. for setting up and subsequently operating a 2x10 MW captive thermal power plant for their Chinakuri group of coalmines. I am extremely happy to say that the project is coming up ahead of schedule. All civil foundation work in the power house complex and boiler area stands completed, and delivery of critical mechanical equipment for boilers and turbogenerators has begun.

It is with pride that I inform you that at a time when machinery imports are the order of the day, we have placed all orders for plant equipment on indigenous suppliers. Since the proposed power plant will meet captive needs of gaseous coal mines, great care is being taken on the safety and reliability fronts. At the same time, the cost, quality and time management aspects are being continuously monitored.

Acknowledgements

The success of your Company could not have been achieved without the total involvement and support of all levels of workforce. To the officers and employees we record our appreciation. I gratefully acknowledge the continued support given to your Company by the Government of West Bengal, particularly its Department of Power, the West Bengal State Electricity Board, the Damodar Valley Corporation, Coal India Ltd. and Eastern Coalfields Ltd. On behalf of the Board, I assure them of our continued commitment to the cause of excellence.

Chairman

Note. This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

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Durgaprasad Chakravarti
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S.N. Singh
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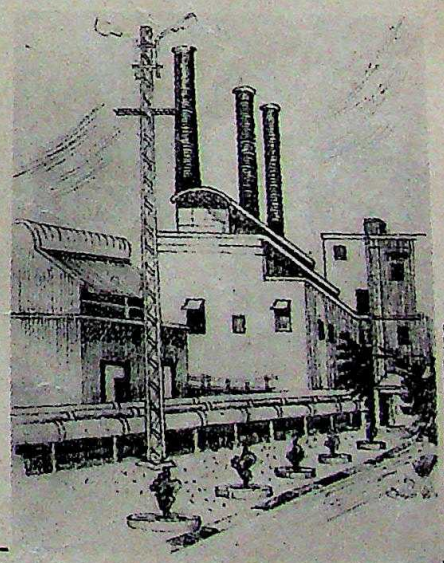
Maj. Gen. A.K. Mukherjea



PHOENIX-1177B/89

A tradition of 77 'light' years.

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malpractices takes place. The protagonist dissects the marriage with the cold precision of a student cutting open a frog in a laboratory. In the end, there is nothing left, not even hope.

The novel is really about the anatomy of the 17-year-old marriage in which Jaya sees herself and her husband as "a pair of bullocks yoked together". Finally, she breaks "that long silence". That cry within that she did not know existed.

In the blare of truth, Mohan the husband, devoid of the props of his job, of the roles and rights of the Indian as male and husband, and those provided by an unquestioning devoted wife, is like a tyre with the air let out of it. He is the hollow man; only Jaya can prop him up again: "I have looked at his face for clues and then given him the answer I know he wants. I have only to do this now and authority will seep into Mohan once more."

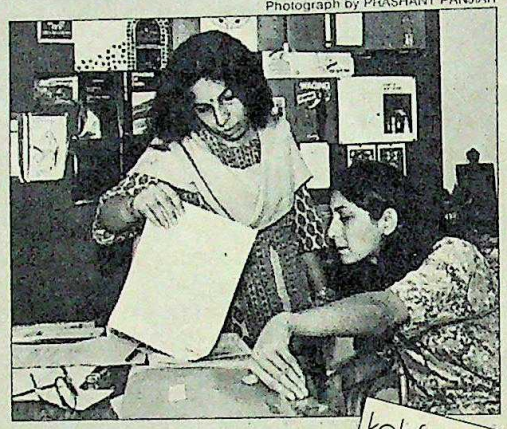
Finally, Jaya after long empty years of playing the role of mother, wife and sister, wants a role of her own. The silence becomes a shout. The intensity can be a bit too suffocating—it does skate close to becoming cloying at times. But it is one of the most honest portrayals in contemporary writing of the hypocrisy of middle-class India and the door mat status of the Indian woman, both within and outside marriage.

—MADHU JAIN

KALI FOR WOMEN

Rights Writing

Photograph by PRASHANT PANJIAR



Kali is an attempt by Ritu Menon and Urvashi Butalia to try and progressively alter the perspective on women through publishing.

WHEN Kali for Women started out as a feminist publishing house, it was written off as a flight of fancy, an unviable venture doomed to a quick demise. Today, five years and 20 books later, it is hailed as South Asia's first and only feminist publishing house (though New Delhi-based 'Manushi' too publishes books), credited with bringing out quality literature. The acclaim that Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive*, Kali's biggest success so far, has achieved has given sceptics food for second thoughts.

Kali's tie-ups with publishers in the US, Europe, South and South-East Asia and Africa are a major reason for its success. It publishes books in collaboration with radical publishing houses like Zed, Women's Press of London and Forlaget Oktober, a Norwegian publishing house, thus ensuring a good distribution network. In UK and the US, several Kali publications have sold all rights and its titles have sold even before publication.

Says David Davidar, editor and publisher of Penguin India: "Kali for Women is doing wonderful work. It's one of the few radical and committed publishers around." A review of *Staying Alive* (India: Rs 125; UK: £28.95) in *The Spectator* hails it as: "A uniquely modern Green mixture of Hindu mythology, social disquiet, dry statistical tables and assault on Western male science." The book is an off-beat articulation of the challenges women in ecology movements are creating and an explication of their struggles.

Kali's small office has an informal, academic look. Brimming with cane-furniture, indoor plants and books, it is basically a two-women show. Frail and articulate Ritu Menon, 41, and the matter-of-fact Urvashi Butalia, 38, say their long stints in the publishing industry and involvement with women's issues have made Kali a success. Menon's years with Vikas and Orient Longman and Butalia's stints with Oxford University Press (OUP) and Zed prompted them to try and progressively alter the perspective on women through publishing. Says Menon: "Through our academic titles, we question the biases against women, through our general books we create awareness on social issues which also pertain to women and, we actually give people an alternative." An example: Kali's non-sexist children's book in Hindi, *Ulti Sulti Mitto* (Rs 3), by Kamla Bhasin which has sold 38,000 copies. Its central character Mitto is, unconventionally, a girl and the book refrains from stereotyping characters on a sexist basis.

Kali's primary concern is publishing Third World studies on women, but it also brings out titles in fiction, reprints, monographs, pamphlets and diaries, publishing in English, and occasionally in Hindi.

Kali's first book *Women and the Media* (Rs 15) published in collaboration with Isis International of Italy and Pacific and Asian Women's Forum of Sri Lanka, which dealt with the negative depiction of women in media and the agitations launched by women's groups in Asian countries against it, sold 4,000 copies. *Truth Tales* (Rs 45), a collection of short stories, has also done well. Institutional buying is its mainstay but Menon says there's been tremendous response from individuals. Most of Kali's books are commissioned, but Menon also gets three to four manuscripts a month for consideration. She claims Kali has no prejudice against male authors and the fact that it's yet to publish one is a mere co-incidence. Says she: "We are activist publishers. This ensures quality and honesty in our work." But says R. Advani, OUP's chief editor: "Kali is a creditable venture though it has not yet come up in a major way in terms of number of titles and their visibility in the market."

Kali's forthcoming books include *Phaniyamma* (Rs 45) by M.K. Indira, a novel about a child widow translated from Kannada, and *The Quilt and Other Stories* (Rs 50) by Ismat Chugtai. It is also starting a book club with "like minded" publishers. Clearly, Kali has shown that activism and publishing can be wed in harmonious and profitable enterprise. —SHARMILA CHANDRA

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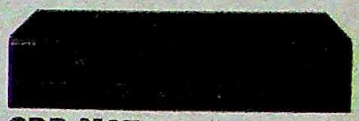

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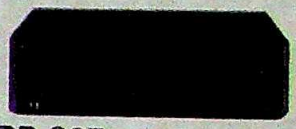

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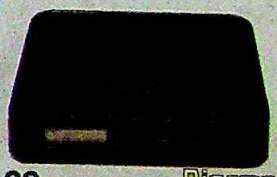

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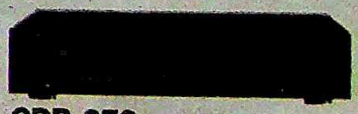

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WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE
ESCALATING DEMAND
DYNAMIC PROGRESS

Apollo Tyres.
Major expansion with a new hi-tech plant in Gujarat

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Escalating demand

By March 1990, Trucks & Buses in India will be using more than 50 lakh tyres. Jeeps and cars more than 29 lakh tyres and tractors more than 10 lakh tyres. A total demand of more than 204 lakh tyres in just one year. A fast growing market worth more than 2900 crores of rupees a year. About 10 crores of rupees every single day.

The Gujarat plant – new frontiers

In order to meet the growing demand, Apollo is setting up a state-of-the-art plant in Baroda, Gujarat. It has a licenced capacity of 10 lakh tyres per annum and will utilise tested technologies from General Tire International, USA.

The plant will go on stream from day one with a proven range of hi-quality tyres for trucks, cars, tractors and LCVs.

Pioneering pays

Locating the plant at Gujarat is yet another instance of managerial genius. It gives us a pioneer unit status and an exemption of sales tax of over Rs. 100 crores during operating years.

The location has other advantages: close proximity to raw materials, lesser transportation costs, a healthy industrial climate & excellent infrastructure.

Heading towards a golden future

With the coming of the Gujarat unit, the company's growth and assets will take a quantum jump.

Yes, our horizons are expanding. Our growth accelerating. Our profitability soaring. But we're still looking beyond. Because for us success means breaking our own records of excellence. And ensuring that its rewards continue to flow... long into the future.

SWARNA GANGA

THE FLOWING REWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

APOLLO TYRES

LEADERSHIP THROUGH QUALITY

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BAGPIPER

Club Soda

All the makings of a great occasion

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BY K. NATWAR SINGH

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Candour and Confessions

WHILE reading serious and worthwhile books I have at the back of my mind something Franz Kafka (1883-1924) wrote: "If a book we are reading does not wake us, as with a fist hammer on the skull, then why do we read?... The book must be like an ice-axe to break the sea frozen inside." If we were to apply this extreme criterion to all our reading, we would end up having Kafka's negative vision. So I use his criterion selectively, sparingly, and I do so unconsciously.

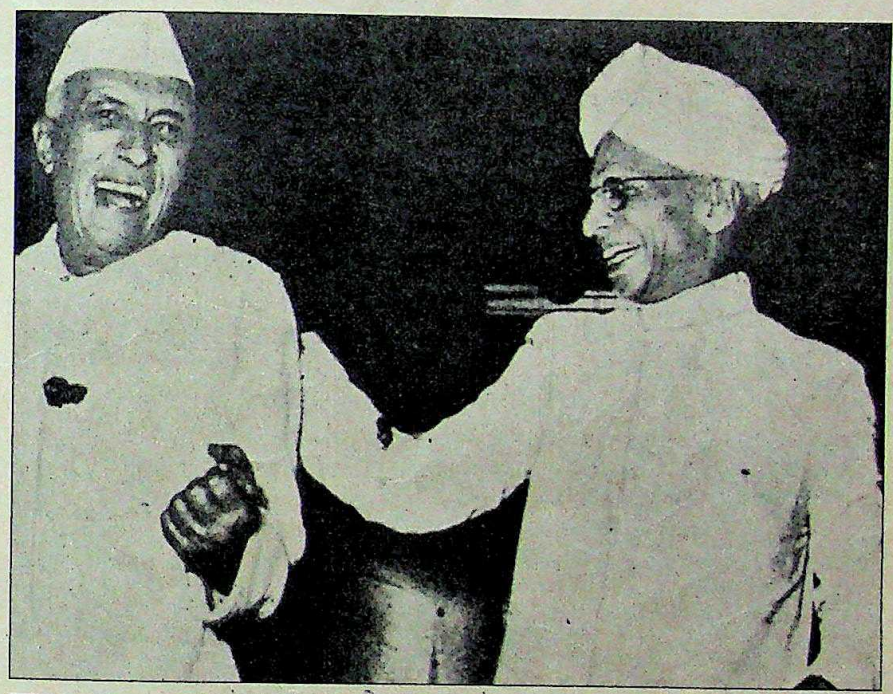
Sarvepalli Gopal is the son of a very famous, world-renowned philosopher—Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. I finished reading his masterly, and in some ways unique, biography of his father last week. It is unputdownable.

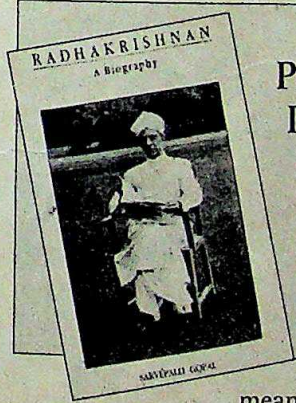
In his preface, Gopal writes: "This is a son's book. But I have tried not to be swayed by personal affection and have shirked nothing." Through the 408 pages he keeps his word. There is no tactful omission of inconvenient or embarrassing events.

Biography as a literary form is just beginning to take root in our country. We Hindus are particularly secretive and devious about our private lives, but perfectly loud-mouthed about other people's lives. The 'fist hammer' of Kafka knocks the reader on the head on page 10. Gopal writes: "More important is the doubt whether Veeraswami was his father. Parental responsibility lay, according to village rumour, with an itinerant Vaishnavite official. Sitamma's brother, who served in the local administration, was thought to have arranged the rendezvous to oblige a superior officer. Credence is lent to the story by the difficulty in believing that Radhakrishnan and his four brothers and sister belonged to the same genetic pool. Intellectual endowment and physical appearance both suggested that Radhakrishnan belonged to different stock. Radhakrishnan himself accepted this version and critical of his mother's conduct, always, through her long life, kept her at a distance. But he was attached to the man who passed for his father."

Only Gandhiji has written about himself with similar candour, similar luminous intellectual honesty. I hope Gopal is a trail-blazer. I had the good luck to come in contact with Dr Radhakrishnan at a young and starry-eyed age. Gopal used to take me to see his father from time to time. In July 1961, I had my appendix operated in Safdarjung Hospital. The vice-President of India turned up unannounced to see me. Gopal was with him. What an unforgettable gesture of gracious concern for a young man. No one will dispute Gopal's claim that his father, "throughout a long life had never been guilty of a mean deed; and it is unlikely that he ever had a mean thought". Of how many human beings can that be said?

Radhakrishnan was the outstanding, perhaps the greatest, Indian thinker of the 20th century. Gopal devotes many pages to the intellectual, philosophical and spiritual development of his father. Unlike his son, Radhakrishnan was very reticent and guarded about his private life. In 1950, he wrote in *Fragments of a Confession*: "No particular good fortune has lifted me above the sphere in which our common humanity struggles along, and I have had my own share of the burdens and anxieties of life. Although these are of immense importance to me, discretion forbids me to speak of them. Besides, they are of no particular interest to the philosophical public." And that was that.





Pandit Nehru wanted Dr Radhakrishnan to become President in 1957 but was opposed by Maulana Azad. Five years later, in 1962, Nehru made sure that Radhakrishnan got the top job.

His philosophical writings and ideas attracted international attention. *An Idealist's View of Life* is among the important books of the 20th century. Deep down he felt that to transform was far better than to inform.

His tenure as vice-president was distinguished and generally problem-free. Pandit Nehru wanted him to succeed Dr Rajendra Prasad as President in 1957 but due to strenuous opposition

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from Maulana Azad this did not happen. Nehru made sure that Radhakrishnan did get the top job in 1962.

Unfortunately for Radhakrishnan, his five years as President were a depressing half decade. The Chinese invasion left the country bewildered and shaken. Pandit Nehru passed away and the conflict with Pakistan in September 1965 put a heavy burden on the country's resources. Lal Bahadur Shastri's unexpected death at Tashkent was another setback.

Politics was not Radhakrishnan's domain. He was helpless before the slow intrigues of highly-placed political operators. He did not have a nose for sensing political trouble and paid the price. Mrs Indira Gandhi did not take kindly to Radhakrishnan's reckless public criticism of her government. (I have personal knowledge of how strongly she felt.) She denied him a second term in 1967. This was a great blow to Radhakrishnan. Consequently, the closing years of his life were empty, lonely, depressing and sad. The most articulate of men lost his power of speech, then the body gave way and lastly his mind. Gopal puts it most poignantly: "Finally, in the early hours of 17th April 1975, Radhakrishnan drifted out of the harbour of a silent tide." Here is great English for you.

I must not end on a melancholy note. In 1962, the king of Greece came on a state visit to India. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan welcoming him said: "Your Majesty, you are the first king of Greece to come as our guest. Alexander came uninvited."

RADHAKRISHNAN: A Biography
by SARVEPALLI GOPAL
Oxford University Press
Pages: 408; Price: Rs 250

EXCERPTS

'The end of a long chapter', was his remark as he returned from the funeral. Doubtless he lived through again in his mind the years when she had supported him and recollected his need for her love at later times even though he had not rejected self-indulgence elsewhere. The black misery that enveloped him on her death was no assumed posture.

Sivakamu had not been educated in the conventional sense. But she was proficient in Telugu and, while in Calcutta, engaged a tutor to teach her to read and write English. Perceptive, lively and courageous, she easily held her own with those who could claim to have gone through school and college. Even more, she was a woman of character, veined with fire. She who had once sunk her existence in that of her husband, later, when lacerated by his non-marital wanderings, pretended to be independent of him and gain satisfaction in motherhood. She was too proud to let the public know how much she had been hurt, especially by his mistress from the forties, a hard, bitchy woman of jarring and aggressive gracelessness who was determined to flaunt to the world her place in Radhakrishnan's life. To Sivakamu her marriage seemed, if not broken, certainly fractured; the human relationship was now a half-lie even if she would not allow it to become merely a social habit. But total devotion to him was still the bedrock of her existence, weathering all his wounding actions; and the sudden fits of rage which marked her last years were in fact explosions of possessiveness and expressions of unspoken pain. It has been asked recently about three wives of great men whether, given a second chance, they would have married the same husbands. In Sivakamu's case there is no doubt about the answer. Being the wife of the greatest creative intellect of his generation in India had not been easy; but she would not have had her lot cast otherwise.

Radhakrishnan with wife Sivakamu: uneasy bond

◆

In his private talks with Mao, no immediate problems were raised; but there were some remarks of significance. Mao, when discussing prospects in the two countries of reducing expenditure on defence, said that for them it was not just the question of Taiwan and Indochina; 'we have to watch Japan too.' China was not worried much about Korea or Vietnam, but she was definitely concerned about the possibility of Japan building up her military might with the backing of the United States. China felt about Japan as the Soviet Union felt about West Germany. When Radhakrishnan said that if India and China stood together it would be a lesson to the rest of the world, Mao's reply, even then, in September 1957, was guarded and conditional: 'If India and China stood together for a score of years, no one will ever be able to pull us apart, but I am aware that there are some forces which are constantly trying to separate us.' During the general discussion Radhakrishnan asked Mao if he believed in coexistence. Mao replied that he did. Then Radhakrishnan asked if coexistence meant only with those with whom one agreed or also with those with whom one disagreed; coexistence meant converting in a friendly way the one who disagreed and not suppressing him. Mao had no adequate reply. Then, while saying goodbye to Mao, Radhakrishnan patted him on the cheek. Mao appreciated the gesture; but the others round him were visibly taken aback. Noticing this, Radhakrishnan remarked, 'don't worry; I have done the same to Stalin—and to the Pope.'

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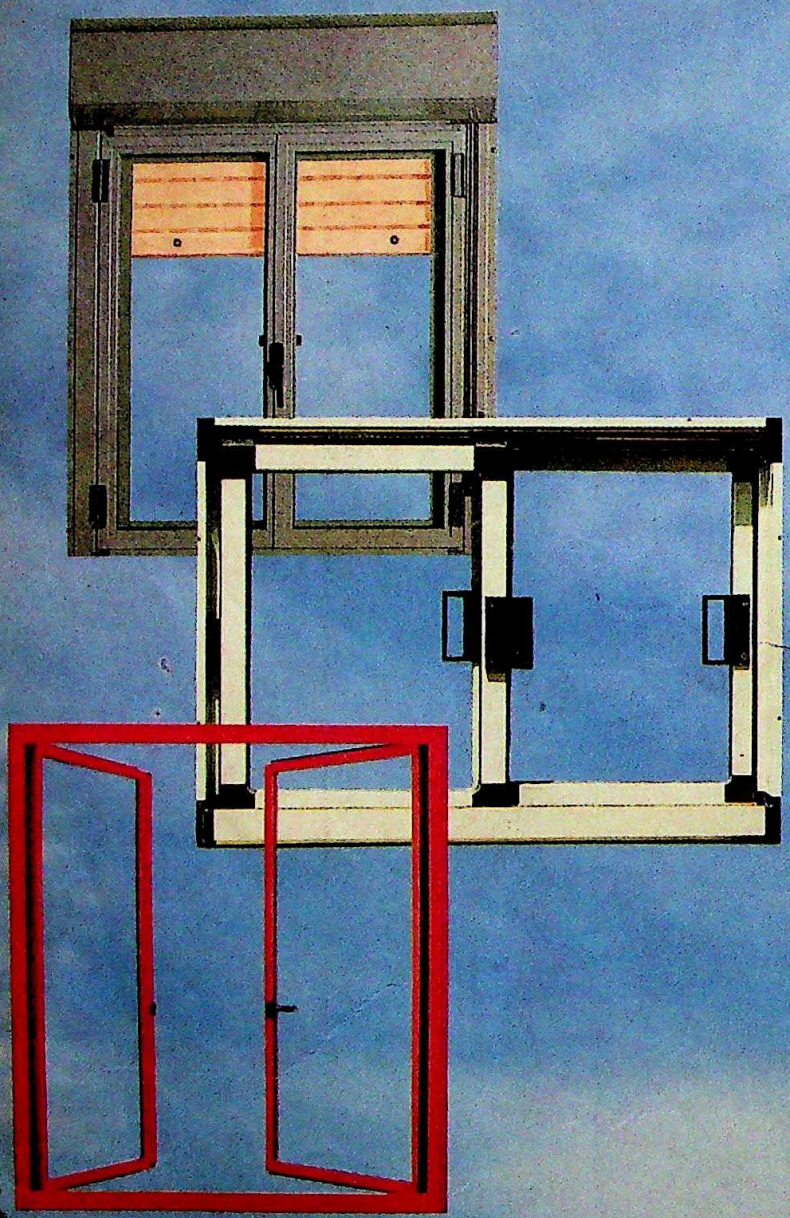

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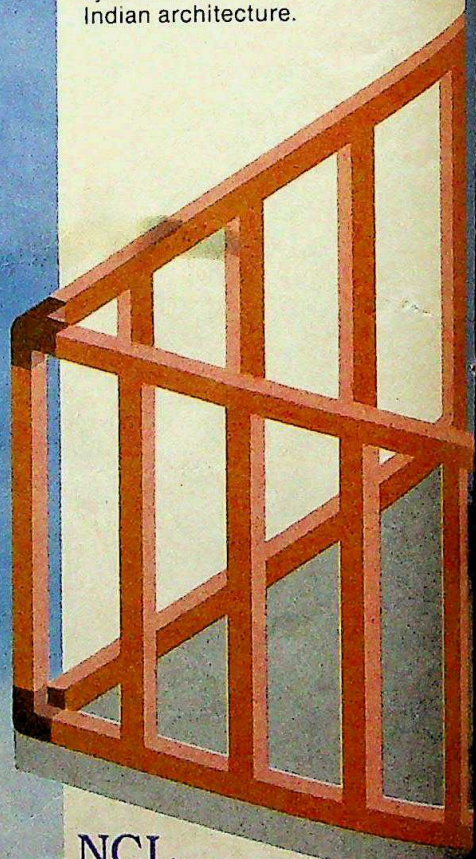

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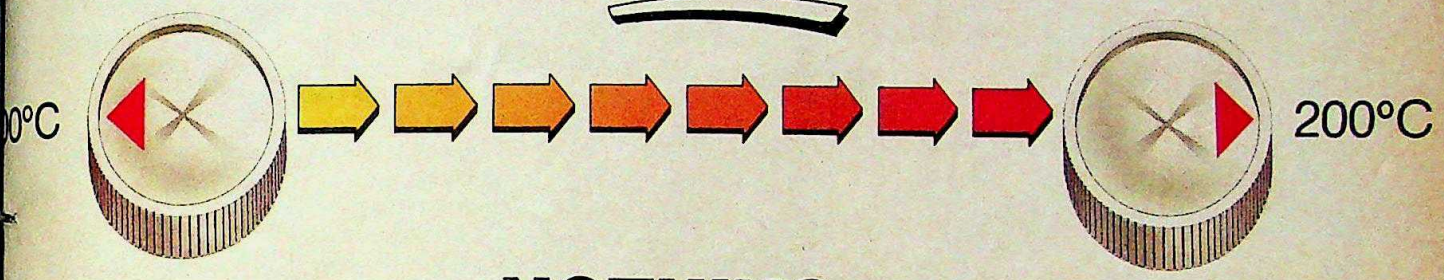
GUESS WHAT HAPPENS TO PUMAPLY IF YOU BAKE IT FOR ONE HOUR IN AN OVEN AT 200°C ?



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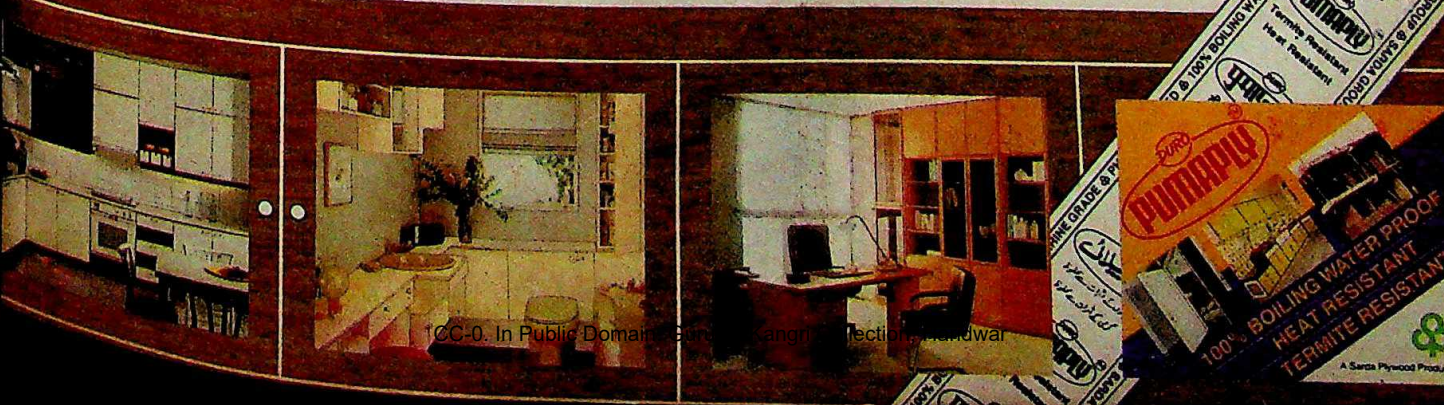

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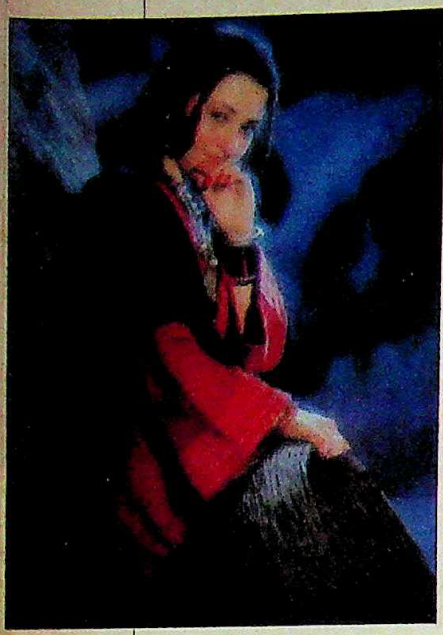

Zeba: dream girl

◆ "Dad would have really been pleased," said Randhir Kapoor. He would indeed. For **Zeba Bakhtiyar**, 22—selected after months of painstaking search by Randhir for the title role in Raj Kapoor's unfinished dream film, *Henna*—is just what the grand showman would order. The Pakistani actress "has that old world charm" typical of R.K. heroines. *Henna*, especially written for Raj by Pakistani author Begum Hasina Moin, is a love story in the R.K. tradition: an Indian boy (played by Rishi Kapoor) falls madly in love with a Pakistani girl but obstacles come in the path of their happiness.... The Raj Kapoor touch, it seems, never dies.

Kapur: show time

◆ Dressed in the white overcoat hunched over the stumps as the white-flannelled men play cricket, **Anjali Rajgopal**, 19, looks just like the many other aspiring Dickie Birds who umpire Bombay's league matches. The country's first woman umpire, Anjali played as an all rounder for Bombay University's women team before she decided to sit for the qualifying examination for umpires last year and scored more than the required 80 per cent marks. Just one more exam, and Rajgopal can officiate First Class matches. And then of course, Tests. "I sometimes get the feeling that male players feel I don't have enough knowledge," she says. "But I don't mind." Howzaat!

Anjali: judging men

◆ He was scouting around for a girl who looked like an athlete—to cast in his new film, *Champion*—when BBC's Channel 4 found him. Film director, actor and model, **Shekhar Kapur** has now been invited to anchor a current affairs programme dealing with the problems faced by the Asian community in Britain.

On the Other Hand, in seven episodes, will discuss issues that range from racism to astrology. "I'm very hot about the idea," says Mr India enthusiastically. And serious about it too. He's going ahead to London for a week's research before the show actually goes on the floors. For the *Masoom* man, here's the big chance.

◆ For once, it was drama in real life for N.T. Rama Rao. The Andhra Pradesh chief minister's name was unwittingly dragged into a bedroom—and courtroom—drama recently. The main characters were his estranged son-in-law, Naren Rajan and **Uma Reddy**, 27. And at stake was the custody of two-year-old Rashmi, Uma's younger daughter. Rajan, who is "very attached" to the child, had abducted her some months ago.

The curtain came down on months of legal battle and emotional scenes last week with the Supreme Court ruling that maternity is a certainty. And so restored the child to the mother. "Who cares if he is the chief minister's son-in-law?" said the triumphant Uma, who however refused to comment on her relationship with Rajan. "I put up an independent fight and it feels great to win the case and get my daughter back." About Rama Rao, she says: "Poor man! I'm sorry he got involved."

Hussain: run to stardom

◆ He is the saviour England has summoned from the lush green playfields of country cricket to breathe new life into a gasping team. For Madras-born right-hand batsman **Naseer Hussain**, 21, it was indeed a quick single from obscurity to stardom in one season: he scored 1,000 runs for Essex and a stylish 1[illegible] for Combined Universities against Somerset in a Benson and Hedges Cup quarter final.

Hussain's father, Jawad, played for Madras in the Ranji Trophy before he went to England in 1974 with six-year-old Naseer in tow. A protegé of former England skipper Keith Fletcher, Naseer joins the royal ranks of Indians like Ranjitsinhji, Pataudi senior and Duleepsinhji who played for England. Says the nineteen history student: "I'd love to play a Test match against India in Madras."

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Uma with Rashmi: happy ending

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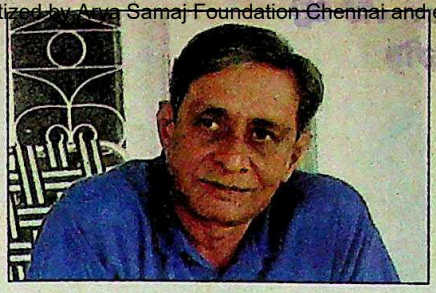
IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

Falling Apart

Sri Lanka's slide into anarchy seems to be endless. More than 4,000 people have died in the last one month as splinter groups of trigger-happy militants have run amok, mowing down innocent civilians. With economic chaos mounting, the island paradise is being rapidly destroyed beyond redemption.

COVER STORY 22



Sundarji Replies

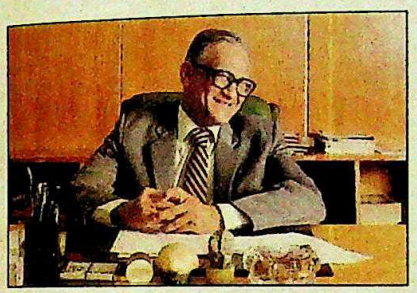
The Government's rebuttal to former army chief General K. Sundarji's interview, contained in a defence ministry release, is not convincing enough in the light of available evidence. It contains gaps and contradictions. Sundarji also vehemently denies the charges against him in a separate interview.

SPECIAL REPORTS 30

Politics of Plenty

With the electoral battle hotting up, INDIA TODAY begins a series on people, issues and constituencies. This fortnight's focus is on Uttar Pradesh—a comparison between Amethi and Rae Bareli constituencies; an assessment of Chief Minister N.D. Tiwari; plus a report on V.P. Singh's campaign.

ELECTION SPECIAL 42



Money Muscle

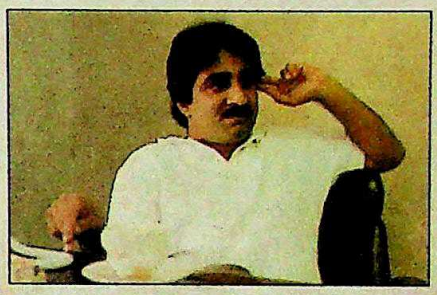
The country's four premier financial institutions have helped spur industrial growth by pumping capital resources into the private sector. But of late they have become the target of allegations: succumbing to political pressure to unseat managements and take sides in take-over battles.

BUSINESS FEATURE 92

Heels on Wheels

Vroom... and they are off zigzagging through traffic. Middle class women all over the country are no longer willing to submit to the rigours and constraints of city bus rides. They are increasingly taking to mopeds and scooters and enjoying the new-found feeling of freedom and convenience.

SPECIAL FEATURE 134



"I don't know the Ambanis"

In his first interview since the expose about his business links with the Ambanis, Umesh Katre, son of CBI Director Mohan Katre, insists that he is just a garment exporter and whatever dealings he had with Reliance Industries was for Kamlesh Shah, his friend, whose office space he shares in Bombay.

INTERVIEW OF THE FORTNIGHT 146

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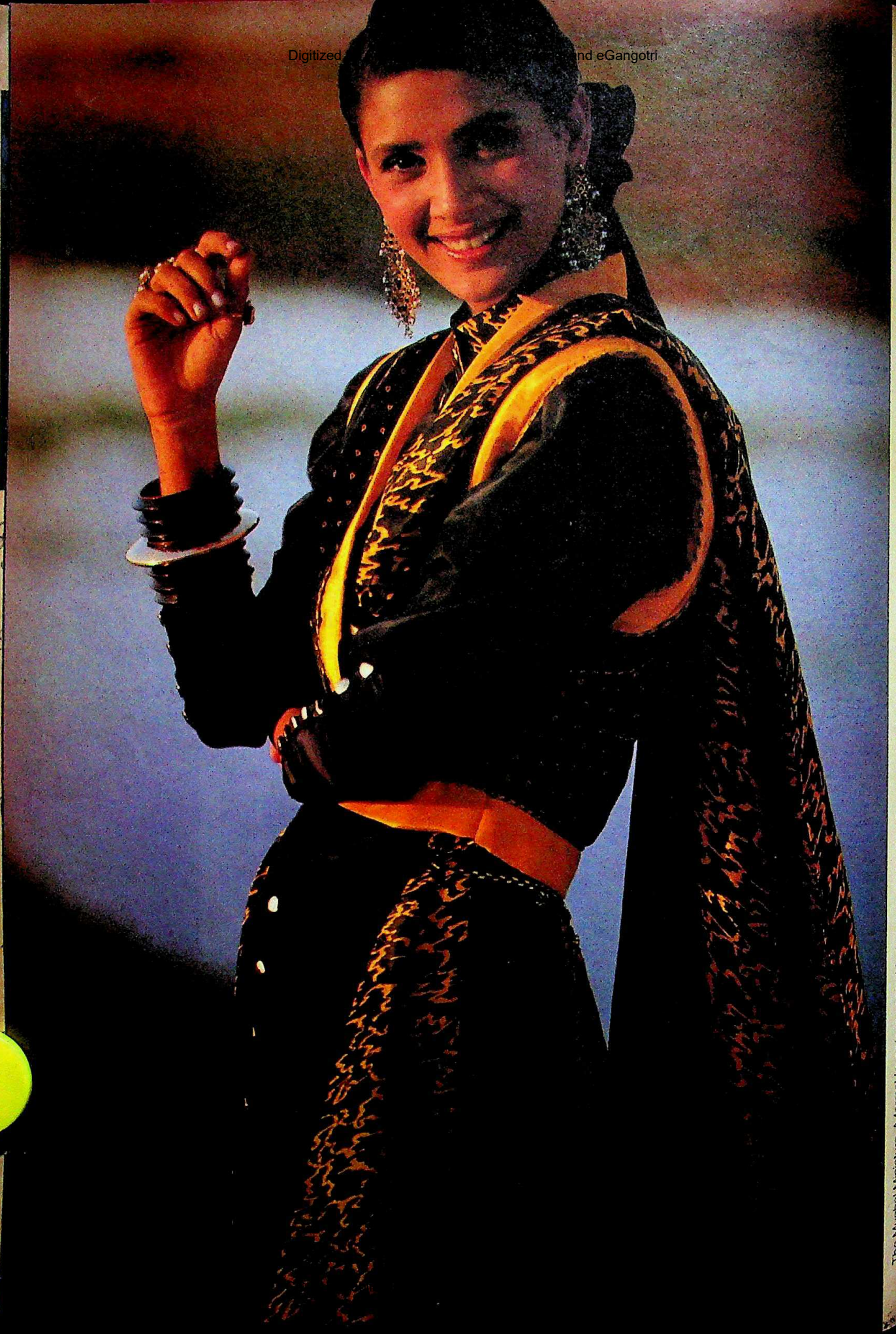

The Mughal Miniature. A formal four piece ensemble that uses gold buttons for expression. And borrows autumn for colour. Easy day-formals. Also dates well with moonlight.

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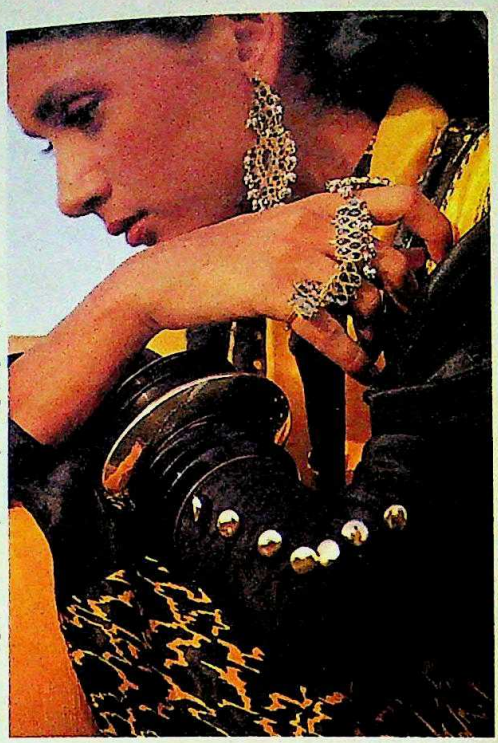
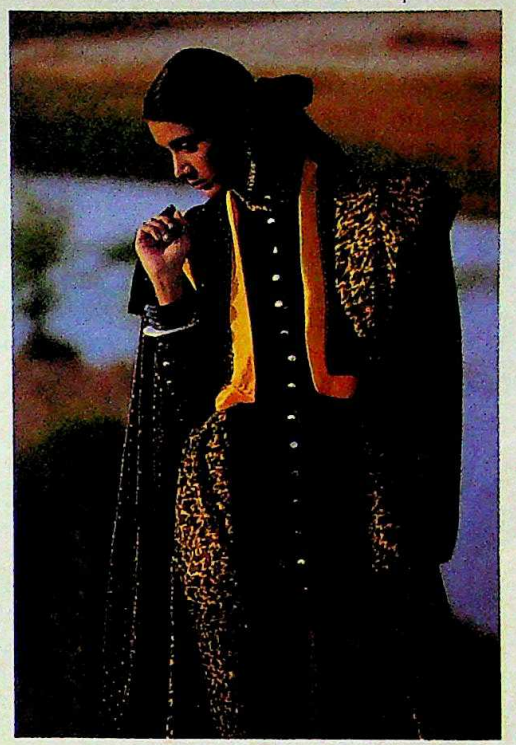
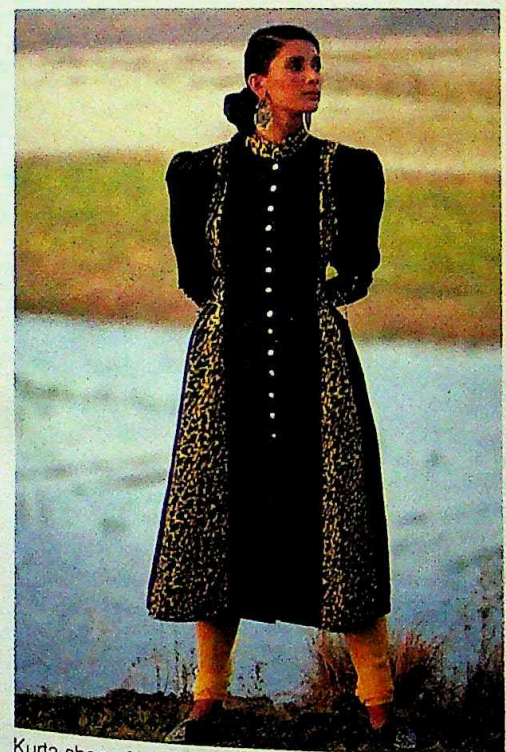
The Mughal Miniature. A formal four piece ensemble that uses gold buttons for expression. And borrows autumn for colour. Easy day-formals. Also dates well with moonlight.



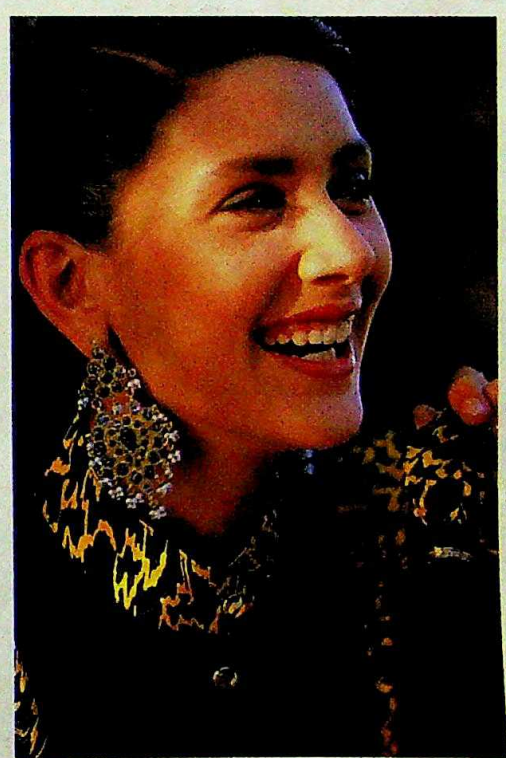
Black and gold kundan jewellery weighing fingers.

Tassle ended scarves for effect or contemplation.





Kurta shaped in classic A-line for stance.



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ASTOUNDING DISCLOSURES

Your cover story ("Getting Away", September 15) was explosive. General K. Sundarji has candidly narrated how his attempts to seek the truth from Bofors were frustrated. It is intriguing that he did not reveal these facts earlier. Yet, the interview has revived the issue in a manner that not even the CAG report did.

New Delhi — **PUNAM RIJHWANI**

■ General Sundarji's interview has answered the questions regarding the Defence Ministry's inability to terminate the Bofors contract on grounds of breach of faith, Arun Singh's sudden and unexplained resignation and the role played by the prime minister and his office.

Bhopal — **DR SANJAY KUMAR**

PECUNIARY POLITICS

The Ambani-Wadia war ("Crime, Money and Politics", August 31) is a clear case of the Ambanis' insatiable greed—emboldened by their political clout. The Government's overt and covert manoeuvres stink of attempts to protect its 'friends'.

New Delhi — **GEORGE JOHN**

■ It is shocking that the Ambanis should plot to kill Nusli Wadia. The prime objective of industrialists today is to amass wealth at any cost.

Jamshedpur — **B.N. BOSE**

■ The Ambanis appear to be following Gay Talese's dictum in his book, *Honour Thy Father*: "Whether men's ambitions are fulfilled in the arena of politics or business or banking or crime, it makes little difference; and the most brutal acts are easily justified in the name of necessity and honour."

Amritsar — **R.C. KHANNA**

■ The Ambani-Wadia story reads like a Ken Follet novel. The triangle of politics, crime and money is bizarre and beyond the common man's comprehension.

Delhi — **G. JANAKI**

DIVERSE PULLS

To expect that those born in the US ("American Born Confused Desis", August 31) will be brought up just like those back home is unrealistic. One has to adopt the native language, dress and food habits. But these youngsters have everything to gain by understanding and trying to follow old-world virtues.

Pune — **D.B.N. MURTHY**

■ Your special feature outlines a problem that Indian-born confused desis ought to consider before they scramble to foreign lands. I sympathise with these children who are the victims of parents who want the best of both worlds.

New Delhi — **MALA BHARGAVA**

■ The article unwittingly advances the myth that the Indians in the US are well-to-do, and their children go to college and form an aware, educated community. But the majority of them are not doctors and engineers but are travel agents, clerks, shop assistants and small merchants.

Trichur — **G.K. KAMATH**

BROKEN CONVENTIONS

It is sad that many well-intentioned parliamentary conventions ("Chamber of Chaos", August 31) have either been broken or manipulated over the years by the powers that be for political ends. Let your special report be an eye-opener to those who represent us.

Ahmedabad — **SASIDHARAN. K**

UNEXPECTED BOUNCER

The BCCI's action ("Stumping the Stars", August 31) is unjustified. After all, people spend their money to see the cricket stars and not the board and its disciplinary committee. Would the board have taken the same decision if India had won the series in the West Indies?

Mangalore — **S. JAGADISH NAYAK**

■ The board's decision is a welcome step. Now it is important for the board to stick to its decision despite all pressure.

Ahmedabad — **SIDDHARTHA SINGH**

AGAINST ALL ODDS

"Struggling to the Top" (August 31) was really inspiring. One must remem-

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ber that spastics are human beings who should be allowed to live a normal life.
Kanpur NIKESH CHANDRA

RAY OF HOPE

The fresh wave in Bengali cinema ("A Silver Streak", August 31) could be strengthened by allowing this sick industry to extend its business to neighbouring Bangladesh where the mother-tongue is Bengali.
Siliguri SANTOO PALCHOWDHURY

TRUE TRIBUTE

Calcutta through Raghu Rai's lenses ("Smile in the Squalor", August 31) proves his class. However two more pages of photographs would have done justice to this lensman par excellence.
Bhubaneswar SANJEEB KUMAR DAS

DECLINING VALUES

It is painful ("Hollow Politics", August 31) that one of the most envied democracies is beset with problems like parochialism, mud-slinging and communalism. Politicians show utter disrespect for Parliament and the CAG.
Patna JAYANT KUMAR

■ When one looks at the democratic systems of the US and the UK and compares it with ours, the greatest difference noticed is the precedence of national interests above party politics.
Bombay RISHI SINGH

SHADY CORPORATORS

The report ("Goon Show", August 31) on criminals being elected corporators in Lucknow and Allahabad gave a vivid picture of the state of affairs. Does the prime minister wish to delegate powers to these people through the highly publicised Nagar Palika Act?
Nainital SOM PANDEY

MALICIOUS COMMENTS

It was disturbing to read the review of Vijay Singh's book, Jaya Ganga ("Flowing Fatuously", August 31). Far from being a book review, it resembled a pseudo-psychological analysis of the author's personality or a political harangue. It was in fact worse than that—an exercise in slander and in mudslinging a young writer.

Equally serious was the perverse degradation of the renowned French school of historiography, the Annales (referred to as "Anal history") and of the most respected French historian of the 20th century, Ferdnand Braudel (referred to as "Ferdnand Brothel"). To spoof, or to pun, as a literary device, is supposed to give punch and humour but, in this case, it descended to cheapness and nausea.

In fact, the book under question, aptly described as an "interior travelogue", is not an imitation of the 1920s surrealism; it is an experiment in the use of cinematic writing.

Of course a critic is free to express his or her opinion about a book, the author, the author's mind or his subconscious drives. There is a fair amount in the review; there could even have been more. But the malicious comments that appeared in your columns, coming from an editor of a reputed publishing house, are indeed regrettable and in poor taste.
Paris LAJPAT JAGGA

STRATEGIC MANOEUVRE

The mass resignations by opposition MPs from the Lok Sabha ("Stunning Strike", August 15) was not a political gimmick as pointed out by the prime minister. By doing so, they gave up a lifetime pension of Rs 500, a monthly salary of Rs 10,500 for the remaining months before the elections, free train travel, 16 single air journeys, and other perks.
Madras S. RAMACHANDRAN

■ There is nothing stunning about the mass resignations by the Opposition. The people of our country are used to such election stunts by the Opposition, when they fail to beat the ruling party in debate. The Indian masses will never forgive them for their betrayal of faith.
Pune VIJAYA MOORTHY

DAMAGING PROCESS

The misconcieved craze to beget sons ("Male Order Service", August 15) is utterly ridiculous. We have perhaps crossed all frontiers of male chauvinism. What is even more surprising is that Dr Pandya, being a woman herself, is perpetuating this damaging process.
Meerut P.N. BANERJI

■ So far nature has wonderfully maintained the male-female ratio. The Erricson technology of sperm separation will only help to reduce the female population. Isn't it time we introduced some code of ethics in scientific research?
Sirmaur(M.P.) RAVINDRANATH M.

TWILIGHT OF LIFE

The Congress(I) leadership's neglect of Kamlapati Tripathi ("Autumn of the Patriarch", August 15) is a result of his over-indulgence and lack of conviction to quit the party at an opportune moment. His marginalisation is pathetic.
Kanpur SHARAD SHUKLA

PROPER DISPLAY

While amending the Motor Vehicles Act ("Motoring Manners", July 31), offences like driving without a licence should have been viewed more seriously than laying emphasis on minor traffic offences like parking in no parking areas. The authorities should ensure that signboards are displayed properly and that they clearly indicate the parking space. When I was on vacation in Mangalore recently, I was given a parking ticket but the 'No Parking' sign was not visible.
Tubarao, Brazil ARUL F.I. ARANHA

LEARNING TO LAUGH

Thank you for the outrageously funny ("Indiana Jokes" August 31). Here are some more rib-tickling ethnic quips: A bragging Assamese is called Phoo! ka(u)n. A firebrand Bengali leader is Gun-goli. An angry Parsi is God-rage. A botanist from Uttar Pradesh is Agni-hot tree. A business house in Gujarat is Kala-bhai-Salabhai.
Tezpur REETEN GANGULY

■ Ethnic jokes are not new in India. I recollect as far back as in 1963, a secretary in the Government of India (whose name figures in the joke) asking this riddle: How do you say father, son and Holy Ghost in Tamil? Mahalingam, Ramalingam and Bhoothalingam.
Poona MICHI SETH

■ More Indiana jokes: What is a female Khalistani terrorist called? Hard Kaur. What is the Khalistani profession? Jarnailism. What is the Khalistani national song? Bande maarte hum.
Patna ARNAB MUKHERJEE

■ Your collection of ethnic jokes was hilarious. Many more of them are currently making the rounds. An example: How do you identify a Mallu? Zimbly.
Noida SUBHAMAY CHATTOPADHYAY

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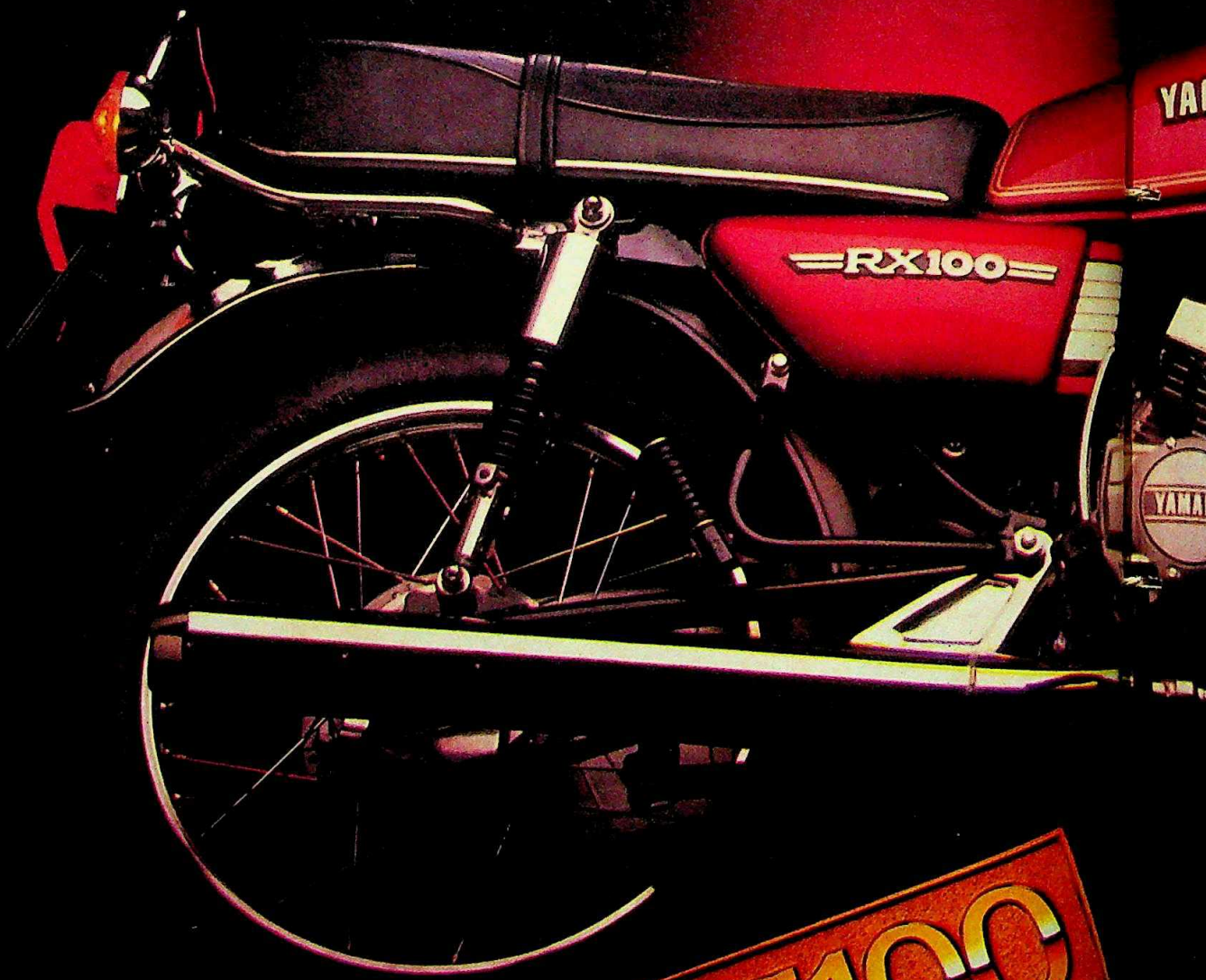

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Indianise Kashmir

As the turmoil in Kashmir worsens, the state Government's reaction to it follows a tiredly familiar pattern—blame it all on a handful of anti-national miscreants; enforce drastic police measures; threaten to gag the press on the pretext that reportage of the deepening crisis is the cause of the crisis itself.

A silent press will, instead, exacerbate tensions because it is now probably the only escape hatch for the steam of popular frustration in Kashmir. And the state and the country, will be caught between the crossfire of the self-serving puffery of government handouts and extremist pamphleteering.

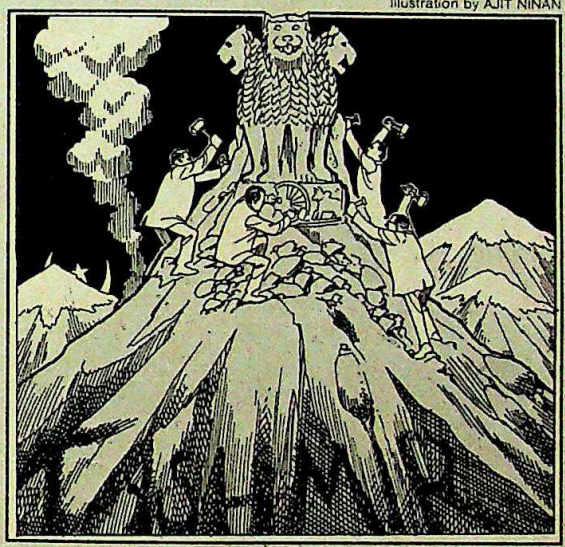
All attention will then be diverted from the dreadful mistakes, the lack of vision, that have brought the valley to this pass. And any scope for salvage will rapidly vanish. Today, the state Government and Centre are stressing that secessionist activities are confined to a few districts and that not all Kashmiris are anti-India.

Precisely. But the rulers can't have their cake and eat it too. The "anti-Indian, pro-Pakistani, fundamentalist" epithets have been politically convenient labels to brand all opposition in Kashmir, whether it stemmed from student unrest against rigged entrance exams, popular ire against corruption, or demonstrations against blatantly unfair electoral practices.

Unpopular state politicians have regularly invoked this fear to convince the Centre that they are the saviours of secularism and national integrity and must be supported at all costs. And herein lies the agony of the valley. Because it is the only Muslim majority state, the rest of the country is easily convinced that if Kashmiris take to the streets to air economic or social grievances, they are demanding another Pakistan, or asserting fundamentalist convictions and must therefore be bullied into submission or controlled by the Centre through puppet governments. Conversely, many Kashmiris believe that the Centre, while subsidising unpopular governments and looking the other way when elections are rigged, does so because the state is a communal aberration, and they will be given their rights only in Muslim-majority Pakistan.

But all this ignores history and demographic reality. When Sheikh Abdullah was pledging accession to India in 1947, Nehru was talking about a plebiscite for Kashmir in the United Nations. The Kashmiri struggle—they fought subjugation under the Mughals, the Sikhs, the Dogras—has been to preserve a special identity called Kashmiriyat. Linguistically, Kashmiris comprise about half of the state's 32 lakh Gujjar, Pahadi, Punjabi, and Kashmiri-speaking Muslims. They are the ruling class. But if the state were to join Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), this ruling class would become a minority as POK has a massive Gujjar and Punjabi-speaking population. So, it's incongruous that a community, so conscious of preserving its identity would want to be subsumed altogether in Pakistan.

Illustration by AJIT NINAN



THERE have always been pro-Pakistan elements and fundamentalists in Kashmir. But historically they have never prevailed because of the liberal Sufi traditions and because Sheikh Abdullah never allowed Jinnah or the Muslim League to make inroads into his state. Kashmir's recurrent pro-Pakistani slogans have often been used for blackmail: if-you-don't-give-us-our-rights-in-India-we'll-go-to-Pakistan. And this image simply feeds on itself when Kashmir's own politicians, beset by problems of their own making, brand every dissenter pro-Pakistani. It is a vicious circle.

And there are reasons enough for Kashmiris to fulminate. The Centre, for one, has never had a clear and stable policy towards the state and has often preferred to let it burn a little in order to play the Pakistan card whenever convenient. It has run the state from Delhi through the toppling game—support Sheikh Abdullah, then drop him and imprison all the leaders of the movement. Prop up Bakshi Gulam Mohammed then dump him. Support G.M. Sadiq as a strong administrator, then destabilise his government. Shake hands with the Sheikh, then destabilise him. Bring on his son Farooq and topple him. Ease in G.M. Shah, then dismiss him. Once again, shake hands with Farooq Abdullah, fight what is the most-widely denounced election in the state and, in the process, alienate the people.

Today, thanks to rampant nepotism, corruption and notorious maladministration Farooq's compact with his people seems to have broken. He has lost his trust with them. Some of them have turned to guns and others, who initially blamed only Farooq's Government for their woes, now increasingly blame New Delhi. The ball is as much in the Centre's court as it is in Farooq's.

Now that both are stressing that not all Kashmiris are anti-national, they must act courageously on that conviction to end the current drift and violence. They must build upon what is the most positive aspect of Kashmir: compared to the rest of the country, there have never been communal riots there. They must ensure that Kashmiris come into the mainstream by ensuring more jobs in government and private industry. They must send their best administrators to the state to clean up the regime. They must ensure free and fair elections. But most of all—and if they can do this in Assam, Punjab and Mizoram, they can do it in the valley—they must begin a new dialogue with the alienated youth. The broader, liberal outlook, no matter how long it takes is the best bet for Indianising Kashmir. Press censorship and the police jackboot will simply play into the hands of Pakistan.

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Critical Choices

● The *Indian Express* falls into controversy not only in the arena of political warfare, but in such removed areas as cinema appreciation. Surprise ranged wide when some weeks ago the names of the delegates for the Canadian film festival were announced.

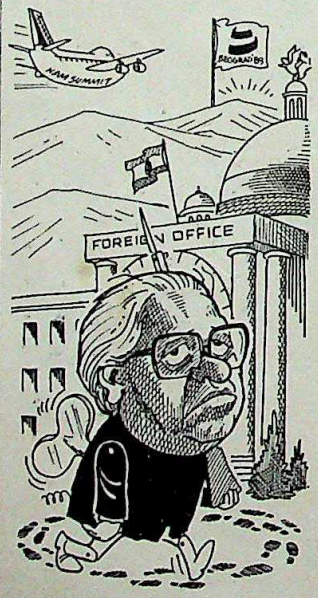
The journalists chosen, Amita Malik, Iqbal Masud and Anil Saari, were well-known film critics, but also happened to be associated with the Express, the Government's bete noire.

Predictably, Director of Film Festivals Urmila Gupta began to fetch flak. *The Hindustan Times* critic K.M. Amladi alleged Gupta had been partisan—tilting essentially at Saari—and took up the issue with I&B Secretary B. Murari. Going a step further he took it up with Rajiv Gandhi who in turn asked concerned officials for an explanation. Meantime, Masud backed out saying he was busy and with Saari's inclusion a contentious issue, Malik left for the festival which began on August 25. Gupta tried to exonerate herself saying that when the Canadian Film Festival Director Serge Losique asked her to name an Indian critic to cover the international film festival in Montreal which focused on Indian cinema, she sent seven names, leaving Losique to make the final choice. And Losique, blissfully ignorant of the media-government battles that ravage the Indian political scene, chose the Express threesome.

Facing the Crunch

● Foreign Secretary S.K. Singh's exclusion from the Indian delegation to the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) summit at Belgrade has caused consternation in South Block. But to foreign office veterans this is no surprise. The soft-spoken career officer, they say, has been on the outs for several months. The crunch came when during his Pakistan visit (June 15 to 17) his counterpart Humayun Khan announced that the two countries had agreed to pull-back to the pre-1972 positions in Siachen. New Delhi immediately denied this.

Ever since, Singh has been increasingly bypassed on critical foreign policy issues which are tackled within the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). This is



the first time a foreign secretary has not been taken to a NAM conference where delegations work around the clock to draft sensitive papers. An official from the PMO explained that with so many senior people in the delegation S.K. Singh was required to stay in Delhi "to mind the fort". But another top ministry official said Singh has been deliberately playing it low-key. Is this another Venkateswaran episode in the making?

Beaming the Bandh

● No matter what the arguments about how successful the recent Bharat Bandh was, there is agreement on one point: it would probably not

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

have enjoyed the success it did achieve without the help of Doordarshan. In order to build public antipathy to the event Doordarshan launched a public relations blitzkrieg in its news bulletins and through slick advertisements. In fact, on the eve of the bandh, the Hindi newscast started off with an anti-bandh message. But all this served to build free publicity for the Bandh. And after it was all over, Doordarshan spent 18 minutes saying what a flop it was. Eighteen minutes to describe a non-event surely must have made television history.

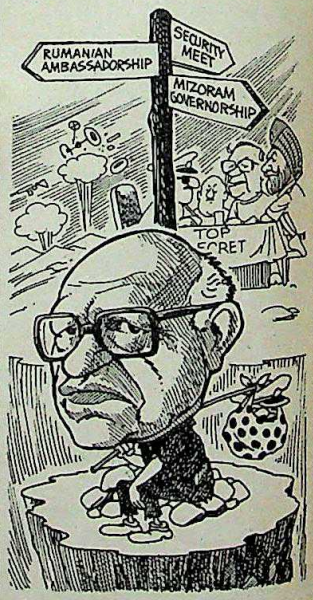
In the aftermath, there has been heartburn aplenty within the ruling party circles about who was responsible for the television campaign that backfired so embarrassingly. Congress(I) high command sources say that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was virtually excluded from any decision-making on the anti-bandh campaign. It was handled directly by Rajiv Gandhi with the help of a few trusted aides. More than anybody else Rajiv was responsible, therefore, for turning the bandh into a successful bandhwagon.

Doghouse Days

● Julio Ribeiro, Punjab's supercop of yesteryear and the blue-eyed boy of the Centre, appears to have fallen in disfavour and right now the bosses don't quite know what to do with him. For more than a year he has virtually hung around as advisor to Governor Siddhartha Shankar Ray without any clearly defined duties.

Ribeiro was recently informed by the Centre that he would be sent as governor of Mizoram. That, however, fizzled out. Then came word that he would be sent as ambassador to Rumania. But no final clearance has followed since.

Last fortnight, however, Ribeiro received his biggest snub. The Centre scheduled four separate meetings in Chandigarh to discuss new



methods to combat terrorist activities in the state. The meetings were attended by the governor, the Union Minister of State for Home P. Chidambaram, Director-General of Police K.P.S. Gill, and the state's senior police and civilian officers. Ribeiro was excluded. Even supercops, it seems, can be put in the doghouse.

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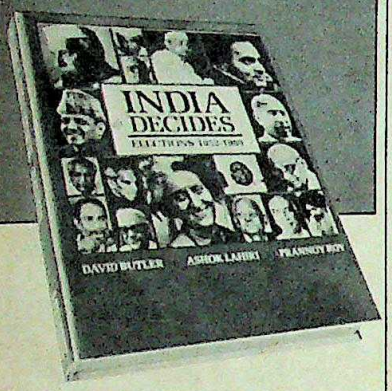
ELECTIONS 1989



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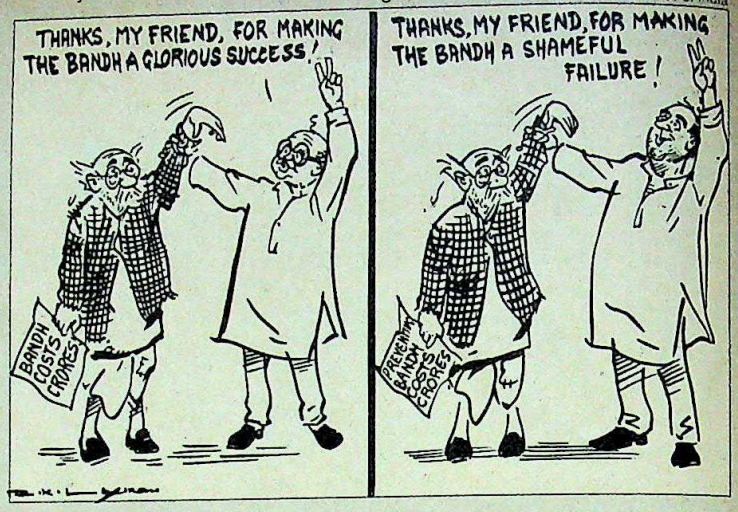

- *Mr Rajiv Gandhi gives extensions to Mr Katre, and Mr Katre gives extensions to Mr Rajiv Gandhi.* ■ V.P. SINGH

- *The people, who are expected to run the Government, are erecting film sets.* ■ RAJIV GANDHI on N.T. Rama Rao

- *Why did General Sundarji not say so (that the risk of cancelling the contract was acceptable) before the* JPC *headed by Mr Shankaranand? He was deposing before the committee. And* INDIA TODAY *is not a statutory body.* ■ J. VENGAL RAO, Union minister for industries

- *Maybe General Vaidya was killed because he knew too much about those who had received the pay-offs from foreign suppliers of armaments. This suspicion will occur to any citizen.* ■ N.T. RAMA RAO in *Indian Express*

- *If this accident of birth that I was born in the Gandhi family can be used in any way to bring some honesty, equality and cleanliness in our national life, I would be very glad.* ■ RAJMOHAN GANDHI, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, on joining the Janata Dal

- *The bandh proved that he (Rajiv) is not only an Alice in the Blunderland of South Block but also a Don Quixote tilting at the administrative windmills of the country.* ■ JAIPAL REDDY, Janata Dal general secretary

- *If Doordarshan has become so incredible, so bad and so distrusted and despised by the Indian people, why do the opposition members want television in their constituency?* ■ H.K.L. BHAGAT in *The Week*

- *I have no doubt that Ambani and Katre are practically one.* ■ RAM JETHMALINI in *Newstrack*

- *I do not know if there is a difference between Mr Devi Lal and a terrorist.* ■ K.N. SINGH, AICC(I) general secretary, in *The Telegraph*

- *I have signed contracts at the airport. Why, I have even signed a blank contract. Given this background, how could we anticipate such drastic action now?* ■ DILIP VENGSARKAR in *Sportsworld*

- *I thought I'd be a wanderer and a vagabond. Well, I guess I'm still that, wandering from one studio to another.* ■ JACKIE SHROFF in *G*

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The Energy & Economy Department building

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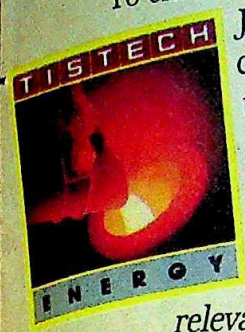

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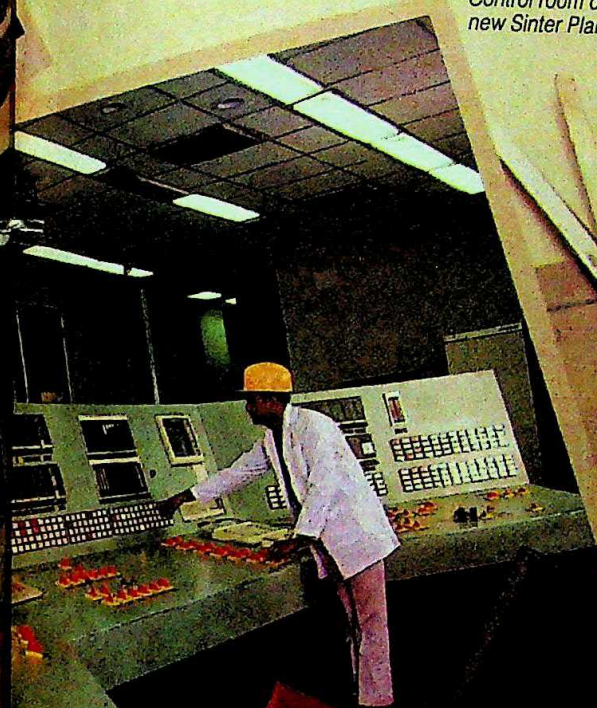

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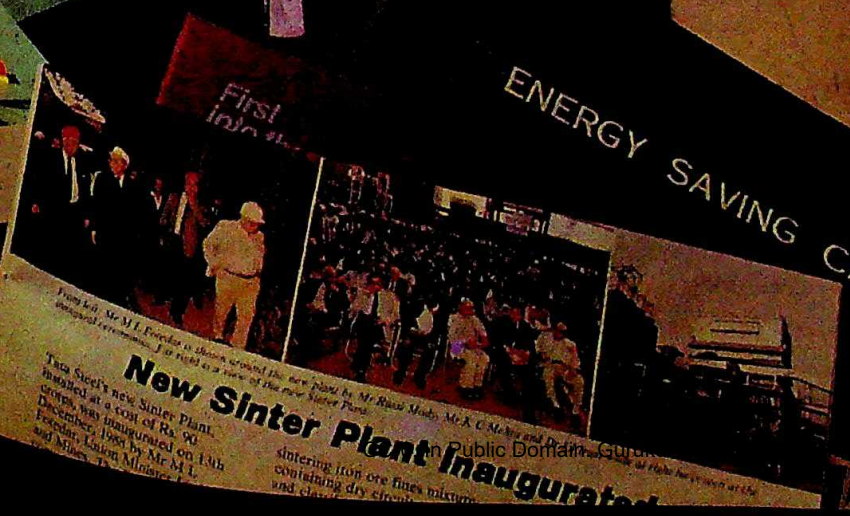

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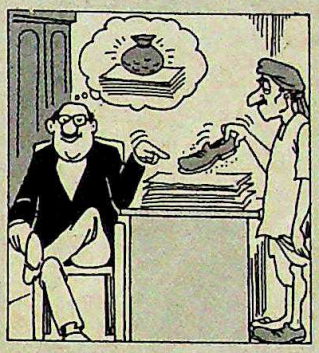
DOWRY DOGS

■ Dowry-harassed women can now take a cue from Rajasthan's Jogi community. The Jogis, a nomadic community tracing their origin to Rajputs, recently congregated in Jaisalmer district's Jerat village. The occasion: a marriage mart. The aim: to fix matrimonial alliances in traditional Jogi fashion.

One thing that became clear to those attending the congregation was that Jogi wedding customs have really gone to the dogs. The dowry accompanying the brides contained no refrigerators or scooters, but fully trained guard dogs and hunting dogs. Brides with ferocious dogs in tow would not make easy prey for greedy husbands. The dogs provide the brides with adequate insurance against harassment. And for anyone planning to go jogi-ing in Rajasthan, the standard warning should suffice: watch out for the dogs. One outcome of this custom is that among the Jogis you hear of no dowry deaths, only dowry dogs.

FOOT FINALE

■ Politicians of all hues and officials have clout which enables them to cut through corruption and the reams of government red tape. But the common man cannot get anything done without greasing a few palms along the way. This is the lubricant which makes government machinery run, but open corruption can sometimes rebound as a Madhya Pradesh official discovered recently. A naive villager of Paloha in Bareilly tehsil approached the official and placed an application before him for processing. The villager was a little nonplussed when the official made an unusual request: the papers could do with a little "weight", the official remarked, using the commonly-understood euphemism for bribe.



The simpleton from the village immediately removed a muddy shoe and placed it on the application as a paperweight. Feeling like a heel, the official had no option but to take care of the matter immediately.

LAUNDERING MONEY

■ The heart of old Delhi, Chandni Chowk, is known for many things. It is best known as north India's largest textile wholesale market, and for its *jalebi* and *parantha* restaurants. What's not known is that here you can literally 'launder' money, black or white. A local dhobi runs a money laundry where he replaces soiled or torn notes with crisp new bills.

The rates may vary—for a slightly soiled Rs 10 note he gives as much as Rs 9 in crisp new notes, whereas the exchange price for a Rs 50 note, half eaten by mice, is as low as Rs 23. The damaged notes are then cleaned, pasted together and exchanged at the Reserve Bank of India for their actual value.

If laundering money is profitable business around the world, it's no less so in Chandni Chowk. And our dhobi-entrepreneur strikes silver every day. His daily profit is staggering, it sometimes touches Rs 20,000. Not bad going for someone who normally washes dirty linen.

MAMMOTH PROTEST

■ Even up to a century or so ago, elephants used to be a common sight in the walled city of Delhi. The stately pachyderms were the chosen mounts of kings and noblemen. Elephants returned to old Delhi recently as part of a novel protest march by a citizens group protesting against the spate of unauthorised construction which was destroying the very character of Shahjehanabad, the graceful capital that Shahjehan built.

What better way to attract attention than a demonstration led by an elephant. Walking behind were members of the citizens group, all wearing elephant masks. The group had earlier sent the mayor 200 protest notes against such construction, but there had been no response. Would a trumpeting elephant draw the mayor's attention? The citizens group is waiting to see if they have made a huge impression on the mayor.

SWEET RELIEF

■ Hungry, marooned villagers of Maharashtra's Raigadh district recently came within a whisker of being bombarded by laddoos from the air. A senior official of the state Government, supervising the packaging of food meant for air-dropping,

was horrified to see the catering contractor making laddoos for the flood victims. The enthusiastic contractor explained that he thought laddoos would make a better meal than a drab combination of puri-bhaji.

In time, the official dissuaded the contractor. What would the stranded flood victims think the Government was celebrating by dropping laddoos? And had the contractor thought of what the impact of landing would do to the laddoos? What good would a shattered laddoo be to a starving man? Finally the contractor saw reason, and the flood hit victims got dinner instead of just dessert.

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Cycle of Shame

CAN this ever change? This remorseless cycle of crisis and conflict, of scandal and shame, of desperation and deceit. It may have resurfaced in the fortnight that was, but now seems to have been with us forever. There is a permanence about the present situation that is sadly self-sustaining; one lie feeding on another, one crisis precipitating a larger one, one pebble amassing an avalanche.

Once again, there is a conflict of crisis, a leadership under renewed siege, the return of a scandal that refuses to let go. And once again, there is an aura of deceit and desperation as a government battles with its conscience—and its compulsions. It is now abundantly clear that Bofors is no ordinary issue. For, in the end, it is a scandal that has succeeded in tainting all of India—and all of its people.

More than any other issue, it is this that has destroyed the credibility of the present government—and raised the level of public cynicism. No matter how convincingly the Government reacts to each new revelation, it has now entrapped itself so intricately in its own contradictions that even the denials have become an embarrassment.

Bofors is no ordinary issue. In the end, it is a scandal that has succeeded in tainting all of India and all its people.

But finally, the shame, and the sham, reflects on us all. It is not, in the end, the Government of Rajiv Gandhi that has soiled its stature but the Government of India. What is more crucial is the fact that the *Indian* Government has allowed itself to be compromised by one foreign company—and that too for the sake of a mere Rs 64 crore. That is a cross every Indian will, perforce, have to bear.

The former chief of army staff has forcefully reminded us of something that seems to have lost its true meaning: 'national honour'. It is precisely that which is being compromised, and with such unrelenting regularity. At any other time, Bofors would not have been as incendiary an issue as it now is. But there is today a discernible lack of faith in the institutions that sustain—and protect—that fragile thing called national honour.

It is for this reason that Bofors is no longer an issue of corruption alone. It is an issue that affects this country's pride and its image in the larger world. And yet, the Government has adopted a strategy that is as fatal as it is facile: any attack on the prime minister is an attack on India. Now, with an election at hand, that strategy is already acquiring a sadly familiar theme; of conspiracies, of traitors and of foreign forces out to destabilise the country.

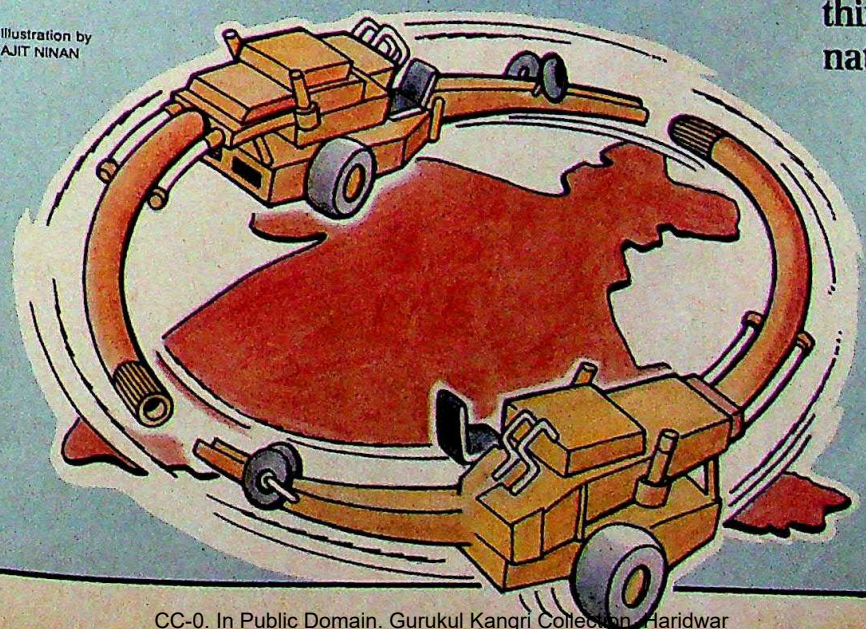
The real reason once again comes back to Bofors. Ensnared in a crisis of leadership, the Opposition has just one gun, albeit a powerful one, to fire at the ruling party—Bofors. But in their desperate bid for power, opposition leaders are using Bofors to denigrate not just the Government, but the armed forces and the effectiveness of the weapon itself. That is a despicable game.

And all this because of just one wretched gun, one single scandal, one cycle of shame that never seems to end. Bofors cost the country Rs 64 crore. The eventual price is already unbearably high.

—DILIP BOBB

There is today a growing lack of faith in the institutions that sustain that fragile thing called national honour.

Illustration by AJIT NINAN



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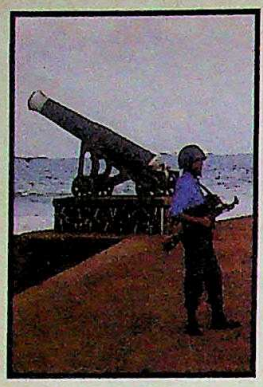


SRI LANKA FALLING APART

FOR a microsecond the roar of gunfire came as a relief, shattering the nervous silence of the night. A groan, and then the silence again. When a man is shot in the head with an M-16 rifle at 30 metres, he just drops dead. The body lay in the middle of Galle Road, Colombo's shopping pleasure strip studded with casinos and shopping malls. Soldiers jumped past streams of blood and poked it with gun-barrels. "Anyone who tries to take a picture will join this body in the ambulance," barked the officer.

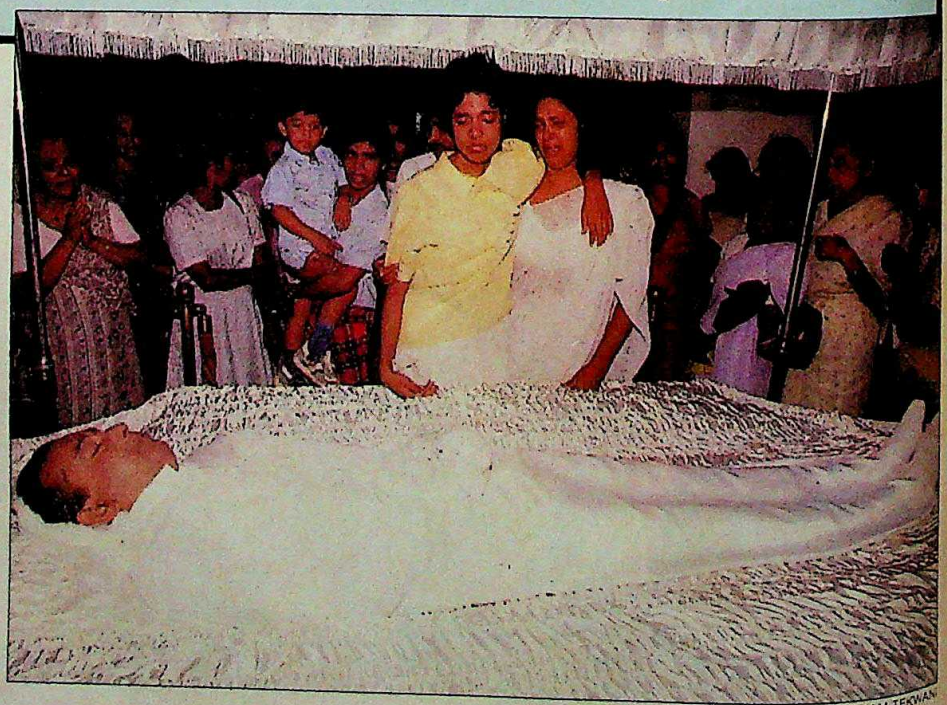
It was a public execution, in full view of hundreds. The victim had been clutching a bag. Soldiers suspected it contained a bomb. First shot in the shoulder he lay writhing in pain. "Shoot him. Kill. Now," shouted the officer. A sharpshooter pulled the trigger. Five minutes later, the road was open and life back to normal.

The chilling execution typified the Sri Lanka of today. Not long ago, the island paradise was a virile country on the threshold of an economic miracle. It was called the new Korea, another Taiwan. Today it is compared with Cyprus, Lebanon, Cambodia, even Afghanistan. Sri Lanka is even more of a socio-ethnic powder keg. Centuries of racial hatred was blown into open warfare by Sinhala-dominated Sri Lanka's anti-Tamil policies. Ideological contradictions and economic imbalances have today created a macabre scenario where Tamil fights Sinhala, pro-India Tamil fights anti-Indian Tamil who in turn fights India, leftist Sinhala fights conservative Sinhala and so on: anarchy abounds.

With more than 5,000 dead in the past five weeks—bringing the toll for the year close to 10,000—Sri Lankans are locked in a hopeless war with themselves. Its economy, once booming at 5.5 per cent annual growth is now in ruins with a pedestrian growth of around 1.5 per cent and faces hyperinflation and atrophy of the three Ts: textiles, tea and tourism that bring most of its foreign exchange.

Corpses flow down the rivers, hang from the trees, smoulder by the roadside, emitting a stench that is a mix of burning flesh and rubber—evidence that most executions in Sri Lanka are not done

"We are all completely shattered. What kind of democracy is this? My country is becoming a graveyard."



SIRIMA KARIAWASSAM, 46
Ruling party legislator

She and husband Merril, a UNP leader, seemed headed for a bright political future till gunmen broke into his office and shot him dead.

Photographs by SHYAM TEKWANI

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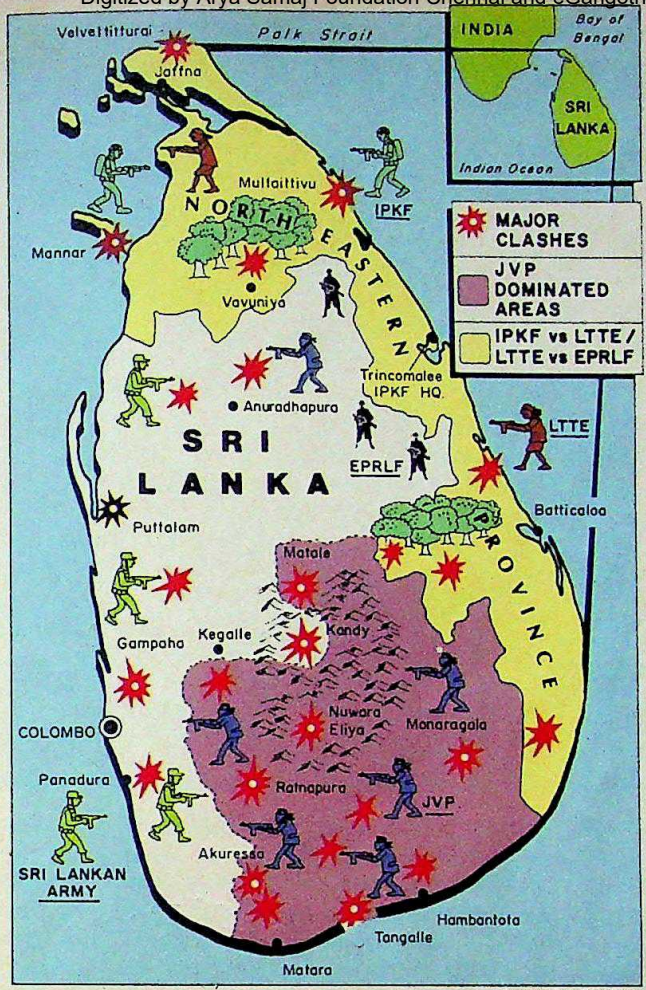
mercifully with rifles but through "necklacing": tie the arms, put a tyre round the neck, throw a tin of kerosene and a lighted cigarette. Last fortnight the state-owned *Daily News* reported that the price of fish was crashing. It chose not to give the reason why: people don't want to buy fish which are eating human bodies. And the Colombo commuters'—and schoolchildren's—favourite pastime now is to hang around the crowded bridge on the Kalani Ganga flowing through the town, looking for bodies. A drive along the countryside gives an idea of the tragedy: there is hardly a village without a few houses displaying white flags of mourning.

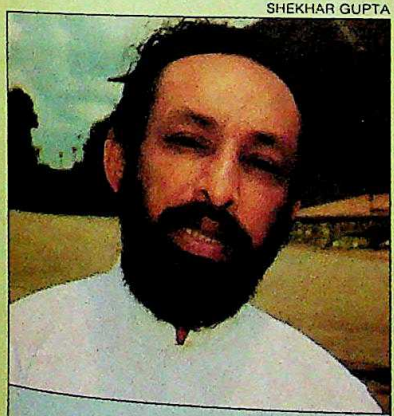
Cynicism overwhelm a once-boisterous people. Last fortnight *The Island*, the most important independent daily, left its editorial columns blank saying: "This column wishes to be silent in symbolic representation of the helplessness and despair which we are sure the whole country feels." Warns Vasudeva Nanayakkara, 50, the firebrand leader of the five-party opposition alliance in the parliament: "We are in a state of anarchy. There is a total breakdown of governance. For each death officially reported, three go unreported." Admits key Premadasa aide and Industry Minister Ranil Wickramsinghe: "Unless we stop the slide we could all drown in our own blood." But he claims things are looking up.

Last fortnight there was little evidence of that as death and destruction overshadowed everything—the possibility of an agreement on the IPKF withdrawal or the all-party conference to find a way out of the mess. In fact, even President Ranasinghe Premadasa's diaphanously veiled offer to the opposition middleground—and even to Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) rebels—to share power was clearly an act of desperation. There were signs too of a rebellion building up within his own party. Many of the rebels were asking for a change openly. Said Agriculture Minister Lalith Athulathmudali: "It is time to think in terms of constitutional



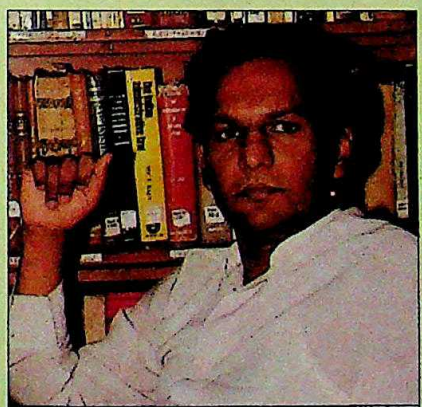
Map by B.K. SHARMA

SHEKHAR GUPTA



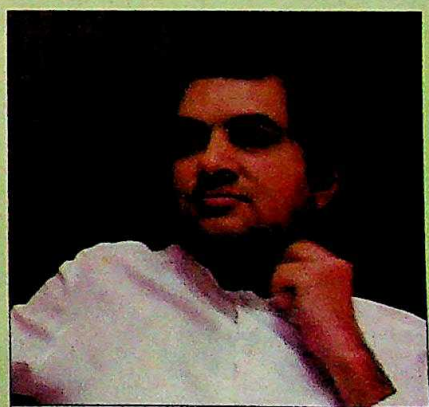
"We are in a state of severe anarchy. There is a total breakdown of governance."

VASUDEVA NANAYAKKARA
Opposition Leader



"Doctors can't treat, teachers can't teach, lawyers can't defend. The very basis of our life is under threat."

NEELAN TIRUCHELVAM
Lawyer and Analyst



"Unless we stop the slide we'll drown in our own blood. But the Government is coming to grips."

RANIL WICKRAMSINGHE
Industry Minister

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DEATH ROLL

Some of the prominent Sri Lankans killed during the past two months

AMIRTHALINGAM

MAHESWARAN

YOGESWARAN

KARIAWASSAM

- September 12
Gladice Jayewardene
Former President J.R. Jayewardene's sister-in-law

- September 11
Prof. C. Paravatavithana
Moratuwa University vice-chancellor

- September 10
Kahawe Vimalasiri, Buddhist monk

- September 5
Merril Kariawassam
Former deputy minister of teaching and director of Rubber Research Institute

- September 1
Tannadassi Nayake Tehro
Buddhist monk

- August 29
Kanchana Abeypala
Civil liberties lawyer

- August 13
Kulasiri Smaratunge
Chief news editor, state-owned television network, Rupavahini

- August 9
K.G. Gunaratnam
Businessman and film producer

- July 31
Premakirthi De Alwis
Announcer and lyric writer, Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation

- July 23
Thevis Guruge, chairman, SLBC

- July 18
Uma Maheswaran, Leader, PLOTE

- July 13
V. Yogeswaran, Leader, TULF

- July 13
Appapillai Amirthalingam
Secretary-General, TULF

changes." The reference obviously was to the widely orchestrated opposition demand that Premadasa step down, bring in a Westminster-style government headed by a prime minister but consisting of all parties. "There is no hope for Sri Lanka with this current Government of mass unpopularity," says Nanayakkara.

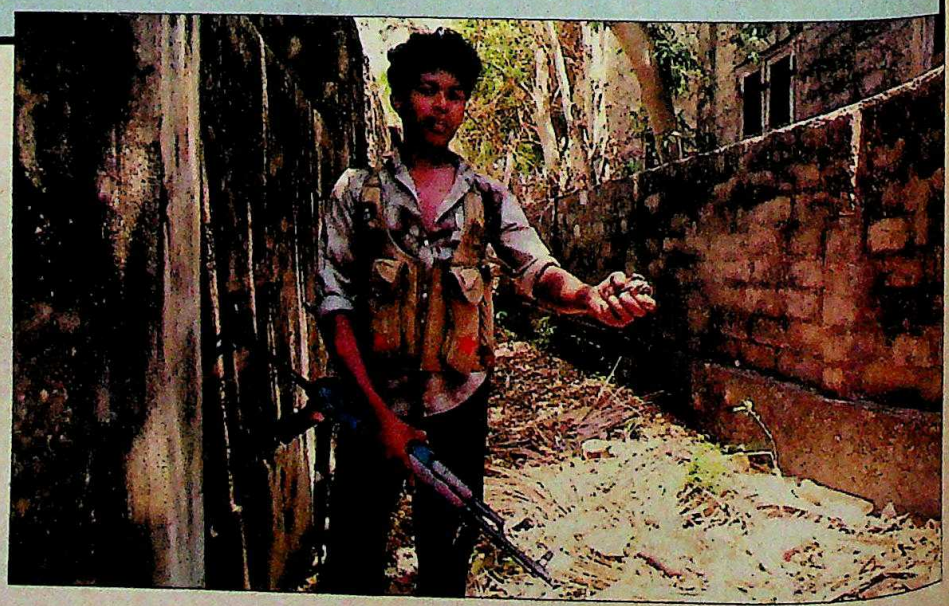
While these political harangues go on, the country that rival politicians are vying so bitterly to rule is cracking from its very core. With all the ethnic, racial and economic tensions blowing up at the same time Sri Lanka today is an active volcano. Post-independence Sri Lanka deliberately followed a policy to exclude Tamils from better education and key jobs under what was later institutionalised as the Sinhala Only Act. The consequence was a Tamil diaspora that finally resulted in the northeastern insurgencies and the Cyprus-like divide. The strife in the Sinhala mainland is really economic in origin: left-wing analysts say that when the pro-West UNP took over in 1977, 10 per cent of Sri Lanka's population controlled 39 per cent of its wealth. Today they hold 51 per cent.

Cursed with such a history and imbalances it was only a matter of time before

"Life is like a hand grenade. You wait more than a second after pulling the pin and it is all over."

SEKHAR, 18
EPRLF fighter

He joined the Tigers five years ago when the Sri Lankan Army killed his father. Now he's totally committed to fighting them.



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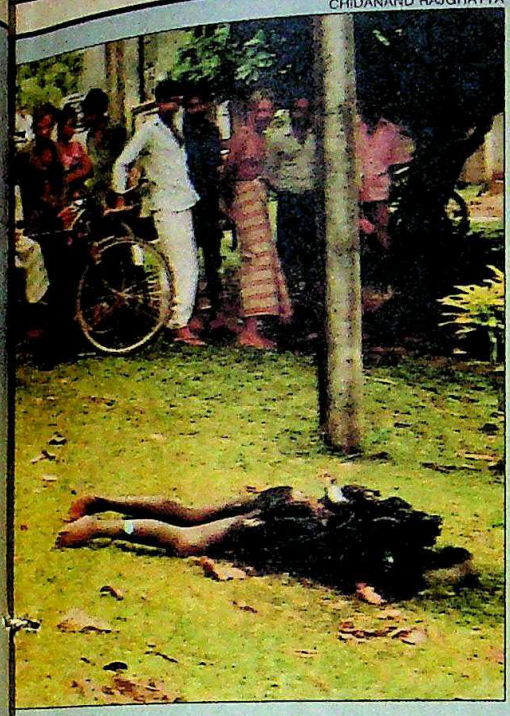
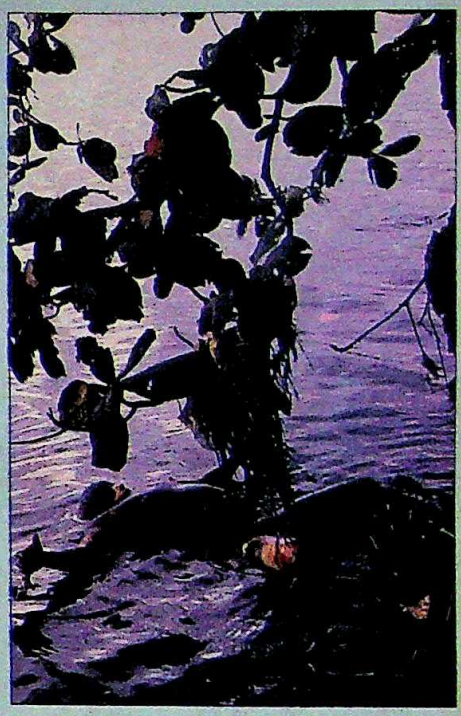
CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA



Corpses can be seen floating in rivers or burning with tyres round their necks. The last five weeks' toll: 5,000 killed.



the racial and economic tensions peaked. As it battles the Tigers and feverishly arms the rival Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and the Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF), the IPKF has lost more men in the past six weeks than in the entire preceding year. In the Sinhala heartland of the south and the west, a trigger-happy army fights what could be termed a private battle, shooting suspected JVP extremists at will even as the JVP kills soldiers' families and burns their houses. Intermittent strikes have paralysed key sectors. Last fortnight hundreds of foreign visitors walked past empty immigration and customs counters with their passports unstamped as officers failed to turn up for work because of the JVP's week-long strike.

THE trains have not run more than a skeleton service for four months and schools and colleges have not held examinations for four years. Almost two-thirds of the country has been totally without electricity for more than six weeks because the power pylons near Matale were destroyed by the rebels and several attempts by the Government to re-erect them have been foiled. "My country is finished," said a senior bureaucrat, "the only people doing better than before are florists and coffin-makers."

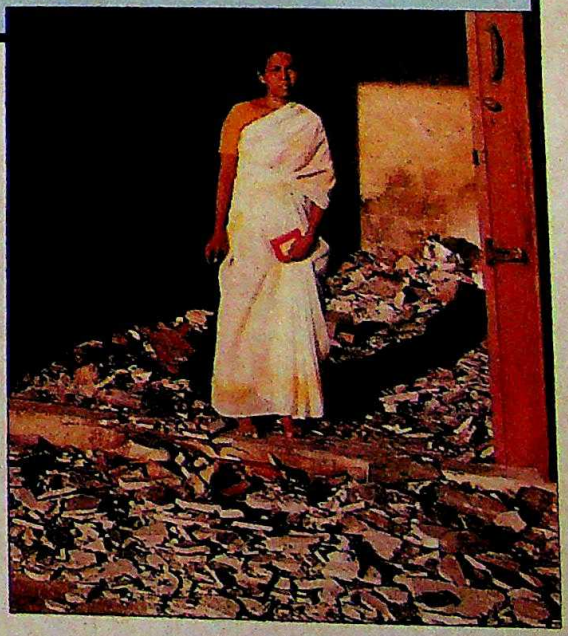
But the overwhelming majority, not able to cash in on the macabre dance of death, is looking for options. One sort is visible in the long visa queues outside the western embassies every morning. "There are thousands of educated Sri Lankan women working in Pakistan as maid-servants," says a minister. Those with skills are going to more promising lands. "Society is being skimmed. The best people are going," he adds.

The JVP has been able to paralyse almost any arm of the Government at will. Stealing a march even over Mao, from whom its goateed leader Rohana Wijeweera learnt the art of throwing a government into chaos, the JVP has also succeeded in paralysing the professions. Laments internationally noted lawyer and political analyst Neelan Tiruchelvam: "Now lawyers can't defend, doctors can't treat, teachers can't teach. The very basis of our existence is being questioned." A minister goes a step further. He likens the state of his nation's

"My shop is finished. So are my sons. Where do I go now?"

INDIRA ADIARUNACHALAM, 45
Velvettiturai mother

She was in her shop when a passing IPKF patrol was ambushed. Hell broke loose, a grenade hit her shop and her three sons are missing.



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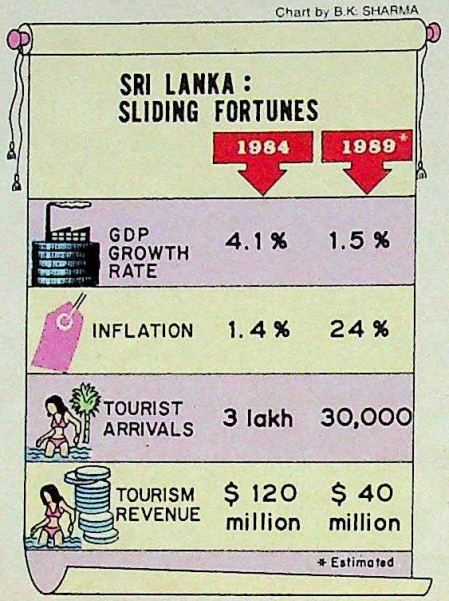
institutions to "total quadriplegia".

Three civil liberties lawyers who took up habeas corpus cases of JVP suspects have been killed in the last month by pro-UNP vigilantes and last fortnight Prins Gunasekhara, the best-known civil liberties activist, went underground after his nephew and fellow lawyer Kanchana Abeypala was killed. Meanwhile, even the Government is finding it difficult to get lawyers to defend its officials. Most striking is the case of a superintendent of police, accused of highhandedness against JVP suspects, who sought government permission to hire a foreign lawyer as even the advocate general of Sri Lanka refused to defend him fearing retribution.

AMID such chaos, any group of people with arms can take the law into its own hands. And they do. Premadasa admitted as much last week when he told a gathering of the party's parliament group in Colombo: "The militants have arms in their hands. Representatives of all political parties have also secured arms for their security..." What he left unsaid was that many politicians have built their own private armies often going under fancy taxonomy like Yellow Scorpions, Black Panthers or Green Tigers. And since the JVP has already killed 17 tea garden superintendents to take over the sprawling estates the plantation managements too are hiring private defence groups.

Retribution is swift, brutal, and at the cost of innocent people. The guilty simply vanish into the jungles. The JVP gave the soldiers an ultimatum to either leave service or have their families killed. The army retaliated by putting up huge banners in red, warning the JVP that "for each one of ours, we will take 12 of you, including your families". And while the JVP continued to implement its threat, the soldiers retaliated. Each time a soldier or his family member was killed, scores of people from surrounding areas known to have even the slightest sympathy for the JVP were picked up. They ended up in the rivers, on the trees or burning by the roadside. Not surprisingly, many Sri Lankan police stations stock a generous supply of used tyres in their backyards.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



The best illustration of how total the free-for-all has become came last fortnight in the small town of Panadura, 25 km south of Colombo.

Premila Chandrakanti, a sprightly, 18-year-old clerk with the army was shot dead along with her parents, brother and sister in her house on the outskirts of the town, presumably by the JVP. The army struck in retaliation. The next morning 31 unidentified bodies, their hands tied behind their backs, some "necklaced", some shot through the head, were recovered from Panadura. A day later it turned out that the family had been killed by an estranged cousin seeking a share in the inheritance. Instant retribution has replaced justice and throughout the countryside, bodies smoulder in what are called "eternal fires": a crater where an army vehicle has been blown up by a rebel landmine is filled up by soldiers with the bodies of suspects and burnt.

The key author of this new code of retribution is Premadasa Udgampola, the 46-year-old deputy inspector general of police now based in Kandy. Often called the Dirty Harry of Sri Lanka, Udgampola has just one mission in life: to finish the JVP. "I have good reason. How can I forget July 28, 1988?" That was when the JVP raided his family home in Galle, killing his 78-year-old mother, brother, sister-in-law and two children. It is an open secret

"My family is wiped out. So are those of thousands of others in Sri Lanka. Can't Christ stop this madness?"

NALINI DIAS, 59
Panadura matriarch

An estranged nephew wiped out the family of her grand-daughter, an army clerk. The army, thinking it was the JVP's doing, killed 31 people.

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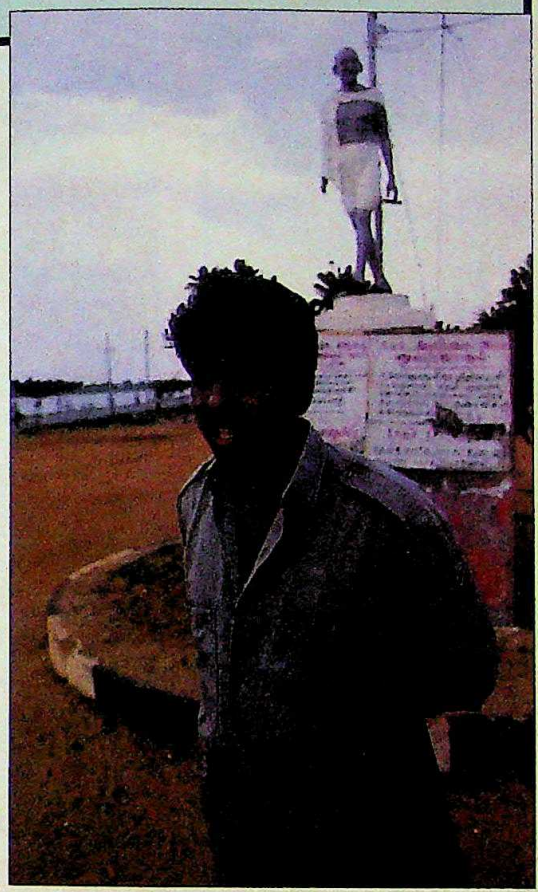
"First you fight for revenge. Then you can't do anything else."



MANGALRAJA, 26
ENDLF leader

He runs the pro-India party's office in Batticaloa right next to Gandhi's statue. Soon he will be fighting the LTTE.

that he sought out each one of the killers and supervised their executions, slowly, painfully. "They showed me no mercy. I show them no mercy," he says.

Evidence of that lies scattered all over his desk, in his half-open drawer and behind his chair: dum-dum bullets, snub-nosed ones which, fired from his favourite .38 Browning, could shatter a human body.

NONE of these would pass the Geneva Convention rules for "humanitarian" killing. His drawer bristles with grenades of various sizes, a Uzi submachine-gun lies to his right, a light machine-gun next to his chair, and a commando knife under his pile of files.

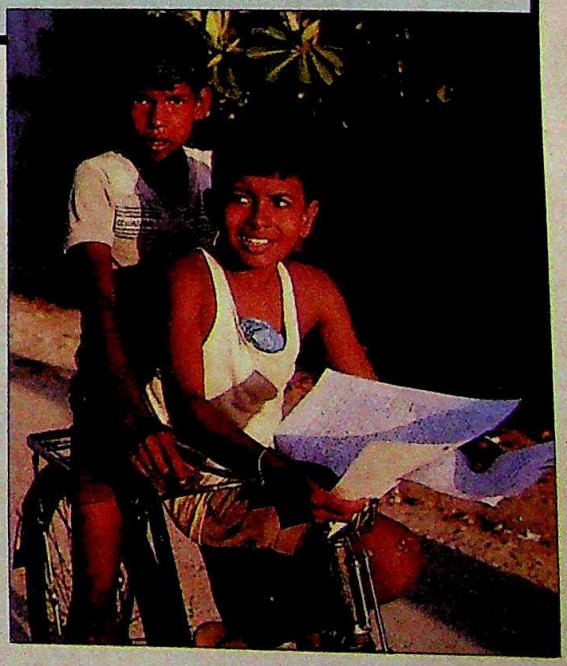
"There are no second chances in this business," he says. But behind the merciless vendetta lies the realism of a family man. His wife and children are now safely tucked away in the US and he will join them "once my work here is over".

Far away in the Tamil-dominated northeast a similar vendetta controls the fortunes of the people. In early August a patrol of the Sikh Regiment was ambushed in Velvettiturai, 35 km north of Jaffna. Six soldiers died. That evening, the village, known for producing smugglers and top LTTE leaders, lay in a shambles, 120 houses reduced to burnt out shells and at least 50 people killed. "Not one of the dead belonged to the LTTE. They were all shot in cold blood," chafes N. Selventhran, chief of the local citizens' committee. The IPKF denies this, claiming six were militants and the rest were caught in the crossfire. The bottom line is: thrice as many civilians died as combatants.

No wonder then that in just three years, from being the West's favourite Third World showpiece, its free trade zones churning out products from Pierre Cardin labelled textiles to Noritake bone-china and its long beachline drawing tourists in droves, Sri Lanka is now nearly a basket case. Estimates of exchange reserves range between one week's imports and a fortnight's. "Everything depends on the IMF going ahead with the standby agreement to provide the money we need now," says economist Sonali Deraniyagala at the Colombo-based International Centre for Ethnic Studies.

Inflation is running above 20 per cent (versus 14 per cent last year). The value of the local rupee has slid for the past three weeks, from 30 per dollar to 39 (three years ago the rate was 25). The black-market rate is 44, exactly what the IMF wants Sri Lanka to devalue its currency to. Many of the foreign entrepreneurs who crowded the free trade zones have fled—many of them Indian. And even if factories function despite strikes, harbours don't, holding up shipments for weeks. "I shudder to think what buyers will do next year," says a well-known textile exporter. Tea auctions have been erratic too. "To destroy us, India need send no armies. It only needs to manipu-

"We're waiting to be 15. Then we will use guns, not leaflets."



JAYANTAN, 10, and PARANDAMAN, 12
Velvettiturai cousins

They have become experts in dodging IPKF patrols while going about their daily routine of distributing rebel leaflets in the city.

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late the international price of tea by a rupee," says Minister for Plantation Industries Gamini Dissanayake.

The third major exchange-earning sector, tourism, has been predictably devastated. For a whole decade, as tourist arrivals swelled (to 300,000 in 1983) and brought in $ 120 million a year, vast sections of Sri Lankan society, particularly along the coastline, merrily feathered their nests with the western tourists' travellers' cheques. Today, the entire 150-km strip of hotels and beach resorts along the south-western coast lies depressingly vacant, wiping out this new rich class with little by way of economic resilience and plenty of loans to pay off.

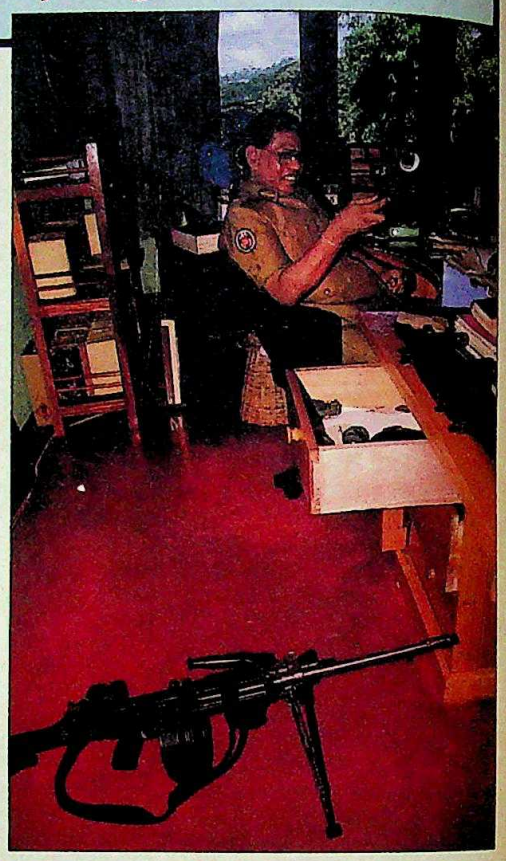
THERE is no hope at all for lesser entrepreneurs. Walking listlessly along the picture-postcard drive to Kandy, the ancient Sinhala capital whose history and the Temple of the Tooth Relic make it a must on the tourist itinerary, Hettiarachige Ranasinghe and his pair of porcupines, Chutti and Patty, make a curious sight. In better days Ranasinghe made a spartan living by charging tourists Rs 10 each to be photographed with his prickly pets. Today there are no tourists and no pictures. "How long can I wait? Another month. Then I will perhaps eat up the porcupines and go to Colombo to look for a job."

Desperation. That is what drives the average Sri Lankan to panic stations. In a production-based economy, a steep fall in the value of the currency would not have affected the poorest of the poor to such a degree. Not so in Sri Lanka with its trade-based economy. Much of the country's requirements are imported, from rice to ketchup and from nuts and bolts to handcuffs (Smith &

"You get no second chances. You either kill, or get killed."

PREMADASA UDGAMPOLA, 50
Police DIG at Kandy

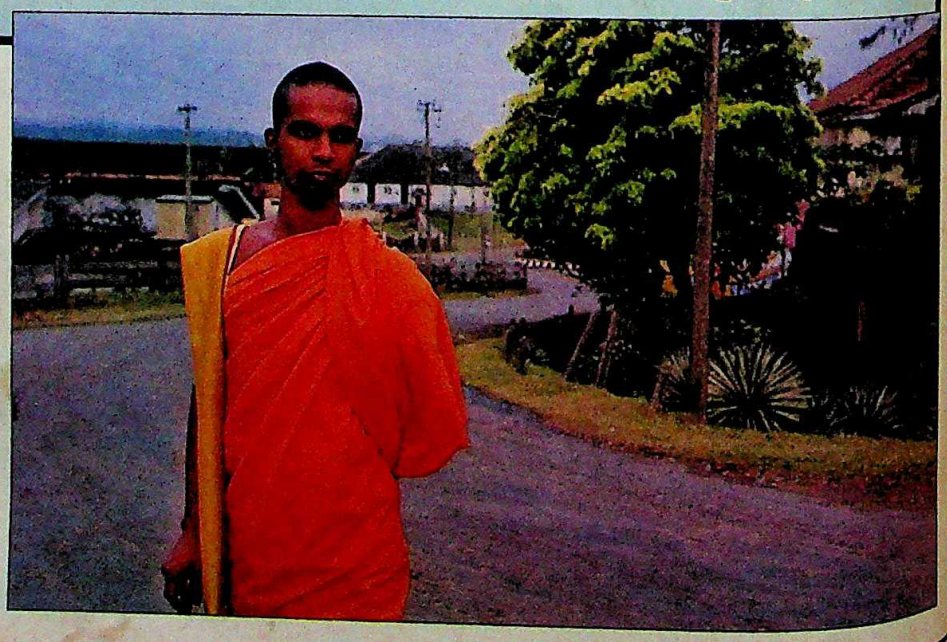
Militants wiped out part of his family in July 1988. He now has one mission: to wipe out the militants. He is called Sri Lanka's Dirty Harry.



"Monks have even gone to war for Sinhala pride. We don't back killings but we are for Sinhala glory."

NAPAL SUMANSARA, 21
Monk from Matara

His house has been burnt as his brother is a soldier busy killing JVP activists. Yet he supports Sinhala chauvinism.



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Wesson) and each time the rupee falls a notch, people have to pay more. The rising cost of defence purchases is also draining resources—whatever is left. Says Athulathmudali, former defence minister: "Once we took pride in constantly being able to keep our defence expenditure within 1 per cent of the GNP. Today it is running close to four." Says a retired Sri Lankan general: "Defence costs money. In green dollar bills."

GIVEN its peculiar economy and social structure, Sri Lanka's tragedy has many unique facets, the most tragic of them, ironically, stemming from its phenomenal rate of literacy (86 per cent, compared to India's 36 and Pakistan's 21). This resulted in the churning out of a new and literate generation with not enough industry or white collar jobs to keep them occupied. The first protest against this came with the first uprising of the JVP in the early '70s, crushed by Sirimavo Bandaranaike with some Indian help and at an enormous cost of 20,000 lives. After the right-wing UNP came to power, mushrooming free trade zones that employed thousands and Singapore-type economic changes helped put the lid on the socio-economic tinderbox for some time. But they could not contain the pressure forever.

"This generation of frustrated, overqualified, underemployed Sri Lankans is being supplemented by a new one that is overaged and underqualified as well," says a senior university don who eagerly opens his mailbox twice each day to check if the letter from a US university—"the most important thing in my life today"—confirming his year-long fellowship, has arrived. For four years, not one person has graduated, as Sri Lanka's eight universities and 212 high schools have remained mostly shut. Medical colleges have been paralysed for five years. "We have had no new doctors, no new lawyers, no new engineers, no new teachers for at least four years. And the ones we had are going away to safer climes," rues a senior government official. Hopelessly short of doctors for its largely state-funded health care system, Sri Lanka is now employing final-year medical students as doctors.

It is from this vast mass of idle, frustrated and sullen students that the JVP picks its bloodthirsty new converts, the defence forces their trigger-happy troops or the suspects for torture chambers, and the streets their new criminals.

"The problem is not just to survive economically but how to survive without suspicion," says Ranjan Gunasekhara (not his real name), a final-year law student for four years now. "You hang around the street all day doing nothing, and sooner or later the police come for you. And once they give you the treatment, you go to the JVP asking for weapons for revenge," he adds, explaining why the rebel ranks have swelled despite their confused ideology. Gunasekhara has tried to sit for his examinations three times, only to return home without writing out a line. "The vice-chancellor went on TV asking us to come for exams, commandos guarded the institutions. But they don't accompany you from home to college," says Gunasekhara. Adds Minoli, a fellow law student: "You've done this thrice over, you're sick of your notes." Both, like thousands others, have tried getting into Indian universities. But they are overage for most. The others want them to begin from first year onwards. The Sri Lankan campus lexicon now has an addition to flotsam and jetsam: dropsam.

Caught in the same crossfire is the media, particularly the state-owned Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation and Rupavahini, the television network. Three top executives of the two organisations have been killed. So has the Government's chief censor in the brief period of press censorship in July. The JVP said it was punishing them for purveying "anti-people" propaganda and for denying the free press its rights. But the free press is far from enthused. In the past three months at least a dozen senior journalists have grabbed job offers abroad, many more are negotiating and those who can't get employment abroad are thronging western embassies looking for scholarships. "Anyone, just anyone who does some political writing wants to get away. We are running for our lives," said one of Sri Lanka's best-known newsmen last week as he went through a series of farewell parties for him.

Many of the national television and broadcasting corporation employees have quit, most refuse to report for work. Result: for more than a fortnight now, most of the key jobs have been manned by soldiers. Some of them even double as television newsreaders fumbling, stuttering, and yet blabbering out pages of propaganda interspersed with scores of nervous sideways glances. A naval commodore is in charge of the television network. No surprise, professionals say, that the newsreaders and anchorpersons seem all at sea.

Despite all the mayhem, Colombo's subterranean jetset has found ways to live with the times, and continue living it up. To get around the night-curfew—sentries have shot too many violators without asking questions for anyone to take chances—parties now begin at nine and end at four in the morning when curfew ends. The casinos are doing more business: players have to stay on till four. Two of the major hotels with casinos are offering free coffee at 4 a.m.

But for much too large a majority of Sri Lankans, the night brings terror and the question: will they wake up alive the next morning? The day brings the drudgery of staying at home because of the strikes, or the option of defying the strikes and risking one's life. One of Premadasa's ministers put it most aptly: "What can I do except count every day as my nation falls apart."

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Sri Lanka

"Many will be thrown to the wolves if India abandons in a hurry."

VARATHARAJA PERUMAL, 40
EPRLF Chief Minister

The Tigers call him a puppet. India views him as a moderate. He will be the LTTE's target once the IPKF quits.

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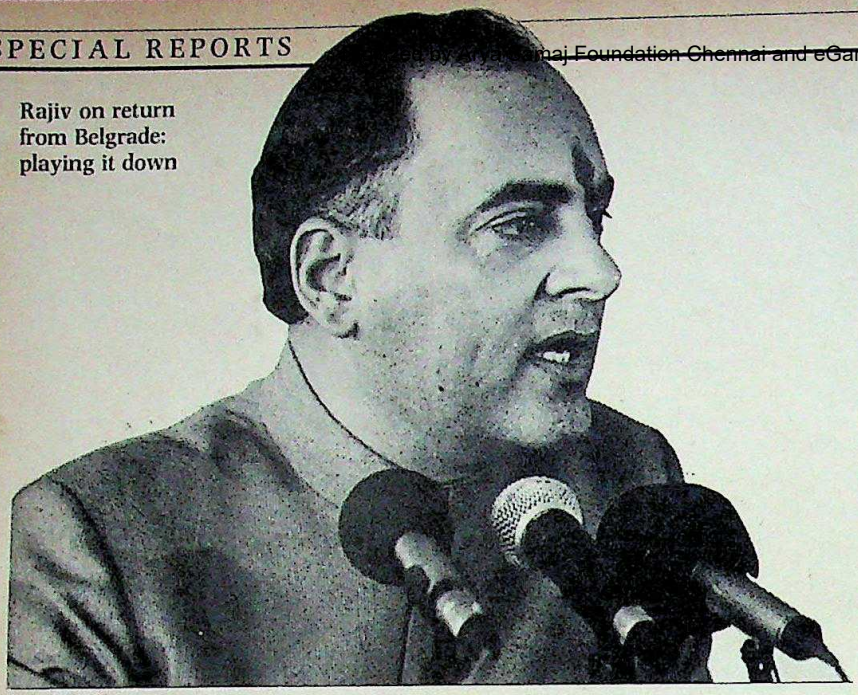

Rajiv on return from Belgrade: playing it down

BHAWAN SINGH

THE BOFORS ISSUE

More Questions Than Answers

FOR Rajiv Gandhi and his government, the Bofors issue has become a recurring nightmare. No sooner had the dust from the CAG report settled, when former army chief, General K. Sundarji, fired a broadside that's still creating shockwaves.

Sundarji's devastating revelations could not have come at a worse time for the Government, when Rajiv was readying to leave for Belgrade. One of his close aides rushed an advance copy of the INDIA TODAY interview to Rajiv, just hours before he emplaned for the Non-Aligned Movement's Conference. At a hurriedly-called conference with key ministers and trusted bureaucrats, it was decided that the Defence Ministry would be entrusted with the task of damage-control.

Rajiv skirted the issue in his pre-departure press conference, but it was clear that Sundarji's statements had exploded like an unexpected bombshell. There was a clear division of opinion within the Government. One view, mainly supported by ruling party politicians, was to take a tough line against Sundarji and resurrect the conspiracy and destabilisation theory. The contrary view, supported by senior bureaucrats, was to downplay the revelations. Rajiv supported the softer line.

By then, however, ruling party politicians like J. Vengal Rao had already launched attacks on Sundarji, even demanding his arrest under the Official Secrets Act. This quickly stopped when it became clear that Rajiv had decided not to fan the embers any further.

But it was clear from the stinging editorials in a majority of the national dailies that Sundarji's statements had raised serious and fresh questions about the Bofors deal and the manner in which the Government had handled the cancellation threat to get the Swedish arms manufacturer to reveal the recipients of the Rs 64-crore pay-off.

Even the more conservative dailies were scathing in their opinion. *The Economic Times* stated: "The least that the prime minister should do is immediately seek a fresh mandate on this (the cover-up) issue," a stand that was echoed by the normally staid *Hindu* which opined: "After General Sundarji's revelations—especially of the cover-up initiated at the very top—no leader, party, or government in a democratic system could legitimately hang on to office on the plea that no personal wrongdoing has been proved." *The Tribune* asked if there were any fig leaves left for the Government to shelter behind. However, *The Times of India* and *The Telegraph* raised questions about Sundarji's motives and the timing of his revelations, which the general answers vehemently (*see box*).

Sundarji Replies

THE telephone never stops ringing in the Krishnaswami Sundarji household in Coonoor in Tamil Nadu. And it's always a press reporter seeking a follow-up interview, or responses from the retired army chief on the Defence Ministry's hollow rebuttal of his revelations on the Bofors gun deal cover-up. The general responds with the Walter Scott couplet about people getting entangled in their own webs of deceit. Poetry apart, Sundarji commented at length on the main points raised by the Government's rejoinder to his interview.

On former defence secretary S.K. Bhatnagar's remark that Sundarji's note on the security implications of cancellation was cryptic and cursory.

If my note was not comprehensive enough, as they are now claiming, they would either have told me orally to enlarge on these aspects or written back and said please make it more comprehensive. No such thing happened. Why send it back to me? I had an office copy. That's not the way any government functions. This is the first time that one of my notes came back. And if amplification was needed, why should I be such a nut to return the same note verbatim?

It was a one-page note in which I had baldly stated my considered opinion. One page does not mean it was ill considered, and 600 pages would not have made it better considered. When a (service) chief gives his advice to a civil servant or a minister, he doesn't load that opinion with background clutter of analysis or with technical jargon which is seldom comprehended. If, on the other hand, I was discussing it with my army commanders then I would have dealt at great length with the nuts and bolts, issues like threat assessment or relative strengths assessment. What is important is the bottom line. Whether they had faith in the man giving the bottom line is more important than 600 pages or 25 appendices. If they have faith they must take his advice. The day they lose faith they must sack him and find somebody else.

If at that time they had told me that my threat assessment was poor or not acceptable, I would have quit, because no self-respecting chief can continue to

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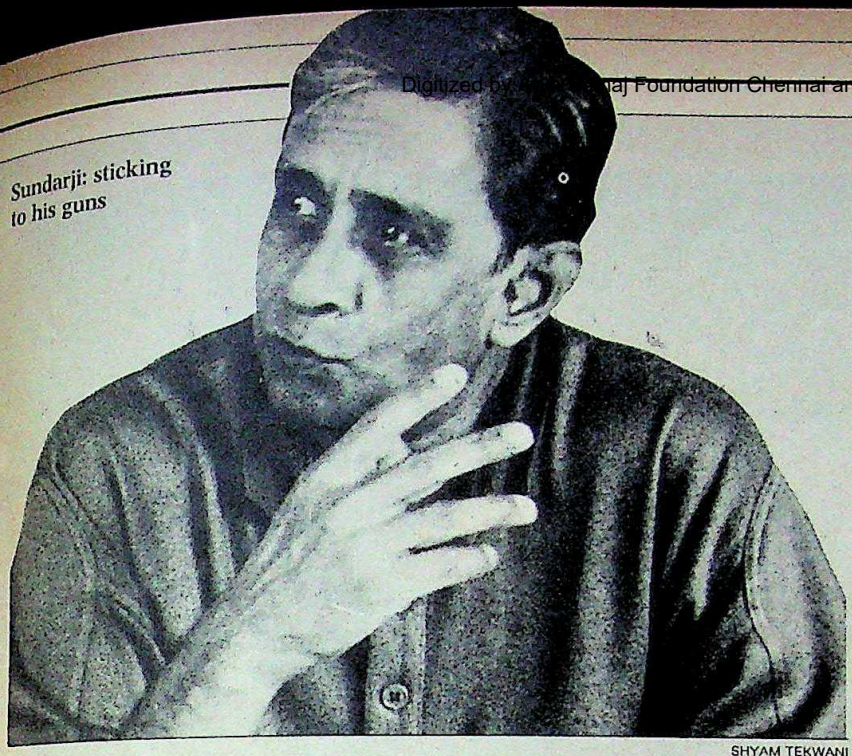

Sundarji: sticking to his guns

SHYAM TEKWANI

"Proof of the pudding is in the eating. Where are the names?"

function after his professional judgement has been questioned.

On the Defence Ministry's claim that there were serious tensions on the border with Pakistan and China.

By April 1987 the crisis with Pakistan was all over. The Pakistan delegation had visited India (in early February), and mutual pull-back of troops was in progress. So in my opinion the security scenario was not highly dangerous. I took these into account and felt it (cancellation) was a risk worth-taking. At one time I thought it (refusal to cancel) might be for the legal and other implications. It was only with the passage of time, when I saw their very firm handling of the cover up, that the scales started falling off my eyes and perception started to increase that, dammit, it must have been part of the game.

On why he did not resign at that time.

My answer is simple. My business is security and if in my judgement security was endangered, then a resignation would be *de rigueur*. If I had said that the contract should not be cancelled because we could not afford to risk an 18-month to two-year delay, and the Government had insisted on cancelling the contract, against my advice, then it would have been incumbent on me to resign because security would have been affected. But in this case, it was the other way round. By not taking my advice to threaten to cancel the contract, the risk was minimised.

On why he decided to speak out now.

The step I have taken, of speaking out, is a major step. I knew there would be dust, fall out and damage to everybody. Only when one is convinced, to the extent one can be convinced without total proof in one's hand, that there is reasonable certainty of skullduggery, or malfeasance, only then would one be correct in taking this major step.

Earlier I had lingering doubts about the integrity of the whole thing (gun deal). But when *The Hindu* published those papers in June or July of 1988, many of my doubts disappeared. When the Government said we will still get the names, I waited with a faint hope. But during the last session of parliament, it became evident that there was no seriousness about getting the facts, no hope of the names coming out. At this point of time I became more or less convinced that I would have to speak out.

Besides that, a broad brush smear campaign was launched against many of us connected with the selection of the gun system, and innuendos started that many of us were involved in making money or in succumbing to improper pressure from the Government. The CAG report put me in a spot by saying there was inadequate justification for my change of view, hinting at malafide or poor judgement. I was also quite dismayed by the fact that the Opposition was knocking the quality of the gun as an election gimmick. If they use the corruption issue to hit at the Government, it's no skin off my nose, but knocking a good gun, sowing doubts in the minds of the troops about the efficacy of the gun system, is a mean, dishonourable thing to do. It did untold damage and I had to make sure that it stopped. This is the reason why I spoke out when I did.

On the Defence Ministry's claim that it was the prime minister who first suggested the cancellation of the Bofors gun deal.

Maybe he was the first to officially articulate it. But there are no medals for suggesting it first. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Where are the names? Have we got them?

On the denials by S.K. Bhatnagar and N.N. Vohra.

Bhatnagar and Vohra are not telling the truth. Vohra has tried to be smart, he has covered his backside, *theek hai*. How long does it take to directly say that he had not told Sundarji this, like Bhatnagar has said. But once you decide to tell a falsehood to save your skin or to advance yourself or whatever, what is to prevent you from coming out with one more falsehood? Why should he have any qualms? It's my word against theirs.

On the charge that he is the first ex-army chief to violate the Official Secrets Act.

When I spoke out, it was not done light-heartedly, but after a great deal of agonising and with a very sad heart. If it is indeed the first time that an ex-chief was forced to talk in this vein, I might add that this was also the first time perhaps that a government has behaved in such a manner to force him to speak out.

On the Defence Ministry contention that his July 13, 1987 note "indicated that cancellation would leave a large void in vital artillery support to field formations...."

My note does not contain any such reference to a large void in artillery support. I did not say so, those are not my words. Maybe it's their conclusion. And when the Defence Ministry says that there were larger security aspects beyond what I had pointed out, it's clear to me what the game is: to obfuscate the issue by producing this tissue of lies. Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practise to deceive.

—RAMINDAR SINGH in Coonoor

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Acqua Minerale Bisleri uses the same silver system used by NASA to purify water aboard space shuttles.

NASA scientists selected a silver system to purify drinking water aboard space shuttles after testing 23 different methods. Acqua Minerale Bisleri (AMB) also found silver to be the most effective water-purifying agent. Silver sterilised water inhibits the growth of bacteria through the oligodynamic effect. It is further treated with special anti-microbial processes and packed in disposable bottles. AMB is 100% pure drinking water. It is safer than boiled and filtered water which can get contaminated. In fact AMB is so safe that you can confidently give it not only to everyone at home but also to the sick and the convalescent and even to infants. Carry it with you while travelling too. On earth. Or in space.

RADEUS/PE/AMB/3-89

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The Defence Ministry's rejoinder, that the chief of army staff's advice was only one input among many others, nonetheless did confirm that:

▶ Sundarji sent letters in June and July 1987, suggesting cancellation of the contract to extract the names of the pay-off recipients and said that it was "an acceptable security risk".

▶ That the July 4 meeting, at which Sundarji claims the prime minister upbraided defence ministry officials for threatening Bofors, did take place.

▶ That Lt-General H. Kaul did inform the then defence secretary, S.K. Bhatnagar, about a Rs 2.5-crore bribe offer made to him by one of the competing companies.

Intriguingly, the Government's seven-page version of events avoids mention of the role played by Arun Singh, then minister of state for defence, who resigned on this issue. There are also other gaps and several unanswered questions:

■ **Government: The idea of the possible cancellation of the Bofors contract had emanated from the prime minister himself on June 4, 1987, following receipt of the report of the Swedish national audit bureau confirming the pay-offs.**

The evidence shows that starting June 16, the Defence Ministry made several written requests to Bofors demanding details about the commissions, but none of these—despite Bofors' virtual refusal to give the information—even hints at cancellation. The picture gets murkier, for on June 4, the prime minister had held a meeting with opposition leaders on the Bofors issue. BJP leader L.K. Advani has now stated that when the participants suggested that the Government cancel the contract to get at the names, Rajiv's reaction was "sharply negative". His version has official confirmation. Defence Minister K.C. Pant referred to it in Parliament on August 6, 1987, when he reiterated that opposition leaders had been taken "into confidence" on June 4 on the reasons for not cancelling the contract. Contradicting this, the ministry now suggests that the prime minister had not made up his mind because, on that day, June 4, 1987, he ordered a "complete evaluation" of the implications of cancellation. Sundarji also stated in his interview that informal talks on cancellation had started within the ministry as early as May 1987.

■ **Government: In deciding against cancellation, the Government could not go by the sole advice of the chief of army staff (COAS) because "the national security is much larger than its military aspect...The views of the COAS, though important, cannot alone determine national security decisions."**

No matter how valid this point, this is perhaps the first time that the Government has used this argument. Throughout the Bofors debate, the Government had consistently maintained that because Sundarji was the chief it gave his opinion maximum weightage while selecting the gun. But in cancelling it, his opinion had to be weighed against other factors. The Government does not disclose what the other factors were. Earlier, the advice of the chief was the only factor. Pant averred repeatedly in Parliament: "You have to respect the opinion of whoever is the chief" and "it is the chief's opinion which prevails". Ironically, the Government is now doubting the judgement of the man it had earlier presented as the main arbiter of national security.

> **Intriguingly, the Government's seven-page version of events avoids mention of the role played by Arun Singh, who resigned on this issue.**

■ **Government: Sundarji's note of June 13 was returned to him for re-examination because it lacked "any evaluation of precise security implications, the attendant risks etc....in relation to probable threat scenarios". A month later he again submitted the same note.**

Sundarji vehemently denies this. As chief, he says, he had given the army's considered opinion on the impact of cancellation on defence preparedness. If the Government had then questioned his professional judgement, he says he would have resigned. His views had earlier been sought in writing, and if additional details were sought, in writing, he would have been glad to provide them.

■ **Government: "It has to be borne in mind that in the first half of 1987 there were serious tensions on our borders with Pakistan. Developments on our border with China were also causing concern."**

Until January 1987, there were definite tensions with Pakistan, but by February 4, high-level delegations of the two countries had met and signed an agreement promising to de-escalate and pull back forces to peacetime locations. By end-April 1987, Sundarji says the crisis had wound down and he took the threats from Pakistan and China into consideration before concluding that cancelling the contract would be an acceptable risk.

■ **Government: There was no assurance that such a risk (cancellation) would yield names of the pay-off beneficiaries.**

There did appear to be a reasonable assurance. Minister of state for defence Shivraj Patil told the Rajya Sabha in mid-August 1987, that "Bofors vice-president Bertil Bredin had been willing to reveal, orally, the names of persons who received the commission, but not in writing as the Government wanted". On August 14, 1987, the prime minister said: "Bofors were willing to tell us something orally but not in writing... What is the use of telling us something orally?" This gives credence to the account that as late as July 3, Bredin visited the Ministry of Defence where N.N. Vohra hinted that top Bofors officials may have to be summoned to Delhi to discuss cancellation and blacklisting. The Government does not deny this meeting, nor does it deny the meeting called by Rajiv the following day at which it was decided not to summon the Bofors officials, but rather to try and get them to appear before the Joint Parliamentary Committee.

■ **Government: Bofors was "addressed afresh on 16th July,... to furnish specific replies to the questions already put to them. This refutes the allegation that the prime minister turned down any move proposed by the Defence Ministry officers to coerce Bofors."**

The account of the coercion tactics given by Sundarji simply refers to threats to cancel the contract to get at the names. But throughout the Government's correspondence with Bofors that is available, there is absolutely no mention of the cancellation threat. These same letters testify that simply writing letters to Bofors had failed to elicit results because of Bofors' refusal to cooperate. The July 16, 1987 letter, contains no threat of cancellation. "We must once again urge you furnish the entire information, asked for on June 16," the letter concludes. The troubling questions that still remain are: if the idea of cancelling the contract had emanated from no less a person than the prime minister, then why is this option reflected nowhere in the published record, which includes the letters sent by the Ministry of Defence to Bofors? And if the prime minister's cancellation option is a serious one, when was it dropped—on June 4 or July 4? And who made the final decision?

—RAMINDAR SINGH

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PUNJAB POLICE

Uniformed Brutality

The shocking torture of two women in Batala has once again made it clear that in Punjab the security forces continue to transgress the law.

POLICE atrocities piled on terrorist massacres have numbed sensitivities and thickened hides in Punjab. But from time to time, the dam of despair bursts and the anger spills out into the streets. Last fortnight, when the Punjab Police showed the ugly side of its face by inflicting torture on two married women—one a mother of four and the other of three—the dam burst once again.

People in all corners of the state gave vent to their frustration by staging dharnas outside police stations. So complete was the condemnation that a usually unyielding administration had to transfer the official held responsible, the SSP Batala Gobind Ram, throwing anti-terrorist activity in the area completely out of gear.

Governor Siddhartha Shankar Ray told INDIA TODAY that he proposed to get a senior woman officer from Delhi to prevent excesses on women: "I have spoken to Buta Singh about sending Kiran Bedi to Punjab." Still, Ray defended Gobind Ram, saying he had done excellent anti-terrorist work at Batala, but added that he did not condone his methods. Said he: "I am having him out of Punjab, like three, four others who have become sadists due to the extraordinary situation."

But even the unique situation in the state does not justify the treatment meted out to the two women, Gurdev Kaur and Gurmeet Kaur, both in their 30s. On August 21, the two women were picked up from their office in an Amritsar finance company, where they worked as clerks, and taken to a closed factory in Batala, now used as a police interrogation centre. According to Gurdev Kaur, Gobind Ram was among those who hit them with a stick, demanding information on the whereabouts of their husbands Kulwant Singh and Mahel Singh, both suspected of terrorist activity. Says she: "When we said we didn't know, we were whipped and made to lie down with four men standing on a wooden plank which was placed across our thighs."

While Gurdev Kaur was released the next evening, Gurmeet Kaur—a mother of three, whose husband has been missing for the last five years—went through the ordeal for another week. Both are now bed-ridden and in excruciating pain. Worse is the psychological stress, the memories, and the constant fear they live in. Says Gurmeet Kaur: "At one stage I thought they were going to skin me alive."

According to Gurdev Kaur, her husband, Kulwant Singh, was an officer in a bank. He was deeply religious but had nothing to do with terrorism. But repeated stints of illegal detention saw him absconding two years ago. "We have not seen him since," she sobbed, adding: "My four children (the youngest is seven years old) can testify to it."

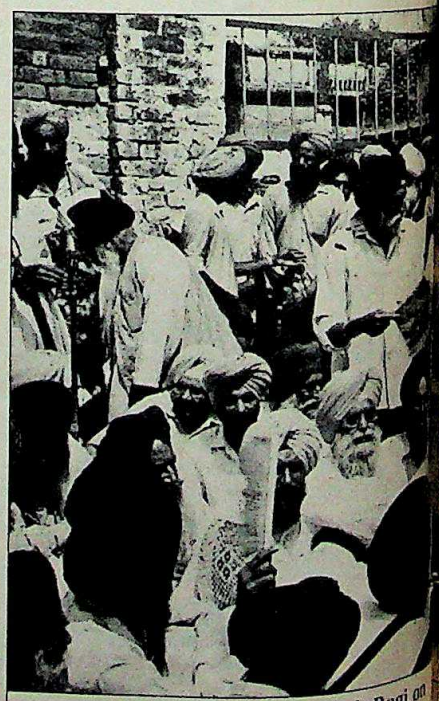
The Jathedar of the Akal Takht, Professor Darshan Singh Ragi—who had spearheaded the campaign for Gobind Ram's removal—declared that the episode would make anyone familiar with Indian culture revolt. Said he: "How does the police expect an Indian woman to sign the death warrant of the father of her children, howsoever bad he might be? Details of the torture send shivers down my spine."

The public outcry over the Batala outrage was fuelled further by the fact that just in May this year, a firm commitment had been given by the administration that women would not be detained in police stations in order to force their male relatives overground. Ray made this promise after two teen aged girls—Surinder Kaur and Narinder Kaur—were harassed (one of them allegedly molested

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Gurmeet Kaur with relatives: brutal outrage

Gurmeet Kaur and Gurdev Kaur were beaten up to extract information about their husbands...



Darshan Singh Ragi on

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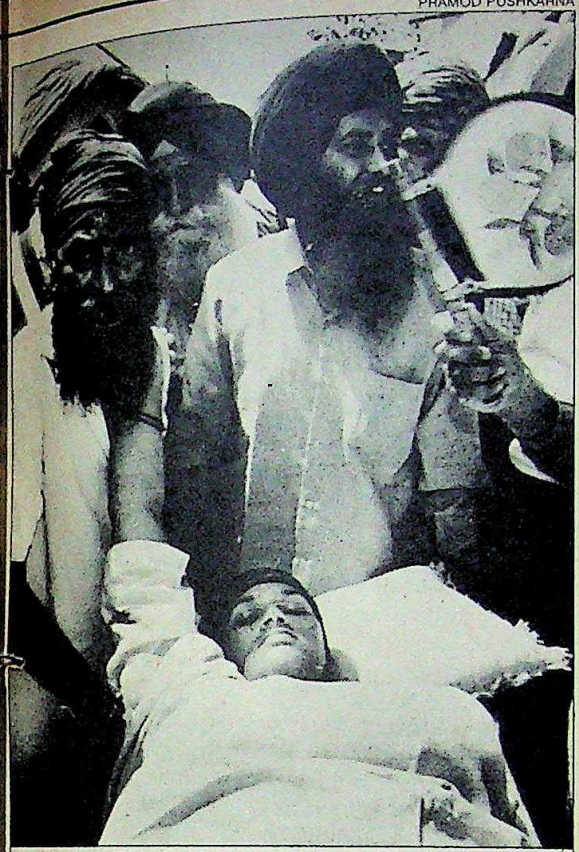
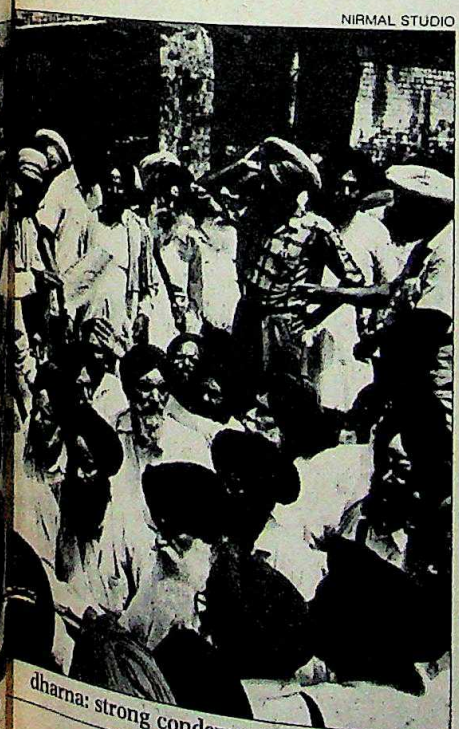
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Gurdev Kaur: victim of torture

...But so far, the only action taken is that the Batala SSP Gobind Ram has been transferred.

NIRMAL STUDIO



dharna: strong condemnation

too) by some policemen in Majitha. This episode had even embarrassed the Indian Government abroad. It was taken up with the Indian Embassy in Washington by a US Congressman, Don Burton—described as an "anti-Indian politician" in official correspondence—who considered it a grave human rights violation. So when the Batala incident came to light, the Inspector General (internal security), R.L. Wadhwa, reiterated that instructions had already been issued that women would not be called to police stations for questioning. "Severe action will be taken against the delinquents," he announced.

BUT it seems unlikely that aside from a transfer any disciplinary action will be taken against the policemen concerned. Particularly as the Director-General of Police, K.P.S. Gill—considered to be favourably disposed towards Gobind Ram—now says that they had definite information that the two women were planning acts of terrorism. Sube Singh, Inspector General (crime), added that Gurmeet Kaur's name figured in three cases, including the bomb blast in Batala's Chakri Bazar some months ago, while another senior officer claimed that the husbands of the two were the "think-tanks" of a well-known terrorist group.

Even before the furore over the Batala outrage could die down, another incident of torture came into public view. Baldev Singh of Shapur village in Amritsar district, and a salesman in a cooperative society, was picked up by the Chowk Mehta police on April 18. He was released following a high court order, then again whisked away by the police. Again, the high court intervened and he was finally produced before a judge on August 25. He told a tale of brutal torture which has left him a virtual skeleton with broken legs. The court ordered his immediate hospitalisation. The police on its part gave no official explanation for his illegal detention, though sources said that it was a case of mistaken identity.

Police highhandedness obviously stems from the simple fact that they can get away with it. Take the Brahmpura incident in December 1986, when it was proved beyond doubt that a CRPF posse had used excessive force while searching a village and even molested a woman. "Three CRPF jawans were picked up for punishment. A lance-naik was demoted two ranks for three years, two increments of a head constable were withheld for two years and the third was dealt with in the orderly room by the commandant. Isn't this a mockery of the rule of law?" asks a senior official. There have, in fact, been about a dozen magisterial inquiries in which police officials have been indicted. All have been swept under the carpet.

While the police get away scot-free, even those proved innocent continue to suffer in Punjab's hellfire. Take the fate of the released Jodhpur detenus. They are precariously placed between the devil and the deep sea. The police still harbour suspicions about them, while the terrorists believe that having been jailed for long, they can be banked upon for support.

The upshot: at least a dozen of the 300 detenus released from Jodhpur Jail after five years of internment have absconded due to police harassment. Just last week, Gurmukh Singh of Sapadhi village in Ludhiana district wrote to the governor that his son, Darshan Singh, released in November last year, had left home due to persistent police pressure.

Another former detainee, Avtar Singh from Sur Singh village in Amritsar district, wrote to Ray last month: "I have not yet got a penny against the promised payment of Rs 3,000. I wish to bring to your notice that I am picked up at random by the police. Last time the police took me and kept me in illegal custody without any case from July 28 to August 7...I seek your help." The Raj Bhawan ordered the police to submit a report on the case within five days. A month has passed since then.

And in all likelihood Avtar Singh will never get a reply as many key officials in Punjab still believe that an eye for an eye is the only way to curb terrorism, regardless of the fact that a few innocents may get blinded in the cross-fire. The governor's adviser, J.F. Ribeiro, says that it was a mistake to have sent Gobind Ram to Batala in the first place. Says he: "I am against brutalisation of the police force."

Unfortunately, Ribeiro has been asked to keep his hands off the police department; only intelligence reports and transfer proposals of police officers are sent up to him. And in the case of Gobind Ram, even his transfer file was not sent to Ribeiro.

This was in all probability done at Gill's insistence. Earlier too, when Gobind Ram was in the dock for beating up village sarpanches in Batala district, Gill had backed him to the hilt: he had reportedly threatened to quit if Gobind Ram was shifted. This time too Gill was apparently

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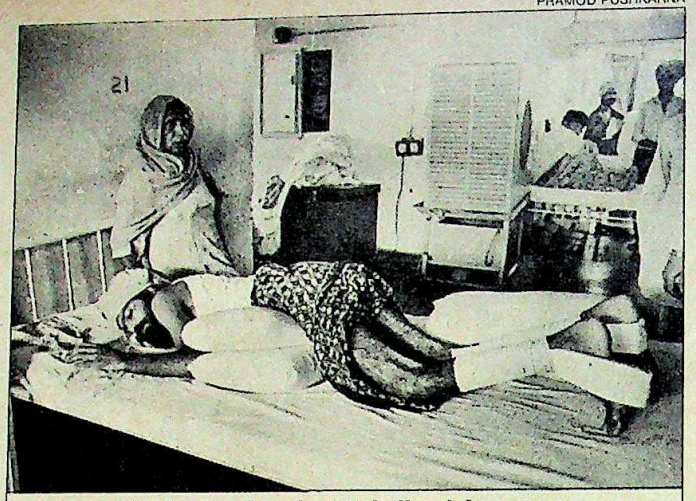
in favour of delaying his transfer in order to drive home the administration's invincibility.

Gill dismisses charges of brutality and insists that aberrations are limited to a few police stations. He also says that instructions have been issued that no one should be booked under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act without prior clearance from the Crime Branch at Chandigarh. Following this, the number of cases under the Act has come down from 291 in January to 140 in August. Gill's explanation for innocents also getting hurt at times: since terrorism is in the category of "blind" crime in which witnesses are unwilling to talk, a large number of people have to be questioned. He declares blandly: "By international standards we are running a very humane operation."

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Baldev Singh in hospital: illegal detention

If that is indeed true, then basic human values have been forgotten in Punjab. The police must, of course, get tough with the terrorists, but as an official says: "It must always be a civilised response to an uncivilised act." One of the laws of modern civilisation is that a person is considered innocent till proven guilty. And till they are indeed shown to be guilty, the agony of the two mothers, so brutally beaten at Batala, will continue to be Punjab's shame.

—KANWAR SANDHU

SODHI REPORT

Hitting Hard

IN February this year, Justice S.S. Sodhi of the Punjab and Haryana High Court went on a routine inspection tour of Amritsar Central Jail. It turned out to be a shocking experience. Appalled by the complaints he heard from undertrials there, he sent a copy of his report to Punjab Governor S.S. Ray in April.

Ray reportedly called for immediate action and the report was referred to the Police and Jails Department. It has not been made public, but INDIA TODAY has procured a copy. The contents are highly damaging to the police.

Many of the 780 undertrials in the high security Central Jail, Amritsar, Sodhi reports, complained that before being formally arrested, they were invariably illegally detained by the police for a couple of weeks. During that period, the undertrials were tortured and money extracted from them. Several also alleged that they were falsely implicated.

Undertrials complained that when they were granted bail by court, the police would rearrest them in some new case. Other undertrials, though granted bail, chose not to leave the jail as they could not meet the demands for money made by the police.

Several undertrials, the judge found, were languishing in jail because the police had delayed issuing chalaans against them.

The report also questions the basis of some arrests. Some undertrials charged with raising anti-national slogans, Sodhi observes, were old people who "appeared quite incapable of committing such an offence".

Justice Sodhi: shocking findings

And referring to the 700 cases pending in the Additional Designated Court, Amritsar, Sodhi says: "Delay blurs the distinction between acquittal and conviction, which is most unfortunate."

Of equal concern is the poor conviction rate—eight out of the 364 cases under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act disposed of by the Additional Designated Court in two years. One reason, Sodhi says, could be that witnesses are afraid. But the poor record also raises questions about the investigations and suspicion about "innocent persons too having been implicated."

The cases registered under the Arms Act and for harbouring terrorists and raising anti-national slogans, the judge notes, are significant. "A stereotyped set pattern of their contents emerges, almost as if there is a prescribed proforma where names etc are filled in. What is more, one has to strain one's credibility to accept the version given in these reports."

Coming as it does from a person held in high esteem in legal circles, Sodhi's report is damning. The police have some serious explaining to do.

Meanwhile, a Supreme Court lawyer, R.K. Garg, and a former Congress(I) state general secretary, Gurbir Singh, have challenged last year's 59th Constitution Amendment Bill which authorises the Union Government to declare an emergency in Punjab in the event of internal disturbances. Garg argued that applying the emergency provisions only to Punjab permanently alienates its people from the rest of the country. And S.S. Grewal, former advocate general of Punjab, said: "If without such draconian laws, the police can unleash such terror, the situation if emergency is declared is hard to comprehend." He was hardly alone in entertaining that fear.

—KANWAR SANDHU

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"Meet Madhura, a woman entrepreneur." Initially, she endures it. Then gently but firmly she admonishes him. "Please introduce me as an entrepreneur. They can see I am a woman."

(India Today, July 31, 1988)

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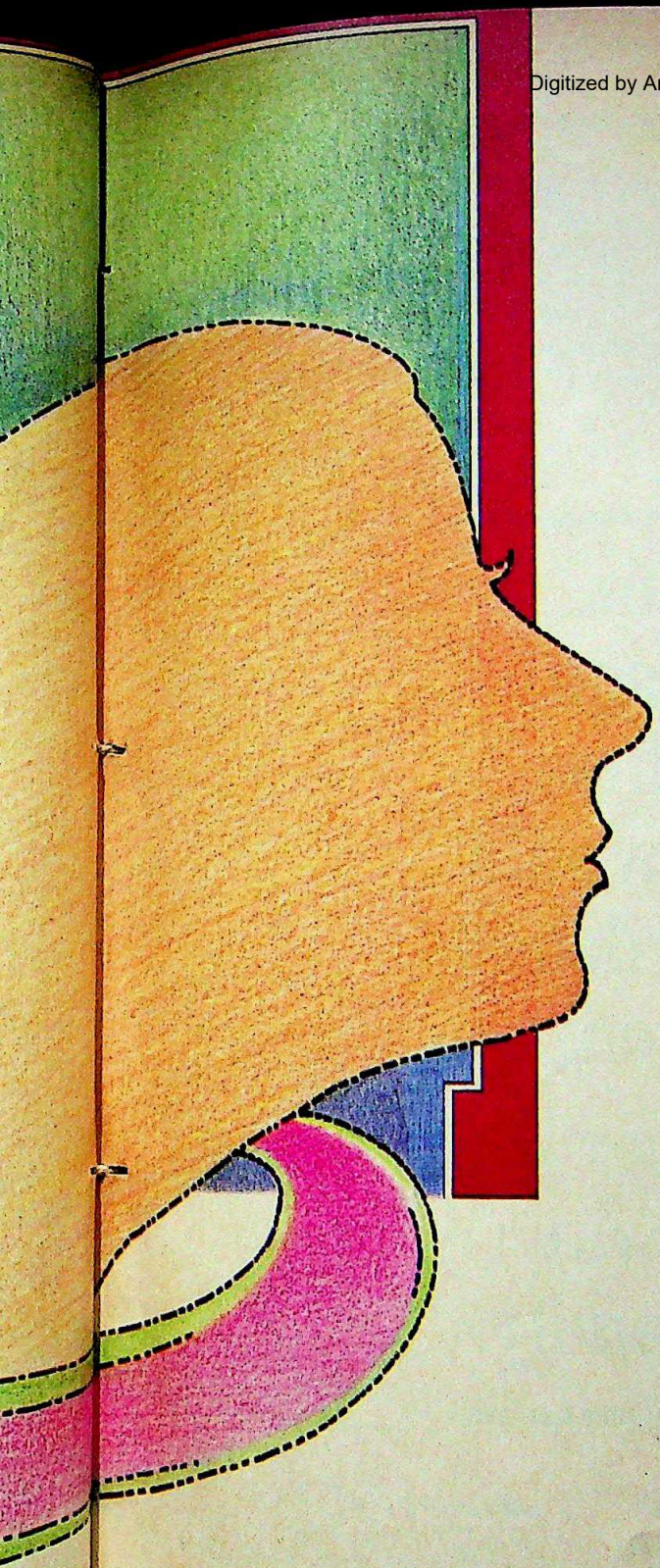

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INDIA TODAY

Keeps you ahead

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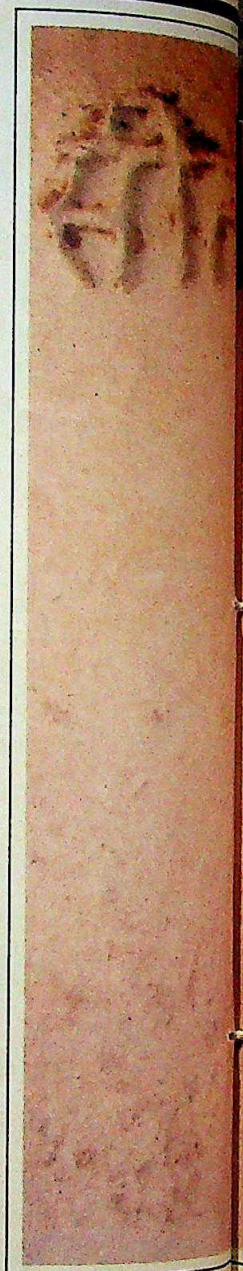
As dusk descends on Kundam, a village near Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh, Sushilabai awaits her husband's return from the fields. Balram, their elder son, is herding the cows home while little Rajni plays in her arms. The infant's joy brings a smile to Sushilabai's face, lighting up memories of the time she had come here as a young bride. When she and her husband had planned their family with care and understanding to bring security and happiness for the future. That was nine years ago, when ITC came to their help...



Sushilabai of Kundam. The thought of marriage held out little joy for her. She feared that her life would be like her mother's: burdened with too many children.

Then, ITC showed her husband the simplest way to plan a small, happy family.

ITC distributes Nirodh contraceptives in the heart of rural India.

Working closely with the Family Planning Association of India in its Kundam Rural Integrated Project, ITC is helping dispel traditional taboos and is popularising maternity and child health care. Utilising its widespread distribution network and considerable marketing experience, ITC has been promoting Nirodh contraceptives since 1968.

In 1989-90 alone, over an area where more than half the country's population lives, ITC will spend above Rs 1 crore on this project: in manpower training programmes, on distribution and on promotion.

Today the country's largest distributor of Nirodh contraceptives, ITC's efforts have been rewarded with the 1988 FICCI Award for Family Planning: an honour that is a symbol of hope for hundreds and thousands of families seeking security and joy in the future.

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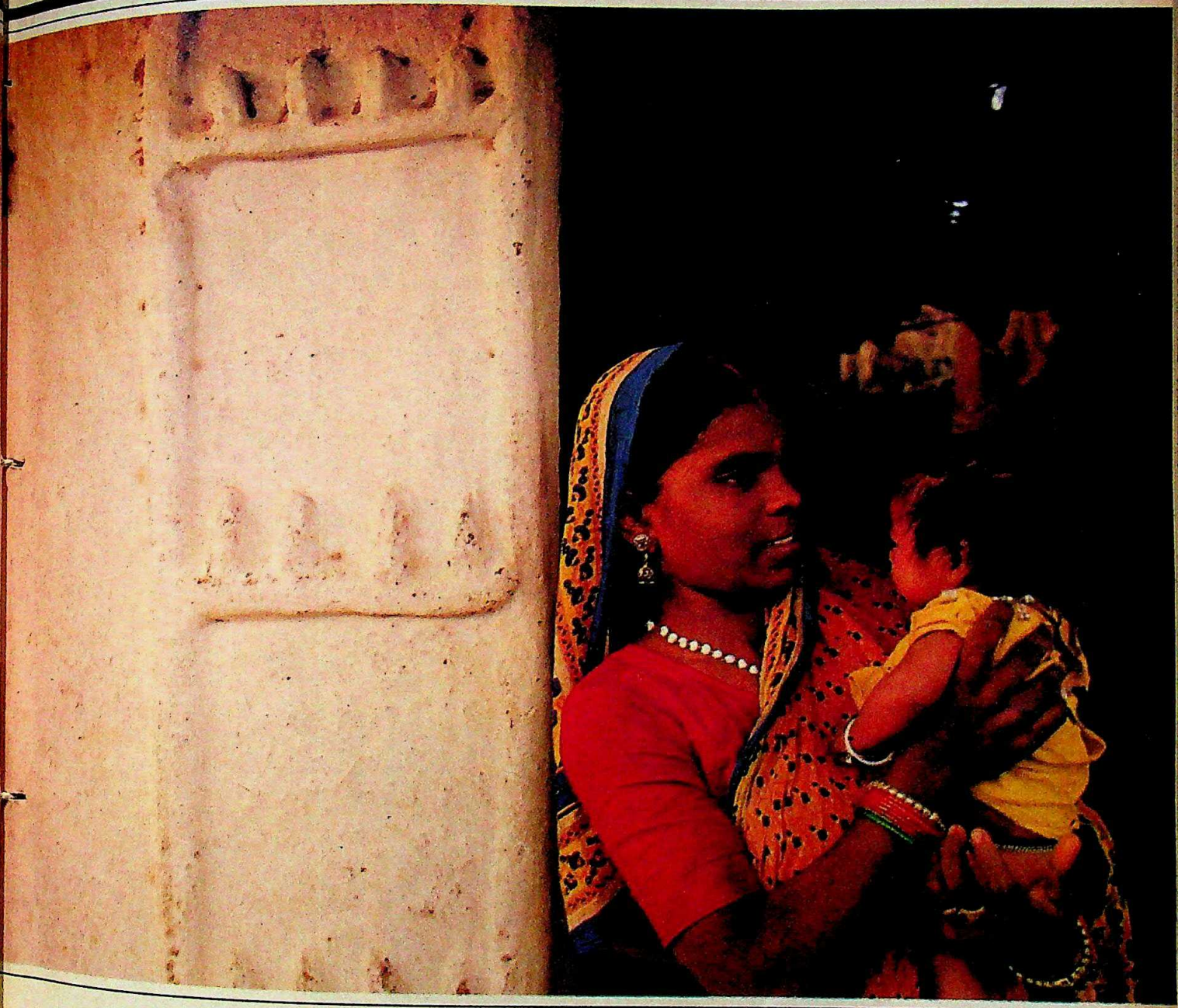
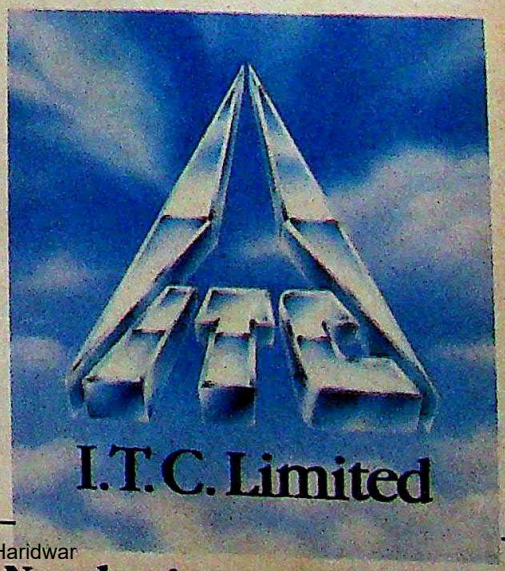


Where else is ITC working for India?

Agro-industry **:** ITC's technological expertise, gained from decades of R&D in seed development, is being transferred to produce high-yielding oilseeds. With the manufacture and marketing of edible and non-edible oils and their derivatives, ITC is helping reduce imports.

Cottage-sector Craftsmanship **:** With looms, raw materials and technical knowhow, the ITC-promoted Triveni Handlooms has revived Shahjahanpur's traditional craft of carpet weaving. These carpets are exported by ITC along with many other products from small-scale and cottage-sector units.

Paper and Board—in the core-sector **:** The ITC-promoted Bhadrachalam Paperboards is a leader in its field. It has set new standards by combining record productivity with exemplary concern for wood conservation, environment protection and tribal welfare.



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New horizons, new hopes.

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The run-up to the 1989 general election is picking up pace, and with this issue INDIA TODAY begins a series of special reports on the unfolding scenario: the people, the issues, the constituencies.

This fortnight's focus: Uttar Pradesh, where V.P. Singh has just launched his campaign. The report compares Amethi, Rajiv's constituency, with cousin Arun Nehru's Rae Bareli and assesses Chief Minister N.D. Tiwari—who's expected to deliver the state to the Congress(I).

Politics of Plenty

AMETHI 1989

AMENITIES abound. The administration is almost in respectful terror of the village voice. Grievances are not muffled in bureaucratic apathy but listened to in the comfort of prime ministerial presence. All trains salute the local railway station in reverence. Electricity flows continuously. This is not an illusion. This utopian land exists in India, in Uttar Pradesh: Amethi.

Rajiv Gandhi's parliamentary constituency has been pampered with privileges. And as the elections draw nearer, the politics of plenty is increasingly on view. Since April 1988, grants or ex gratia payments worth Rs 15 crore have flowed in. And it's not as if Amethi has witnessed any natural calamities in this period.

Spread over 3,300 km, with a population of 13.65 lakh (1984 electorate: 7,40,782), Amethi is, perhaps, the only rural constituency in the country which enjoys facilities rivalling the large towns. Significantly, Amethi languished in its backwardness till 1980 when the Gandhi family adopted it, leading, in the space of the next few years, to a phenomenal transformation:

► In 1980, there were only 330 electrified villages. Today, Rajiv's arc of light covers 1,254 villages, of Amethi's 1,299 revenue villages.

► Drinking water was available in only 28 villages in 1980. Today, the facility is enjoyed by 1,146 villages.

► The number of tubewells has jumped to 400 now from a meagre 26 in 1980.

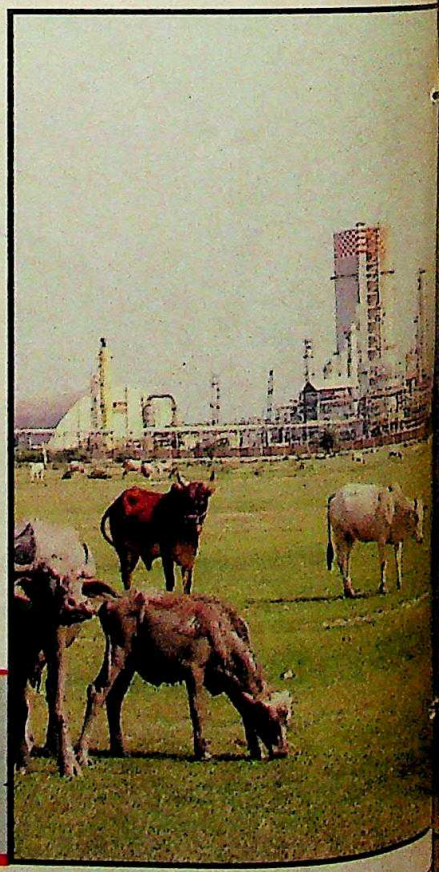
► Amethi is now connected by 1,150 km of metal roads versus 422 km in 1980.

► Primary health centres have shot up to 36 from 12 in 1980.

► Amethi was a zero industry area till 1980. Today it boasts of 15 big and 1,231 medium and small scale industries with the Jagdishpur industrial area emerging as the fastest developing one in the state.

Amethi's status is imprinted on every plane of socio-economic life. Villagers and

BHAWAN SINGH



Rajiv Gandhi's latest electoral strategy to win Amethi is to reach out directly to the local population, while continuing to shower benefits on them.

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industrialists interviewed confirm that electricity is available round the clock. Ghufran Nazvi, an industrialist, says: "We get power 24 hours, the whole year." This seems remarkable, considering that even Lucknow is burdened with three or four breakdowns every day.

An electronic telephone exchange connects all five assembly segments to the rest of India through a one-way STD facility. Even the villages will soon have the benefit of C-Dot telephones (wireless) linking them to the rest of the world. Some of these are already functional.

All trains—passenger, express, mail or superfast—stop at the Amethi railway station. Bus connections to Lucknow and Sultanpur from Jagdishpur at 30-minute intervals are a cherished convenience.

Amethi has been been the recipient of several other benefits, and there has been a consistent effort to shore up its services. Today there are as many as three degree colleges, 10 intermediate colleges, five industrial training institutes and two polytechnics, including one for girls. An ultra modern hospital in the name of Sanjay Gandhi, equipped with 500 beds, is now ready for inauguration. Besides, 11 medical vans dispense free medicine and medical advice in the villages.

Up-market amenities have been also improved. Two impressive hotels crown the Amethi landscape, and another is under construction. Moreover, beautiful guest-houses—with air-conditioned suites—play host in Amethi, Gauriganj, Musafirkhana, Salon and Tiloi.

IN spite of having been showered with benefits, the Amethi citizen maintains a perpetual stance of dissatisfaction.

Gaon mein bijli milee? (Are you getting electricity in the village?) *Haan saheb, bijli to milee, pur uske istemal ka paise dena parta hai.* (Yes sir, we have got it, but we have to pay money to use it.) That response sums it up. The mollycoddling of Amethi has even led some of its residents to expect free power supply.

There are other complaints. Says Mohammed Yusuf, 65, in Kamrauli village: "These factories have made life impossible. There is no open space left."

A local journalist explains the strategy of complaints: "If they do not take this stance, they know that they are not going to get more. It is a question of always maintaining pressure because that has always worked." So, Amethi keeps Rajiv on his toes, sending favours and funds through his representatives—Satish Sharma and lately, Sonia and Priyanka.

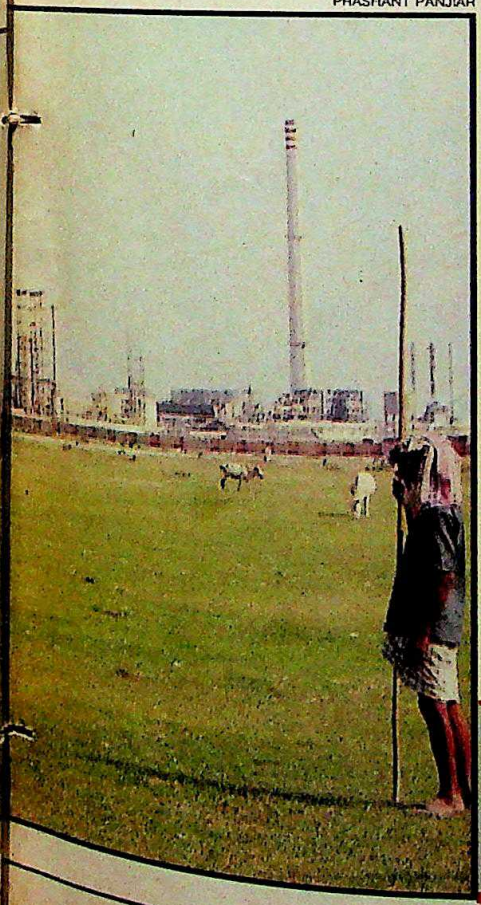
This year, his representatives have been visiting Amethi once every month. Rajiv himself reserves some minutes during his daily durbar to offer Amethi a special hearing. Every working day, 50-100 visitors from his constituency meet the prime minister, when he is in Delhi.

Rajiv's latest electoral strategy to win the Amethi heart is to reach out directly to touch the local population. Rajiv and Sonia made a three-day visit, beginning March 11, touring Gauriganj, Munshiganj, Amethi and the surrounding areas. On May 5, Priyanka was politically baptised as she visited the constituency with Sonia. During this tour, the Sonia-Priyanka duo covered 30 villages, distributing gifts and picking up applications.

When Priyanka again visited Amethi on July 1 and 2, it became obvious that Rajiv's daughter was being groomed to carry forward the family's political lineage. While leaving a Gauriganj meeting Sonia noticed a slogan which read: *Amethi ka dankaa, Bitiya Priyanka* (Amethi's clarion call is daughter Priyanka). Local journalist, Jagdish Piyush, who is in charge of coining slogans and painting them on the walls, a project costing Rs 2.5 lakh, was nearby. Sonia asked him: "So you have written this?" At the next meeting at Amethi when she was greeted with similar slogans, Sonia told a local Congress(I) leader

(From left) Rajiv Gandhi at Amethi; Indo-Gulf fertiliser plant at Jagdishpur; a villager uses telephone facility: pampered constituency

PRASHANT PANJIAR



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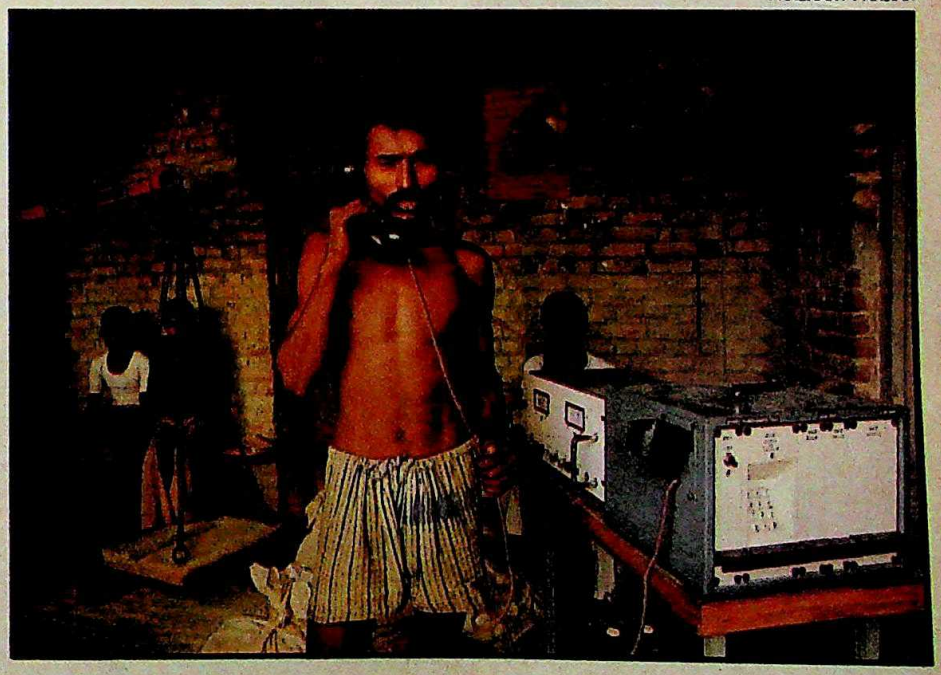

A modern electronic telephone exchange connects the five assembly segments of Amethi to the rest of India through a one-way STD facility.

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encouragingly: "Ask Piyush to keep on writing slogans."

Priyanka too seemed interested as she went about collecting applications and talking to women and children. She even made an effort to sip tea at the insistence of some local women.

In addition, Rajiv has a special envoy in Amethi in the person of Satish Sharma. His basic assignment: to redress complaints and provide financial help to deserving individuals. During his visit on June 29, no less than 2,000 applications passed from villagers to Sharma to officials as he visited about 20 villages.

Sharma operates discreetly. He visits villages, meeting people, including Congressmen, gauging the mood, efficiently transmitting the signals to Rajiv, but avoids directly addressing them.

Recently, however, he has shown an interest in settling rows amongst local Congress(I) groups. At a workers' meeting, during his Gauriganj visit on May 28, he said: "We have also started looking after our workers' interests like we look after the interests of Amethi."

And assuredly, the Congress(I) workers are being looked after. Position and privilege are handmaidens in the local Congress(I). Of the 16 Congress(I) block pramukhs, as many as 15 are big contractors, and most government contracts have been awarded to the kith and kin of these pramukhs, who have touched prosperity like Amethi itself. The AICC(I) has also set the block pramukhs on the road in brand new jeeps—each costing Rs 1.25 lakh—a privilege extended only to Amethi.

BUT, it has not been smooth sailing all the way. Amethi's special status has also created for it some special problems. The local administration, for one, falls into periodic paralysis over even routine matters such as junior transfers. The transfer of a compounder of Jamo primary health centre is being discussed at the Prime Minister's Office since the local MLA is opposing the move initiated by the block pramukh. The deadlock is two months old, and the exasperated compounder himself wants his transfer today. Earlier, local Congressmen agitated against the subdivisional magistrate of Amethi for two months before his transfer was ordered from the prime minister's house in April this year.

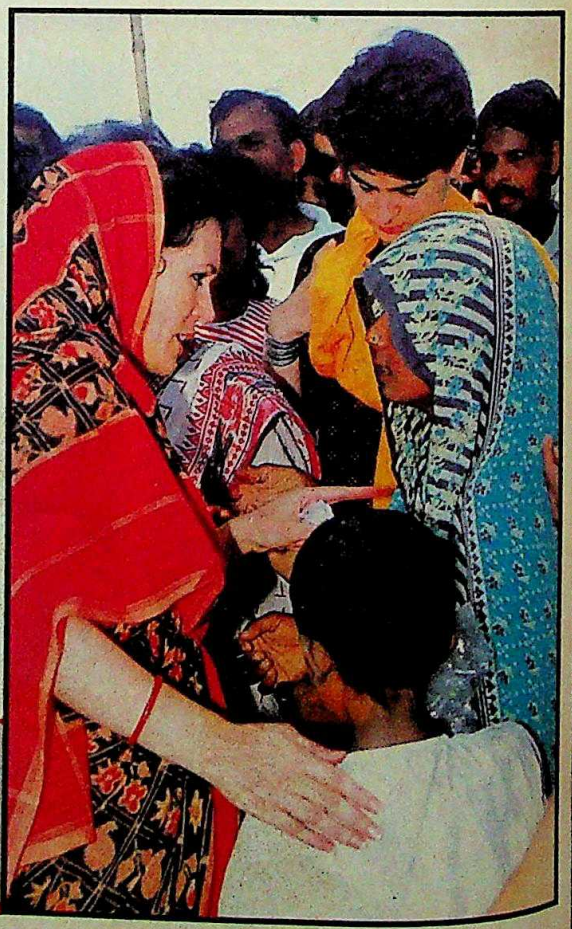
But the primary allegation is that even while showering manna, the local administration is siphoning off developmental funds. Field workers are said to be in unholy alliance with contractors. Ram Murti Shukla, a committed Congressman and presently, block pramukh of Amethi, alleges: "At least 50 per cent funds have been pocketed by these officials and contractors."

Announcing the setting up of Ambedkar University on April 14, Rajiv himself made the point, saying: "Make this university nicely, not like the buildings made in my constituency." At least a dozen buildings, including a few school buildings and food grain godowns in Musafirkhana and Gauriganj had collapsed last year, only six to eight months after they were constructed.

Even so, Amethi is sure to elect anyone who holds out the promise of becoming prime minister. It is common to find even complaining villagers vouching support for Rajiv. An official who was till recently posted in Amethi, commented: "The people of Amethi are now addicted to the prime minister's house and they will not be able to survive without regular doses from there. They will always like to elect from their constituency the country's prime minister—something, for which, the Rae Bareli people have been desperately vying."

And this is precisely the attitude Rajiv wants, as he snuggles his prized voters in the cushioned comfort of prime ministerial attention, hoping to fortify his parliamentary bastion against all electoral threats to come. —DILIP AWASTHI

Modern medical facility (below); Sonia and Priyanka at Amethi: wooing plan



Sonia and Priyanka have been touring the prime minister's constituency distributing gifts and picking up applications.

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Fallen from Grace

RAE BARELI 1989

RAE Bareli is to Amethi what Arun Nehru is to Rajiv Gandhi: a poor cousin. While the prime minister's pampered stronghold, Amethi, is given only the best, Rae Bareli, till recently Nehru's constituency, has been facing bad days ever since the Janata Dal leader fell out with his famous cousin in July 1986.

Though the two constituencies lie close to each other—like the two men once were—there is a wide distance between their development levels. One indicator: if Amethi has uninterrupted power supply, Rae Bareli town swelters under power breakdowns at least twice a day. The situation in villages is far worse.

Compare the two assembly segments of Amethi—Tiloi and Salon—which fall in Rae Bareli district, to the five assembly segments of Rae Bareli. Since April 1987, Tiloi and Salon have received special Central and state schemes worth Rs 65 crore; in the same period all that the five assembly segments of Rae Bareli have been provided is Rs 3.25 crore.

Similarly, Rae Bareli's once booming industries are in the red. Says I.P. Mehta, general manager of Modi carpets: "There is no industrial climate here anymore." One indicator of the industrial decline is the fate of the Engineers' Complex set up in 1974 with the aim of inviting young engineers to open units with aid from the Uttar Pradesh Small Industries Corporation and the Bank of Baroda. Twenty engineer-entrepreneurs went in for the scheme. Says V.V. Rastogi, chairman of the complex: "Only one of the 20 units is earning profits. The rest have either closed, or are about to close, or are just tottering."

And Rae Bareli is not used to any shoddy treatment. It is, on the contrary, accustomed to a VIP status thanks to a long association with India's ruling dynasty—the Nehru-Gandhi clan. In 1957, Feroz Gandhi represented Rae Bareli. But the real honeymoon began when Indira Gandhi contested from there in 1967, then again in 1972. For 10 years Rae Bareli proved happy hunting ground for Mrs Gandhi, till she lost it to Raj Narain during the 1977 Janata wave.

In that decade, under Mrs Gandhi, Rae Bareli prospered. Says Prahlad Misra, 38, a local journalist: "Till 1967, Rae Bareli town was as backward as one of the tehsils are now." After 1967, it got a railway station, hospitals, roads, unlimited power and water supply and industries.

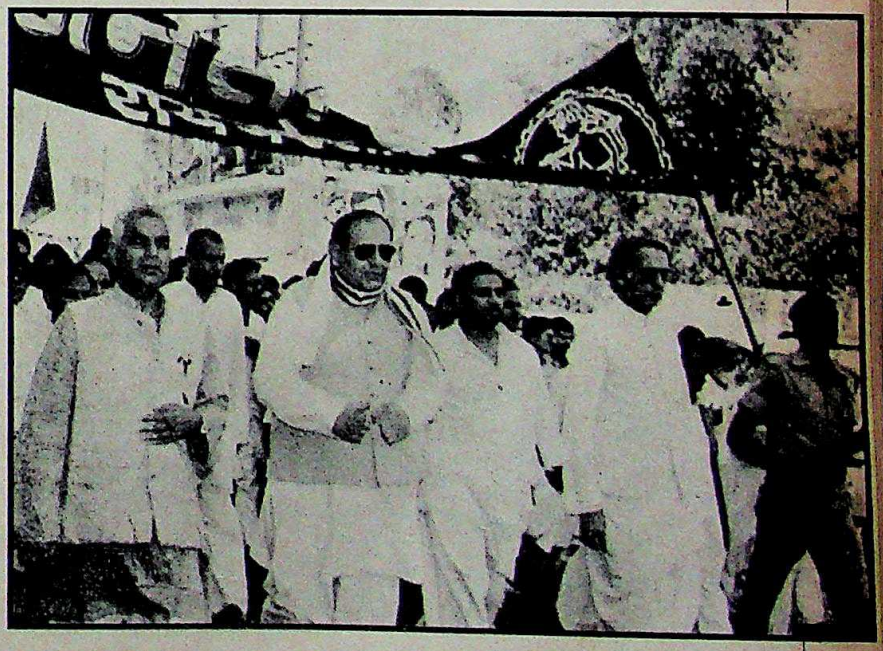
Rae Bareli's flirtation with the Janata Party proved brief as in 1980, Mrs Gandhi won both from there and Medak in Andhra Pradesh. She gave up her Rae Bareli seat, leading to a by-election. As Nehru was then close to the Gandhis he was offered the 'safe' seat. And as long as Mrs Gandhi was alive, she ensured a regular flow of largesse to Rae Bareli.

Riding the Rajiv wave in 1984, Nehru again piggy-backed to Rae Bareli. But this time as Rajiv was representing neighbouring Amethi, Rae Bareli began to suffer in comparison. And when differences with Rajiv resulted in Nehru being dropped from the ministry in July 1986 and then expelled from the party in August 1987, development began to slacken.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

AMETHI VS RAE BARELI

Amethi (Lok Sabha Constituency) 1980	Amethi NOW		Rae Bareli (Lok Sabha Constituency) 1980	Rae Bareli NOW
26	400	STATE TUBEWELLS	121	366
28 Villages	1,146 Villages	DRINKING WATER FACILITIES	267 Villages	820 Villages
0	15 (35 are coming up)	LARGE SCALE PROJECTS	25	25 (Seven have closed down)
21	1,231	SMALL SCALE UNITS	199	1,986 (50% sick or about to close)
1,254 (Till Today)		VILLAGES ELECTRIFIED	796 (Till Today)	
Rs 323 crore (Since Jan. '88)		INVESTMENT IN SPECIAL SCHEMES	Rs 4 crore (Since Jan. '88)	



Arun Nehru in Rae Bareli

When Rajiv began representing Amethi, Rae Bareli began to suffer—more so after Nehru's estrangement in 1987.

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While the Centre may well be discriminating against Rae Bareli, Nehru too was not exactly a model MP himself. Though he represented Rae Bareli for almost nine years—till the en masse resignation of the Opposition in end-July this year—Nehru rarely ventured out among the people. Just about the only matter he took great interest in was the distribution of party tickets. Says Devi Deen, 92: "Who is Arun Nehru? I voted for the Congress because of Mrs Gandhi and Panditji."

Still, the shrewd manipulator that he is—though now one of the leading lights of the Janata Dal—Nehru has been able to drive a wedge in the local Congress(I) unit. There are two camps, one headed by Nehru's supporters including two party MLAs and the other headed by the old-timers who call themselves Indira loyalists.

Nehru will obviously be fishing in the Congress(I)'s troubled waters if he again stands from Rae Bareli. And in all likelihood he will do so with a little help from the Congressmen. Consider the fall-out of Nehru's expulsion on the local party unit. A meeting presided over by DCC(I) President Kamal Nayan Verma, also a local MLA, warned of serious repercussions if he was not taken back. The anti-Nehru group headed by Sadhu Pandey staged a walk-out. Three Congress(I) office-bearers were expelled from the party. Frightened, Verma and his men did an about-turn by calling another meeting at which they expressed full faith in Rajiv Gandhi.

Again, during the zilla parishad and local bodies elections held early this year, there was considerable cross-voting between the two Congress(I) groups. The upshot: most Congress(I)-supported nominees found themselves pitted against rebel candidates. Says K.K. Jiswal, press secretary of the DCC(I): "Once the sitting MLAs are denied tickets, you see how many traitors we have. Verma and some MLAs are still with Nehru."

And Nehru's men are getting help from an unexpected quarter—the Congress(I) high command, whose step-motherly treatment must have alienated many residents of Rae Bareli.

Ironically, this is precisely the reason for the demands for either Rajiv or Sonia Gandhi to contest from Rae Bareli. Says Sadhu Pandey: "We have been telling him (Rajiv) that his ancestral house is vacant now. Why should he live as a tenant in Amethi?" But Rajiv is unlikely to comply, as he will now be looking for dividends from his investments in Amethi. In that case, paralleling the discarded cousin's attacks on Rajiv, Rae Bareli too may hit back during the next polls.

—DILIP AWASTHI in Rae Bareli

NARAYAN DATT TIWARI

Man in the Hot Seat

EVEN partymen taunted him with names like Nothing Doing Tiwari and New Delhi Tiwari. His opponents sloganeered: "*Yeh na hai nar, na hai nari, yeh hai Narayan Datt Tiwari.*" (He is neither a man, nor a woman, he is Narayan Datt Tiwari.) During the Emergency, when he was chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, they called him Sanjay Gandhi's *chamcha*. He smiled through all of this. And while he was a Central minister before being unceremoniously shunted off to Uttar Pradesh to replace Bir Bahadur Singh as chief minister, Tiwari was depicted by Rajiv Gandhi's palace guard as a dangerous and ambitious aspirant to the prime ministership. A man not to be trusted.

Today he is the object of grudging envy. With the decline or political eclipse of several Congress(I) giants over the last two years, the soft-spoken Tiwari has suddenly emerged as the great white Brahmin hope of the ruling party. It is not an overstatement to suggest that he is today among the party's most sought-after men.

He travels to New Delhi several times a month to participate in the regular strategy sessions aimed at countering opposition onslaughts. Days were when Rajiv would communicate with Tiwari through senior bureaucrats or other politicians. No more. Rajiv now talks to "Tiwariji," one-on-one. During the past two months, the two have met alone at least half a dozen times.

Earlier, AICC(I) office-bearers were in the habit of "summoning" Tiwari over the telephone to the Delhi Durbar for consultations. Now members of the Delhi Durbar go to Lucknow. And whether Tiwari is in Delhi or in Lucknow, there is a huge—and rapidly growing—number of obsequious-looking MPs and legislators waiting for his darshan. In typical Congresspeak, a senior AICC(I) leader intones: "Tiwariji is our most precious asset. And we have been told to be extra respectful to him. He seems to have become indispensable for the party and the prime minister."

The rediscovery of Tiwari by the prime minister and his high command is no doubt related to the forthcoming general elections. With the countdown having begun, the prime minister and his aides busied themselves last fortnight compiling a list of leaders who were not only capable of drawing crowds but also not involved in any controversy. They came up with two: Chief Ministers Tiwari and Satyendra Narayan Sinha of Bihar. Uttar Pradesh assumed all the more significance because the common wisdom is that with its 85 Lok Sabha seats it will ultimately decide who will occupy 5, Race Course Road.

During the 1984 elections, the Congress(I) won 83 of the 85 seats. And as the situation stands today, the Congress(I)'s fate in the state is inextricably linked to the level of Tiwari's involvement and political commitment, and his capacity to turn the tables on the Opposition.

With the eclipse of several Congress(I) giants over the last two years, Tiwari has emerged as the great hope of the ruling party.

Other senior chief ministers like Sharad Pawar of Maharashtra, Janaki Ballabh Patnaik of Orissa and Amarsinh Chaudhary of Gujarat have been involved in controversies of one kind or another. Add to that the fact of Tiwari having assumed the role of the only national Brahmin leader following the eclipse or political decline of the Kamalapati Tripathi, V.C. Shukla and Motilal Vora families, and you have a unique situation in which a single chief minister has become crucial in determining the political fortunes of a party and the prime minister.

This is not only because Tiwari has time and again demonstrated the requisite administrative and political experience, but also because within a faction-

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ridden Congress(I), he has made no real enemies. And as a high command official put it: "He is the darling of big industry, acceptable to the minorities, and even the Left." He is also one of the few orators in the ruling party, who is capable of keeping audiences spellbound with his poetic perorations.

But is he capable of delivering the seats to the prime minister? Right now, Uttar Pradesh seems up for grabs, with the ruling party probably enjoying an edge because of its better grassroots organisation and financial advantage over the Opposition. And over the past two months, Tiwari has been active as never before, criss-crossing the state, laying foundation-stones for new projects, addressing public meetings, talking to party leaders and workers and holding long sessions with civil servants clearing administrative bottlenecks.

Still, because of his uniqueness, his position is politically schizophrenic. New Delhi has never trusted powerful Uttar Pradesh chief ministers or potential claimants to the top job at the Centre. So it is an open secret that while the Centre now cheerleads Tiwari, it is also aware that as he becomes more powerful, he also has the increased capacity to harm the Centre should he choose to revolt.

This suspicion is fuelled by the Opposition's whisper campaign that Tiwari's activities are aimed at ensuring his own political future rather than working for the prime minister. Opposition leader V.P. Singh further stoked this fire when he recently urged Tiwari to join the Opposition. A section of the Congress(I) also feels that Tiwari has not forgotten the humiliation of being sent back to Uttar Pradesh much against his wishes. His removal from the Centre was linked to the rumour that Tiwari was emerging as an alternative to the prime minister. And he was saddled with a state cabinet chock-full of Bir Bahadur Singh loyalists. Even worse, another Bir Bahadur protege, Balram Singh Yadav, a former state minister, was imposed as the PCC(I) chief, giving the clear impression that the Centre wanted Tiwari to function as a mere puppet. It was only after Bir Bahadur's death that Tiwari felt he could operate independently.

No longer threatened by any party leader in the state, Tiwari has ardently begun courting Bir Bahadur loyalists to consolidate his position. To begin with, he appointed the son and daughter of Bir Bahadur Singh to posts in the PCC(I). And during the last two months, he has accommodated a dozen prominent leaders of the party, representing various castes and regional groups, as heads of public sector organisations and state cooperatives. Most important, however, is his new rapport with MPs whom he now consults on every important issue in the state.

THE POLITICIAN

Courteous but crafty

BUT then rapport has always been with him a by-word and, along with rapprochement, formed the cornerstones of his political style. The permanent half-smile and folded hands constitute the most enduring image of Narayan Datt Tiwari. His old-world courtesy disarms the most uncompromising of critics. Even Mulayam Singh Yadav, the vocal Janata Dal state chief, acknowledges this aspect of Tiwari: "His courteous way of handling people is disarming. Humility is his special asset," he says.

Tiwari's political ascendancy is precisely because he is a practitioner of the old school of politics, a rarity in the ruling party. He rarely indulges in heated rhetoric or personal attacks on his political opponents; one reason why his enemies both within and outside the party have never been able to take him on directly. His vast experience in government and political seniority form yet another solid bulwark.

Tiwari exudes a special charm when in public. His mellow behaviour and innate courtesy make people feel comfortable when

Chief Minister Narayan Datt Tiwari: a challenging task

BHAWAN SINGH

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Steady Rise

IN September 1946, the president of the Allahabad University Students' Union went to Anand Bhawan to invite Indira Gandhi for a function. Being a regular visitor, he was at once led inside where Mrs Gandhi was massaging her baby.

The student leader was Narayan Datt Tiwari, the baby, Rajiv Gandhi. Today, the relationship continues. The chronicle of Narayan Datt Tiwari's rise in politics seems in essence an account of his association with the Nehru-Gandhi family.

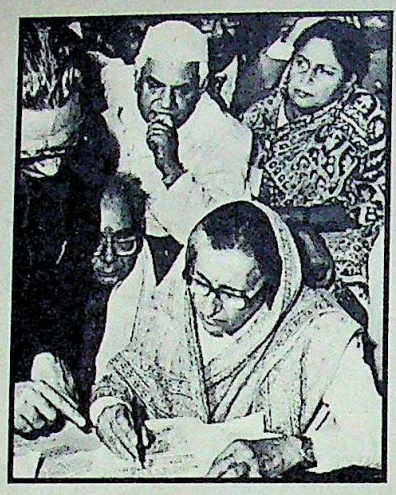
Born in Nainital, Tiwari's political life began in 1940 as a high school student. His father wanted him to be an agriculturist but Tiwari had other ideas. In July 1944, aged 19, he left home for Allahabad. All he had in his pocket was Rs 37. But since he was an activist in the freedom struggle, he was offered shelter in an outhouse of Anand Bhawan.

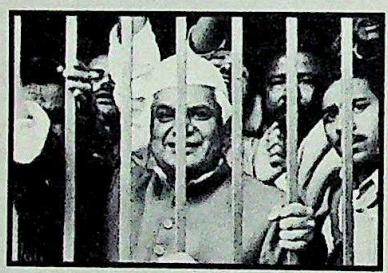
In 1948 he joined the Congress Socialist Party and in 1952, was elected from Nainital, the youngest member of the Assembly. Tiwari quickly concentrated on broadening his horizons. He undertook a tour of Europe in 1959 and later wrote of his experiences in a book *The European Miscellany*. He lost the election from Nainital in 1962. Then, he left for the US from where he reported regularly for the *National Herald*.

In 1964, after the Congress Socialist Party split, he finally found his political home—the Congress. In 1969, he was made a cabinet minister in the C.B. Gupta ministry. He quit after the Congress split but within a year rejoined as minister for finance and parliamentary affairs under Charan Singh.

Tiwari quickly gained a reputation as an able administrator. In 1971, under chief minister Kamalapati Tripathi, his portfolios included finance, industry, power, irrigation, labour, sugarcane, excise and parliamentary affairs. When the ministry was reconstituted in 1973, he retained charge of all except power.

Three years later, he was made chief minister of Uttar Pradesh. But shortly after, the Congress was wiped out in the post-Emergency Lok Sabha elections and Tiwari found himself leader of the Opposition in the Vidhan Sabha.





(From top) Tiwari with Indira; with Rajiv; and in jail for breach of prohibitory orders: tireless performer

In 1980, he shifted his political sights to the Centre, having been elected to the Lok Sabha from Nainital. He was made Union planning minister with additional charge of labour. A year later, he was shifted to the Industry Ministry. But it was when the party required his services in Uttar Pradesh for the 1984 general elections, that Tiwari returned for a second stint as chief minister.

A year later, however, he was back in Delhi as Union industry minister. Subsequently he became foreign and then finance minister. In June last year, Tiwari returned to Lucknow, to complete his hat-trick as chief minister.

—DILIP AWASTHI

they approach him with problems. There is no wide chasm between the chief minister and his people. Last fortnight, an old woman from Basti who had come to the durbar at his residence to petition for her old-age pension yelled: *"Arey Tiwari, Arey Tiwari,"* as the chief minister was passing by. Few chief ministers could have established such a rapport with the people and provoked such careless familiarity, but Tiwari's attitude encourages such a response from the public.

His style is to talk to everybody individually. Says state Food Minister Hukam Singh: "The way he talks to you without any hangers-on around gives the impression that he is genuinely interested in giving you a patient hearing."

MAINTAINING the image of the pacific accommodator also occasionally involves the paying of a heavy price. When he took over as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, the Government was faced with the threat of an indefinite strike by 23 lakh state government employees. Such a threat would have unsettled anyone taking over as chief minister but Tiwari decided not to confront the angry employees head-on. He chose the path of dialogue and conciliation and announced a compromise formula that led to the strike being called off. But in the bargain, the state exchequer had to bear an additional burden of Rs 656 crore.

Of course, the conciliatory approach pays off too. This facet of his character comes into play while dealing with explosive situations. In the case of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, his attitude has certainly helped defuse a potentially explosive communal crisis. Says Shia leader, Kalbe Sadiq: "Though I cannot say at this stage that he is sincere in his efforts to solve the tangle, I give him credit for being more refined in his approach compared to the previous government."

But his excessively inoffensive mien also fetches him criticism. Tiwari has often been accused of succumbing to pressure in order to avoid confrontation—and to maintain his image as a cool-headed, capable administrator and political peace-maker. For example, he drew heavy flak from partymen when he appointed the politically inexperienced children of Bir Bahadur Singh to plum party posts when several powerful veterans could easily have qualified for those jobs. There are also those, including many in his own party, who feel that Tiwari too often errs on the side of caution. And, in his efforts to be all things to all men, he often compromises

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his position. In the rough and tumble world of state politics, that could be a serious disadvantage.

Still, Tiwari's soft-spoken approach and his courtly manners can also be dangerously deceptive, as his political opponents will testify. The way in which Tiwari neutralised his main rival in the party, the late Bir Bahadur Singh, is a classic example. The former chief minister was a force to reckon with, especially with his network of supporters spread at the block level in practically every district of eastern Uttar Pradesh. He had also won the support of a large section of ministers, MLAs and grassroots workers.

And with the high command coming down on Bir Bahadur's side, it looked as if Tiwari had lost the battle. His reluctance to return to Lucknow as chief minister was widely interpreted as hesitation in accepting the challenge from Bir Bahadur. But the manner in which Tiwari neutralised his opponents—and emerged more powerful than ever before—is indicative of his vast experience and political savvy.

In the bargain, Tiwari won the uninhibited support of the prime minister. Observers give full marks to Tiwari for patiently but convincingly outwitting the crafty Bir Bahadur and winning the high command's confidence. What's more, he achieved it without criticising the former chief minister even once. Says Hukam Singh: "He is too shrewd a person to be outwitted. He knows how to wriggle out of any such situation."

THE ADMINISTRATOR

Has clear priorities, attends to detail, but surrounds himself with incompetent colleagues

YET shrewdness is not all. There is much more to Tiwari. The chief minister's biggest asset is his image of being a clean administrator. Though he has often been attacked, no charges of corruption have been levelled at him. That he is running Uttar Pradesh for the third time is testimony to the fact that whenever the party has faced a crisis in the state, Tiwari has been the one who has plugged the gap. That speaks volumes for his main political asset—his acceptability among the people. Says Health Minister Gopinath Dixit: "He has always been the most acceptable leader around. Since 1980, whenever there has been a change of leadership, the first name to be discussed has been that of Tiwari."

Tiwari has always maintained a clear distinction between his political activities and compulsions and his administrative responsibilities. Says he: "The development of the state cannot be allowed to suffer because of political considerations. My effort has always been to establish some kind of a correlation between the two so that the party gets political advantage out of the Government's achievements."

Tiwari has been known to have his priorities clearly established. In 1984, when the Congress(I) had brought him to Uttar Pradesh as chief minister, before the general elections, his emphasis was on road-building—over 2,500 km of roads was built.

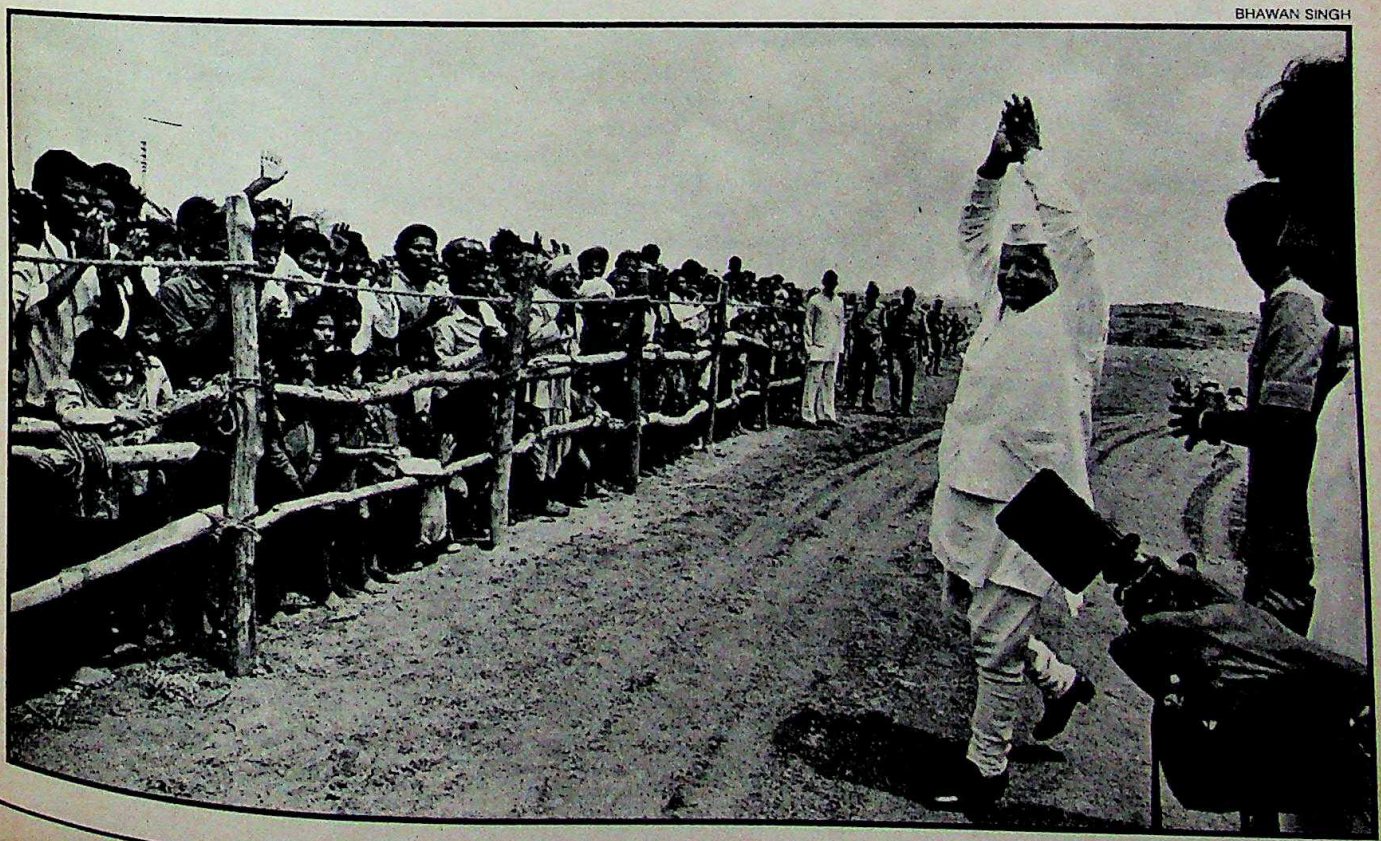
This time, the priority is rural housing for Harijans and other weaker sections at the village and block level. As against 32,000 houses provided in 1988-89, Tiwari's target is 2.5 lakh houses in the current year. The political logic is that each house will give shelter to an average of five potential voters from the scheduled castes or economically weaker sections.

He has also ordered the compilation of an 'Economic Register' for every village in the state. Says Tiwari: "These registers give you a bird's-eye view of the developmental activities which have taken place and what needs to be done." On an average, five to six hours are earmarked every day in his schedule for meetings either with officials or delegations to discuss administrative problems.

His meetings present almost the appearance of a class-room where officials face a grilling. By now, bureaucrats have learnt that when Tiwari addresses an official as 'Maharaj' or 'Bhai Saheb', it means he is annoyed or not satisfied.

In front of the masses: a friendly approach

BHAWAN SINGH



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But Tiwari's obsession with monitoring administrative progress does lead to a lot of delays. One of the major charges against Tiwari is that files take a long time to move because he is fastidious and insists on checking everything himself.

Tiwari's major problem, however, is his ministerial colleagues, largely unchanged since the previous regime. As Mulayam Singh Yadav analyses: "Barring two or three of them, they are incompetent." He has a point. Most of Tiwari's ministers are practically nonentities, some are even liabilities.

It is because of incompetence at the ministerial level that most departmental secretaries are forced to deal with Tiwari directly. In fact, the ministers themselves are responsible for creating a situation where Tiwari is virtually running all the departments single-handedly.

THE STRATEGIST

Conciliation rather than confrontation is his instinctive approach

ANOTHER area the chief minister is expected to almost single-handedly tackle is preparations for the forthcoming elections. The progress he has been making on this front is impressive. Having neutralised all dissidence and obtained a blank cheque from the high command, Tiwari is now in the final phase of his pre-election strategy—increased contact with the people. He meets between 500 and 1,000 people each day at a one-hour durbar at his residence.

Tiwari has also started devoting a lot of time to addressing public meetings. During the past two months, he has addressed a total of 39 public meetings in various districts. And for once, he is also making a deliberate effort to woo politicians. Now he is not always closetted with officials and his door is open to MLAs and other politicians.

His non-abrasive streak marks his entire pre-poll preparations. Unlike his predecessor who loved confrontation with politicians and bureaucrats, Tiwari has chosen the path of conciliation whether with agitating kisan leaders or the Babri Masjid antagonists.

But this does not mean he has forsaken guile. While he is against abusive and negative campaigning, he has readily adopted the Centre's line of encouraging defections from the Janata Dal. It was his cajoling and persuasion that landed opposition Ahir leader Ram Naresh Yadav and former minister Zafar Ali Naqvi in the Congress(I) net. He has identified over 12 more opposition leaders for defection. Nonetheless, while he has no real rivals from his own party in the state, he is pitted against a galaxy of powerful opposition leaders including V.P. Singh, Arun Nehru, Arif Mohammad Khan, Raj Mangal Pandey, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Sanjay Singh.

But here too, his conciliatory approach and graciousness towards even his opponents have ensured that there is very little ammunition for the Opposition to use against him. Says Minister of State for Education Jagdambika Pal: "He has done nothing so far in the state on which the Opposition can capitalise." Adds Agriculture Minister Dr Krishna Vir Singh Kaushal: "In him we have a leader who will never invite hostility from any quarter. What more can we ask for?"

Even so, Tiwari has been doing more than just reaching out to the people and impressing them with rhetoric. One of his immediate and major electoral thrusts is on reducing developmental imbalances between different regions in the state. It includes an ambitious plan to link all districts and important cities with all-season motorable roads. In addition, he has cornered over 30 per cent of the new industrial licences issued by the Central Government during the past few months. Having been a Central minister, his rapport and ability to lobby Central officials for clearing projects have worked to his advantage. For example, when recently there was a problem about the release of loan funds through commercial banks, Tiwari spoke directly to the governor of the Reserve Bank of India and ironed out the situation within a few hours.

He is also actively trying to dispel the miasma surrounding the question of his loyalty. A miasma that has been raised by both the Government's insecurities and the Opposition's clever public utterings. Now whenever his loyalty is questioned, he says: "I am happy with whatever I am being given. Rajiv Gandhi was my leader, is my leader and will continue to be my leader. And he is the only person who deserves the prime ministership of this great country. So there is no question of my thinking in terms of an alternative." And he repeats this at every meeting.

Today Tiwari's is a strange situation: he is important as never before, but the onus he bears is crushing. In every way, Tiwari is in the hot seat. And his dilemma, given the atmosphere in the party, is the dilemma of the long-standing loyalist.

—DILIP AWASTHI and PRABHU CHAWLA

V.P. SINGH

Battle Charge

DO you want units or unity?" roars V.P. Singh, when a worker demands to know why the Janata Dal is not constituting district and city units. A hush descends. Then continues the Opposition point-man in a voice tinged with passion: "Once there are units, the unity is sacrificed. A cyclone does not come in units. It just comes and sweeps away everything."

Even as the Congress(I) was crossing the t's of its poll strategy, its arch enemy V.P. Singh last fortnight picked up the gauntlet, and rung out the battle cry. Along with other top leaders of the Janata Dal, he stormed Uttar Pradesh and spent three days addressing over half a dozen public meetings, holding secret parleys with the party's state leaders, and devising a game-plan to take the wind out of N.D. Tiwari's sails. The battle for Uttar Pradesh is on in right earnest.

Singh's strategy is clear: the prime minister is the target. The Janata Dal leadership has resolved that aggressive campaigning against Rajiv Gandhi is

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likely to yield better results than any other issue. And pumping further adrenalin into the aggression are the twin weapons of the CAG report and General Sundarji's revelations, which V.P. Singh is wielding with calculated skill. He leaves no doubt as to what aspect of the Rajiv Gandhi Government he is going to attack. Not for him the oft-touted, rather flimsy argument that the people are not concerned with corruption allegations and that it cannot be made the major thrust of a general election campaign.

Flashing the CAG report at each of his three major public meetings and 20-odd wayside meetings, Singh took pains to show people the national emblem imprinted on the cover of the report. He read out portions, and drove home the point repeatedly that Rajiv was responsible for compromising national security. Exclaimed Singh, pointing at the Ashoka Chakra printed on the report: "This is not any foreign radio, this is not the Opposition, this is not V.P. Singh. This report represents an official appointed by the Constitution of India."

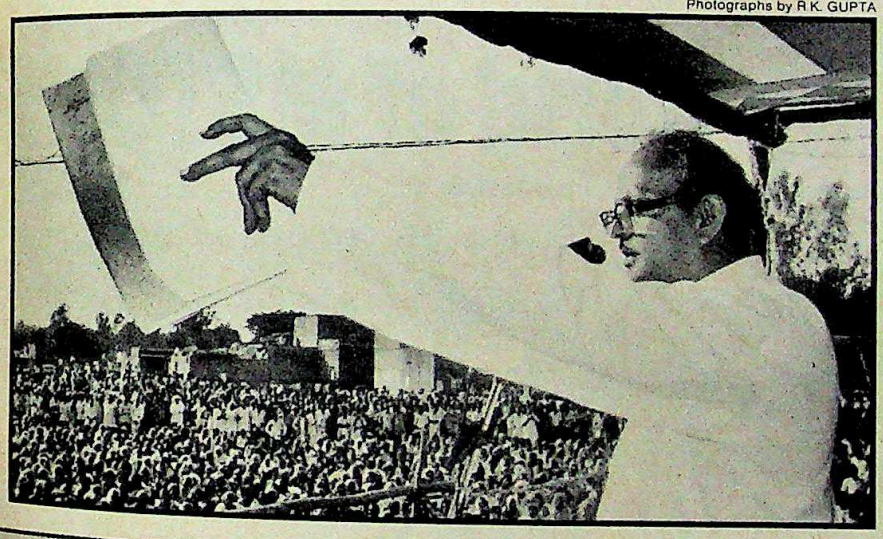
Firebrand rhetoric was meantime being buttressed with agitational politics. Having decided to launch a *jail bharo* campaign (September 11 to 16) all over the state to focus on the Bofors pay-offs, the Janata Dal was busy trying to mobilise over one lakh workers to court arrest. Earlier, opposition MLAs had gheraoed N.D. Tiwari for the same reasons.

It was fairly clear that there was more than one purpose behind V.P. Singh's agitational tactics. They were also deemed to have diversionary value. They were expected to divert public attention from intra-party feuds, and the inconsistencies that tarnish the Janata Dal's approach to sensitive issues like the Babri Masjid which has been simmering for a long time now with neither the Government nor the Opposition able to suggest a solution or take a definite stand.

SINGH's tactics were subtle. Neither he nor any of the Janata Dal leaders directly attacked Chief Minister N.D. Tiwari at public meetings. The idea was to keep the Congress(I) high command on edge, by fostering the impression that Tiwari may be a potential collaborator with the Opposition.

V.P. Singh at a rally in Haidergarh: pulling out the stops

Photographs by R.K. GUPTA



Armed with the CAG report and Sundarji's revelations, V.P. Singh stormed the state. The strategy was clear: the prime minister and not the party was the target.

The Janata Dal's major thrust is going to be aimed at striking a balance of backward and other intermediary castes, including the trading community. In fact, it was only after a consensus was reached in the party on this issue that Singh decided to visit the state last fortnight. The five days which he spent in Uttar Pradesh—his stronghold—constituted his longest stay since the Allahabad by-election, and were reminiscent of the tumultuous meetings he held soon after leaving the Congress(I) two years ago.

Singh began his stump at Allahabad on September 5 in low-key fashion since he is not planning to contest the seat again. He spent his time not meeting the electorate but talking to workers and local leaders. It was in between his public meeting at Haidergarh (Bara Banki) on September 6, Gorakhpur on September 7, and Ghosi (Azamgarh) on September 8, that Singh, travelling by road, addressed scores of small corner meetings. The choice of the venues for the public meetings clearly indicated that Singh is concentrating on eastern Uttar Pradesh, which alongwith western parts of the state is said to be his bastion.

The Janata Dal has divided the state into four zones. Since central Uttar Pradesh is considered an area of influence of the Congress(I), the Dal is planning a special drive in this area. Singh reached Haidergarh, a town 55 km from Lucknow with a population of 11,000, ready to take it by storm. He was accompanied by Haryana Chief Minister Devi Lal, the state Janata Dal President Mulayam Singh Yadav and Secretary-General Sanjay Singh.

The Haidergarh rally was a roaring success. An impressive crowd waited for two hours, braving the heat. Local people were of the view that Singh's meeting was as impressive as the one by Amitabh Bachchan in 1987. Said Babu Ram, 45, a member of the village panchayat of Sakho village: "His (Bachchan's) meeting was also big but there is a lot of *josh* (enthusiasm) in this one." That the rally could have turned out even bigger was made clear by Sada Shiv Misra of Nindura block who said: "For the Bachchan meeting the preparations had started at least a month in advance. This meeting was announced only a week ago."

The Gorakhpur-Azamgarh leg was even more tumultuously successful. Singh travelled by the 'Kranthi Rath', emerging every now and then from the rooftop of the bus on a hydraulic lift to address the people. At Gorakhpur a 60,000-strong crowd waited patiently for four hours in withering heat. In the crowd were dusty villagers who had trekked miles, carrying children on their shoulders to reach the venue. And Singh, with his well-practised rhetoric, did not disappoint for a moment.

Though Singh continues to display time and again that he has charisma and can pull in the crowds, the party has much to prove still. Above all, that the unity amongst its various factions can stand the test of electoral tugs, pulls and pressures. From next month, he is embarking on a bicycle tour of the state. V.P. Singh may be picking up pace, but it remains to be seen if the Janata Dal bandwagon can stay in tandem.

—DILIP AWASTHI in Allahabad and Haidergarh

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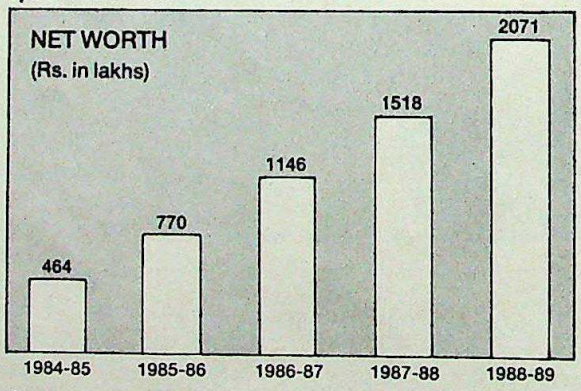

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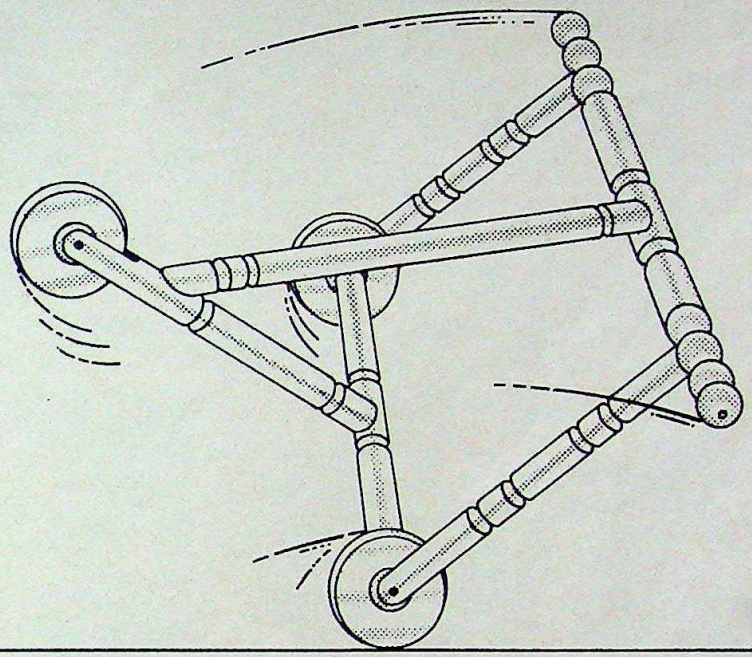

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HARYANA

Miscued Missives

Governor Ray and Devi Lal exchange angry letters

POLITICAL missiles often boomerang. Punjab Governor Sidhartha Shankar Ray was at the receiving end of an offensive he had launched at the Haryana Chief Minister Devi Lal last fortnight. No matter what his intentions were, Ray's action raised the widespread impression that instead of staying above politics, as a governor should, he had begun to play the now familiar role of a Congress(I) politician trying to dislodge an elected opposition government. But unlike the clandestine operations of governors in the past, Ray's manoeuvres were overt.

The drama began on August 30—the day of the Opposition-inspired Bharat bandh which was total in Haryana due to the state Government's support. Surprisingly, Ray joined the Congress(I) in attacking Devi Lal for abetting the bandh. The governor shot off a three-page letter demanding the release of some Punjab vehicles detained in Haryana during the Bharat bandh. The tone was angry, the contents threatening. If the vehicles weren't returned, "you will be acting contrary to the Constitution of India", it warned. The letter was virtually a legal chargesheet. It asked: "Under what law and authority is the Government of Haryana indirectly helping people to prevent vehicles to go to their destinations?"

In a significant coincidence, Ray's letter arrived exactly a day after Union Home Minister Buta Singh had called Devi Lal to warn him: the state Government would be held responsible for any untoward incidents in Haryana. What added to the doubts of a political orchestration by the Congress(I) was the release of Ray's letter to the press—as also the fact that copies of the letter reached President R. Venkataraman and the Haryana governor.

Predictably, Devi Lal saw a design in Ray's letter, which managed to reach his office soon after he had left for the day. The number of vehicles mentioned in the letter was so insignificant that the Janata Dal felt convinced that Ray was, in fact, sowing the seeds for the ultimate displacement of the state Government—and the imposition of President's Rule in Haryana.

In an aggressive counter, the Haryana chief minister accused the governor of dabbling in politics. He wrote: "I fail to understand why have you chosen—as a constitutional head of a state—to refer to a political issue between the ruling party and the Opposition in the country. That is why I wonder, whether there is an extraneous motive in including references in your communication which clearly amount to casting totally unjustified and uncalled for aspersions on the functioning of the state."

Devi Lal made it clear that his government maintained total law and order in the state. He also pointed out that state government offices were kept open on the day of Barat bandh.

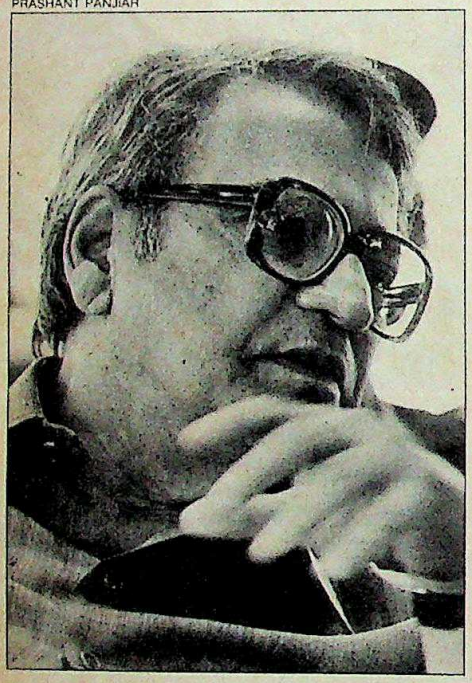
But Ray was not to be cowed down so easily. On September 2, he repeated his charges: "When one tries to propose as well as to oppose a bandh he places himself in a ludicrous position.... He (Devi Lal) asks others not to attend offices but he attends his own! One cannot be both Rama and Ravana at the same time!"

The letter was accompanied by photographs showing Janata Dal leaders blocking train and road transport in the state. The Haryana chief minister retorted: "I shall relentlessly continue to fight the Ravanas of yesterday who are posing as the Ramas of today in our body politick."

The Haryana strongman also questioned Ray's moral authority in so interfering: "This is only to be expected when defeated politicians are installed as governors and in particular, in states under President's Rule to enable them to carry out the mandate of the political party at the Centre."

The Punjab governor tried to defend his actions on the plea that he was not only the "constitutional head of the state

PRASHANT PANJIAR



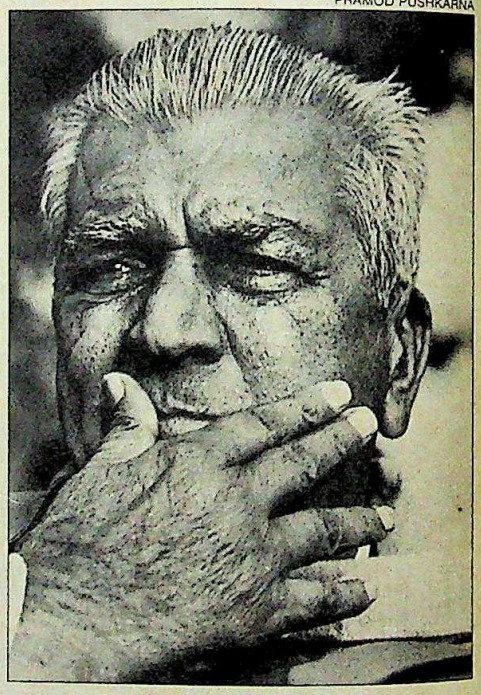
"He (Devi Lal) asks others not to attend offices but he attends his own. One cannot be both Rama and Ravana at the same time."

S.S. RAY
Governor, Punjab

"I shall relentlessly continue to fight the Ravanas of yesterday who are posing as the Ramas of today in our body politic".

DEVI LAL
Chief Minister, Haryana

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



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but at the moment I also happen to be its administrative head and therefore responsible for protecting the interests of the people of Punjab."

Significantly, Ray did not receive open support from Central ministers or even local politicians. AICC(I) sources say the decision to ignore the issue was made after receiving specific advice to do so from the presidential office. But Ray told INDIA TODAY: "This trend of the party in power inciting people to adopt violent postures is calling for anarchy. Perhaps I should not have made my letters public."

From present counts, Devi Lal has won round one. Recently, he wrote to the President demanding that Ray be recalled. The move to involve the President was a clever strategy to pre-empt any action by the Centre against the state Government. What gave Ray's action the air of a political conspiracy, sources in the Haryana Government claim, was that it unfolded almost simultaneously with the discovery of what Devi Lal's supporters claim was a larger plan to topple the Devi Lal Government.

The strategy apparently included a plan to coerce some 45 MLAs to defect from Haryana's ruling party. Only last month, Devi Lal claimed Rs 50 crore had been earmarked to topple his government with the help of two Central ministers. He's also alleged the Congress(I) is plotting to unleash a spate of violence through a youth brigade trained by a former DGP of the Punjab Police.

Sources say that attacking Devi Lal with the charge of constitutional impropriety in having supported the bandh was part of the Congress(I)'s wider strategy to put the Opposition on the defensive. Although Buta Singh asked chief ministers of all opposition-ruled states to ensure law and order on the Bharat bandh day, the Devi Lal Ministry was the most vulnerable due to its internal factionalism. Devi Lal gave additional fodder for Central action with an open call to the state's youth to stop all trains, also promising them monetary rewards in case of mishaps.

The Centre gleefully played up Devi Lal's statements. Doordarshan repeated them half a dozen times for two days. The AICC(I) and the Union Home Ministry generously offered special briefings to select journalists about the "unconstitutional acts of the chief minister". The Congress(I) was ready to have Devi Lal on the ropes. But just then Ray jumped in, perhaps indiscreetly, and the attempt to embarrass Devi Lal wound up in a confused mess.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

GOA

Sex Scandal

Accusation against speaker

LESS than 5 ft in height, charming and schoolgirlish, 19-year-old Sunita Haldankar hardly fits the image of a Mata Hari who can destroy the career of a powerful politician. Yet the young typist from a small town in Goa is at the eye of a raging political storm involving assembly Speaker Dayanand Narvekar in what has come to be known as the Secretariat Molestation Scandal.

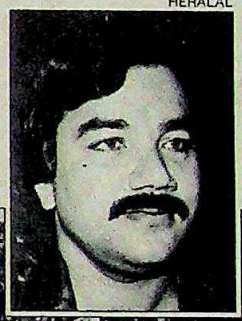
Sunita and Narvekar, 39, are both from Mapusa, a town 15 km north of the state capital, Panaji. The son of a tailor, Narvekar's has been a meteoric rise in politics. After a stint as law minister, he has been assembly Speaker for over five years. Within the Congress(I), he is the main challenger of Chief Minister Pratapsinh Rane.

On August 1, Narvekar hired Sunita as a typist after her mother, Yamuna, 40, a hospital attendant, approached him. But on August 8, Sunita fled the Speaker's office (in the Secretariat Annexe) and found herself in the centre of a public drama which promises to become a major election issue.

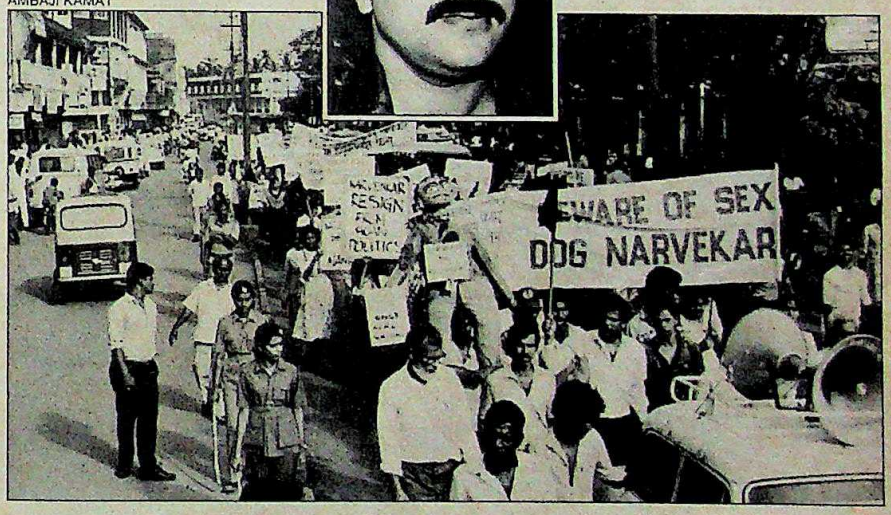
On August 9, Sunita and her mother met Rane along with Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) leader Ramakant Khalap and complained that Narvekar had molested Sunita the previous evening in the Speaker's Chamber. Ever since, there has been a barrage of charges and countercharges, culminating in a joint, statewide opposition campaign demanding the dismissal and prosecution of Narvekar. Even non-political organisations like the Freedom Fighters' Association, the All-Goa Students' Union and the women's group Bailancho Saad are backing the stir. Said Bailancho Saad leader Albertina Almeida: "We spoke to Sunita and are convinced the incident took place. She was later intimidated to change her story. Other men will be emboldened if the Speaker is let off."

But Narvekar returned from a trip to Delhi and sent legal notices to Khalap and Sunita, threatening to launch a criminal defamation case if they did not retract the charge. "I will not resign with a black mark on my record. But I will cooperate with any police probe," he declared. "If the charge is proved even 0.1 per cent, I will leave the political scene."

HERALAL



AMBAJI KAMAT



Protest rally; and (inset) Narvekar

Khalap, on his part, has urged that he be prosecuted if the charge is false. He is unlikely to relent, especially since the issue has acquired major political dimensions. As political reputations go, the MGP leader is considered straightforward while Narvekar has the image of a playboy. Even if the Speaker wins in court, his party will have to pay dearly for the murky affair.

Rane acknowledged as much when he said: "The Opposition is trying to spoil the Congress(I)'s name. But a party cannot be condemned for any individual's actions." The ball, predictably, is in the party high command's court—it is for Delhi to decide whether or not the curtain should ring down abruptly on Narvekar's political career.

—M. RAHMAN in Goa

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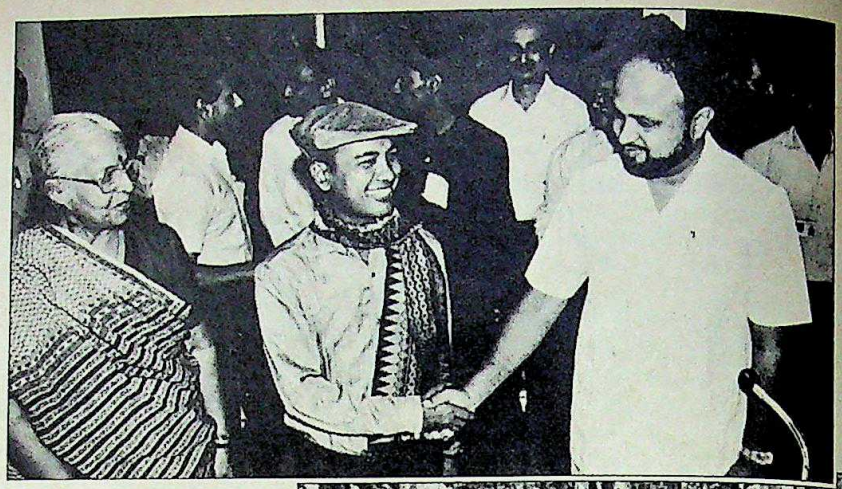
ASSAM

False Hopes

Meet fails to check violence

THE photograph, splashed across the front-pages of national dailies was arresting. Wearing a cap and muffler, and grinning from ear to ear, was the elusive Upendranath Brahma, president of the All-Bodo Students' Union (ABSU-UB), whose agitation for a separate homeland for the tribal Bodos has again unleashed a cycle of bloodshed in Assam. Warmly clasping the boyish Brahma's hand was none other than a smiling Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, chief minister of Assam and the greatest foe of the ABSU(UB) activists. Looking on benignly was Union Minister of State for Welfare Rajendra Kumari Bajpai.

Many promises were made at the first tripartite talks between the ABSU(UB), the state and Central governments on August 28 in New Delhi. Brahma promised to suspend the movement and stop violence, Mahanta agreed to withdraw, step-by-step, the harsh preventive measures invoked in Bodo-dominated areas, and Bajpai announced that a committee would soon be formed to study the ABSU(UB) demands and continue the dialogue. Brahma—who had arrived with a huge 40-member delegation in contrast to Mahanta's four-member team—then shook hands with the chief minister and the two men posed together for photographs.



Brahma with Mahanta: scene of violence

Was this rapprochement at last? Tragically, not. Barely had the ink dried on the joint statement that blood was again being spilled in Assam. Brahma's smiles and promises notwithstanding, the violence seemed carefully timed: the day after the talks a time-bomb went off in a passenger bus near Barpetta town, killing nine people, and blowing to pieces the hopes for peace

WEST BENGAL

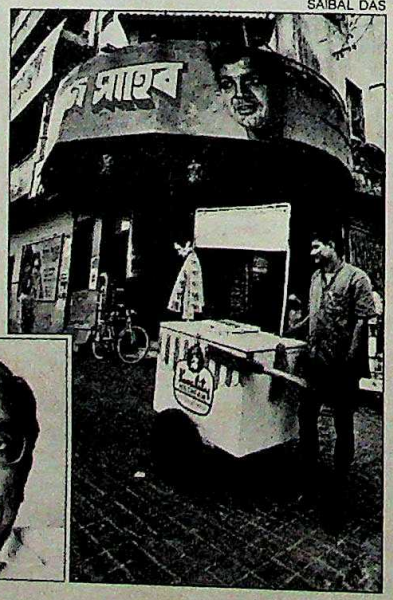
Video Vice

OF late it seemed that the Bengali film industry would stir itself out of its comatose state and re-enact its forgotten days of glory.

But it is becoming increasingly evident that the gasping industry is facing yet another challenge, this time from video pirates. And last fortnight, fed up with the insensitivity of the Government to their demands to check video piracy, leading film, theatre and jatra artistes hit the streets under the banner of the Eastern India Motion Pictures Associtaion (EIMPA). For three days Tollygunge studios pulled down their rusty shutters. Said Bikas Chandra, convenor of the video action committee of EIMPA: "There is no way out but to protest, as the industry is dying."

Closed cinema hall; (inset) Chandra

SAIBAL DAS



This was the second time in 10 months, the first one was December 6 last year, that the industry was organising a protest march for state intervention. A few months ago the state Government had lend a helping hand to the industry: all cinema houses in the state were ordered to screen Bengali films irrespective of the collections for at least six months every year. But it hardly helped.

There are more than 2,000 illegal video parlours in the state. The EIMPA has demanded, among other things, the setting up of a separate police cell and special courts to try video pirates who put out cassettes of new films before it can reach theatres.

But piracy can hardly be controlled as experience proves. The fact is Bengali films have not been able to compete with the glitzy Hindi films which pull in the crowds. Tollygunge's real hope lies in capturing its old touch. —FARZAND AHMED

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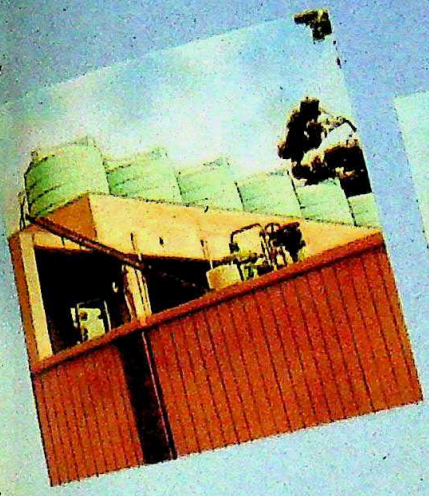

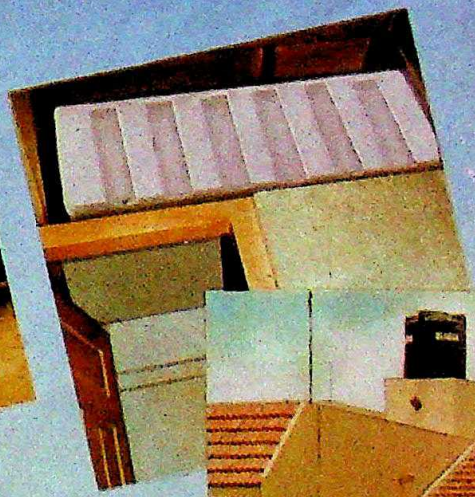

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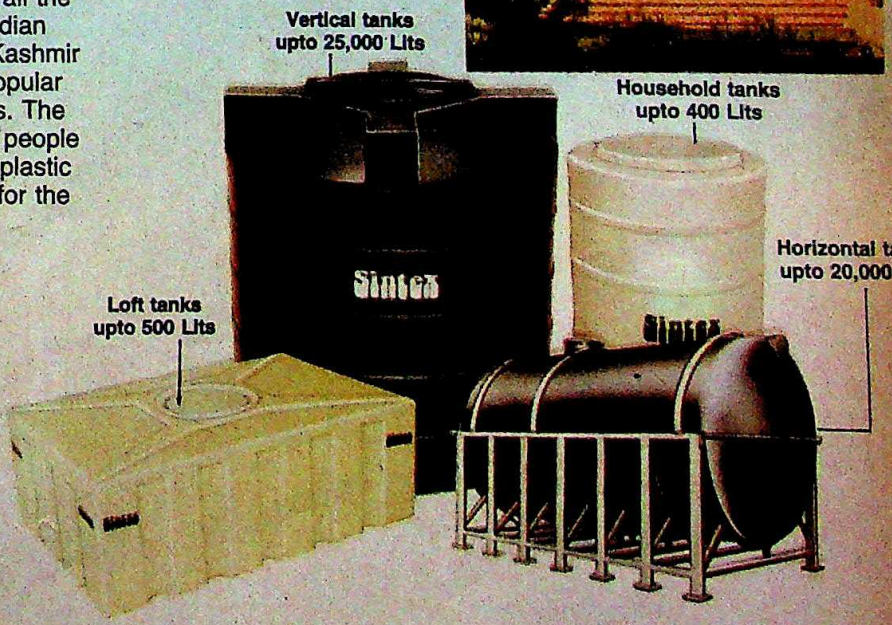

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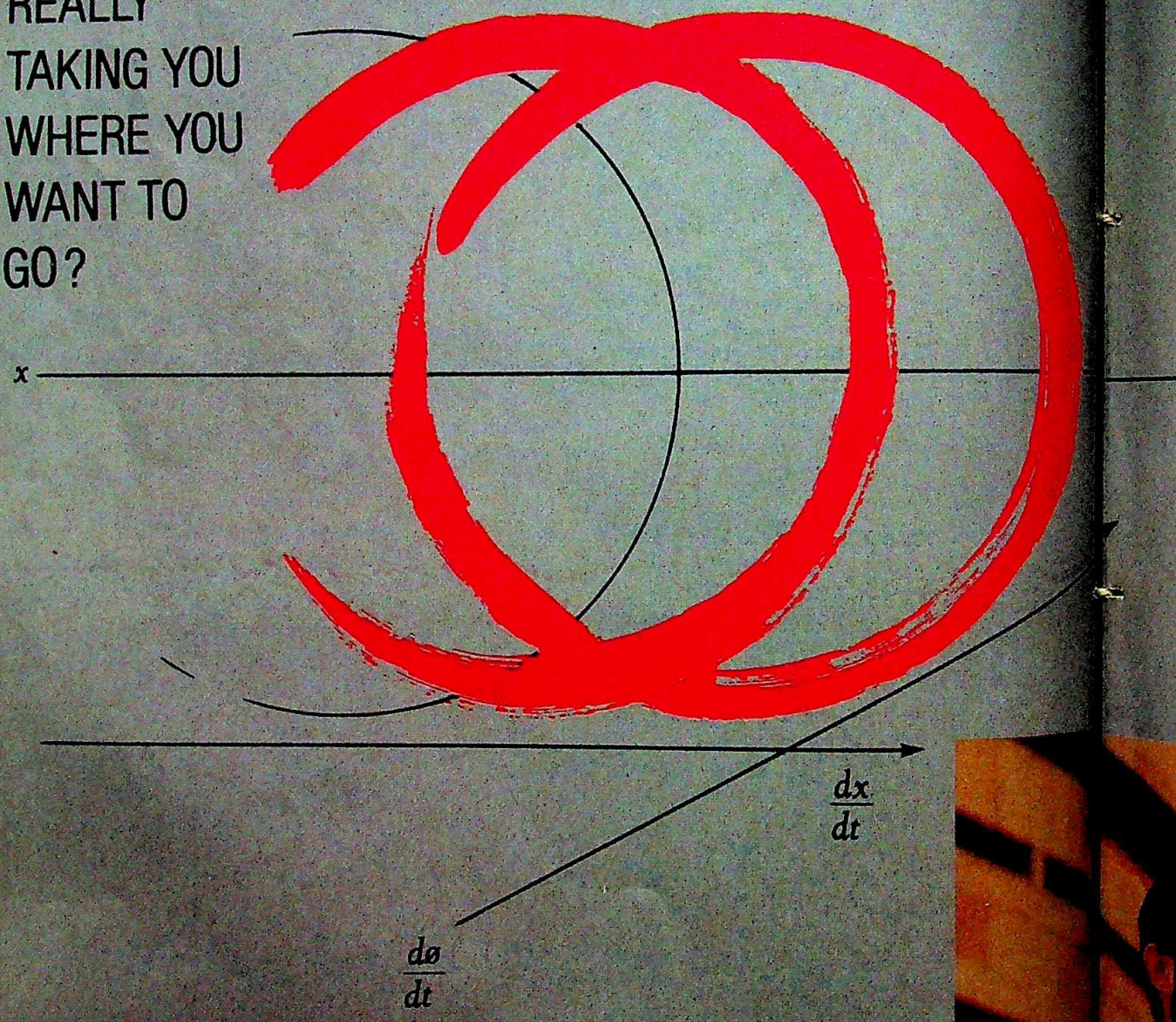

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generated in Delhi. Simultaneously, Brahma went back on his word in less than 24 hours and announced at a press conference in Delhi that if Bodoland was not created then "Assam will burn once again". Insisting that he had made it clear at the talks that he was willing to settle for nothing less than Bodoland, he declared ominously: "We have boys with us who are trained in using sophisticated arms and devices."

That this was no idle threat became immediately evident: in the week following the talks, in a renewed burst of bloodletting, 33 people lost their lives. The toll mounted to 45 as Bodo militants raided a village near Tamulpur on September 9 killing 12 people.

Mahanta was more true to his word. The outbreak of violence saw him cancelling a 10-day trip to the US and Canada. He then kept his part of the bargain by revoking the Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1955. Said he: "The Government is also prepared to withdraw other measures including the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act if ABSU stops the violence."

But that appears unlikely, as with every bout of bloodshed, the Centre's hand becomes more and more visible. Once again it was driven home that the Centre would prefer to let the issue fester when it sent only a minister of state like Bajpai as its representative. Mahanta too is apparently convinced that "outside agencies", and not the ABSU leadership, are manipulating the militants.

While that may be an exaggeration, it is true that the endless bloodletting has tainted the ABSU(UB). The Assamese and non-tribals like Bengalis were always opposed to it. Now, most of the nine plain tribal groups of the state have also turned hostile. Even some Bodos owing allegiance to the faction of ABSU led by Gangadhar Ramchairy and the Plain Tribals Council of Assam have begun working against the ABSU(UB).

A further dangerous twist has been imparted by the All-Assam Students' Union (AASU), which issued a statement after Brahma backtracked in Delhi: "We shall not allow the state to burn again. We shall equip ourselves with sufficient self-defence mechanism to prevent that happening."

And since the AASU is one group which can spill as much blood as the ABSU(UB), Assam seems perilously close to plunging once again into medieval madness. —FARZAND AHMED

GUJARAT

New Customs

IN administration, accountability is effective. So, goes the dictum. The Ahmedabad Customs (Preventive) Collectorate seems to be proving this with its new management information system (MIS) which has brought in a new flavour of efficiency in customs implementation drives. Introduced by Ahmedabad Customs Collector Virendra Singh five months ago, the MIS has impressed with its results: of a target of 140 detentions under COFEPOSA this year, 70 alleged smugglers have already been hauled up. Last year's tally was 37 detentions.

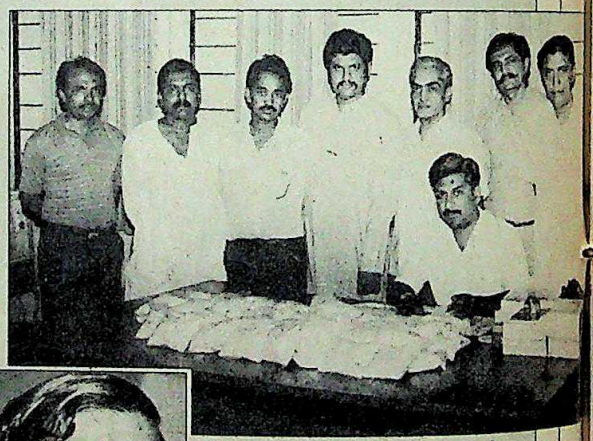
The Centre has so far been fixing targets for only seizures and disposal of goods for a customs centre. But, Singh has taken the initiative, with the help of the MIS to set up targets for 23 areas of work, including detention under COFEPOSA, Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotics, Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PITS and NDPS), and stepping up adjudication and prosecution processes. Action plans are drawn up for each division to realise the present targets—based on past performance and perceived risks. Monthly meetings with assistant collectors are used to monitor performance, and to grill sluggish officers.

Says Singh: "The performance of the officers will be judged on the basis of achievements of targets." Officers find the difference mainly in terms of a new initiative and drive. J.R. Mahida, assistant collector, Bhavnagar division, says: "Now, if a particular operator is evading detention, we put in that extra bit of effort to nab him."

Before the MIS was introduced, customs officials concentrated on just three aspects: seizures, disposal of goods and some revenue realisation. Important areas like adjudication and prosecution which are critical to performance in the primary areas were neglected. The MIS has made a determined bid to improve adjudication: officers have been directed to complete investigations in two or three months—and promptly serve show cause notices. The aim: early disposal of cases and quick revenue realisation.

Significantly, the number of seizures by customs personnel in Gujarat—with its smuggling-prone 1,600 km coastline—has shot up. Smuggled goods (mainly gold) worth Rs 26 crore had been seized by May this year, compared to only Rs 13.76 crore in 1988 and Rs 14.92 crore in 1987. Now smugglers in Gujarat are clearly on the run. While Jayantilal Maneklal Soni, allegedly involved in gold seizures worth Rs 1 crore, has been held under COFEPOSA; Haji Ismail, suspected to be involved in gold seizures worth Rs 14 crore, is absconding.

Singh has also spread his net to narcotics and drug smugglers—at a time when narcotics operators are quite active. In six months of the current year, the yield is Rs 39 lakh compared to a haul of Rs 26 lakh for 1988. Besides, 20 major operators have been detained under PITS and NDPS against this year's target of 30.



Drug haul; (inset) Singh

Impressed with the results, B.V. Kumar, member, customs, has recommended the MIS model for customs centres throughout the country, and it is already being welcomed all over for its ability to fix responsibilities and demand results. There are detractors too. Some reckon Singh is running too fast and is bound to stumble soon. That may be so, but it's better than being stationary and getting nowhere. —UDAY MAHURKAR

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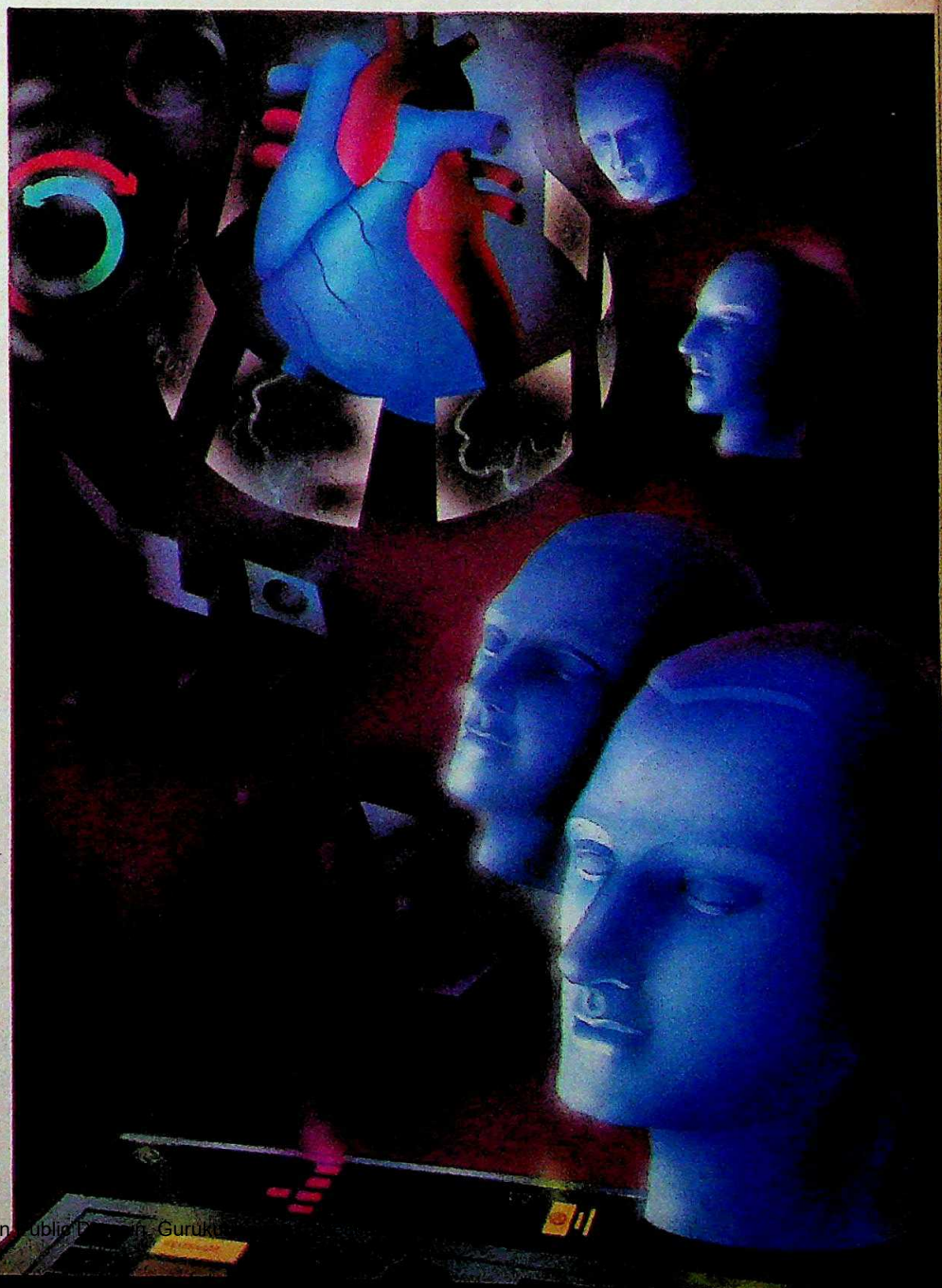

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WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE PLAN

Skirting the Issue

National Perspective Plan makes no headway

IT was a document promising to free Indian women from the clutches of social oppression. But exactly a year after the National Perspective Plan for Women 1988-2000 (NPP) was presented to the prime minister, and 17 months after it was officially released with the attendant hoopla, little has been done to implement it.

Put together by a 14-member core group, constituted in 1987 and headed by Margaret Alva, minister of state for women, youth affairs and sport, the NPP makes 353 far-reaching recommendations. These include: a uniform civil code, property rights to women, reservation of seats for women in elected bodies, banning of sex-determination tests, and making harassment of wives for dowry as a ground for seeking divorce.

The NPP also talks of encouraging industrialisation of rural areas to provide employment options to women, giving credit to women, and setting up a Central maternity benefit fund.

So far, the suggestions have been confined to paper, with little or no attempt to translate them into action. Nandini Azad of the Women's Centre, National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), and a member of the core group, disagrees. Says she: "By January, 275 recommendations were sent to the ministries. Around 179 have been accepted in principle."

But leading women activists confess to being in the dark regarding the progress of the NPP. Queries a puzzled Veena Mazumdar of the Centre for Women's Development Studies: "Has the NPP been sent to various state governments and the Planning Commission? Has a feasibility report about its implementation been prepared? Is it going to be presented in the Parliament?" In fact, adds Ila Bhatt, MP and founder of the Self-Employed Women's Association: "I haven't heard anything of the plan since it was presented to the prime minister."

It is no surprise then that optimism is at a low ebb. What gives more strength to this view is the feeling that the NPP has bitten off more than it can chew. Says Ranjana Kumari of the Delhi-based Mahila Dakshata Samiti: "A strong back-up machinery, structural support and delivery mechanism is required to fulfil the high-sounding promises."

What is ironical is that the core group comprising government officials has recommended the adoption of a uniform civil code to the Government, a step scuttled earlier by the Government. At the same time, it has failed to consider cultural plurality and religious sensitivity of the country. Says Sushila Kaushik of Delhi University's Women's Studies and Development Centre: "The NPP displays a tendency to latch on to the propagandist bandwagon."

As is to be expected, some are dismissing the NPP as a pre-election stunt. Kumari goes further, saying: "The plan is inherently non-implementable." According to her, the fault lies in the fact that the authors of the plan take a sectoral view of the situation instead of an integrated one.

Bhatt finds another ground for complaint—the steps will inevitably lead to bureaucratisation of the system. Says she: "Officially sponsored agencies like commissioners and women's development corporations, recommended by the NPP, will centralise power."

Echoing the same feeling, Madhu Kishwar, editor of *Manushi* (a bimonthly dealing with women's rights), says the plan recommends the setting up of cells, directorates and committees without assessing the role of the existing ones. Nor does it undertake an evaluation of the failure of the existing policies and laws on women.

In the meantime, the NIPCCD has begun organising workshops and meetings with professionals to make them familiar with the document. Also initiated is a strong networking among women's organisations.

Clearly, however, an overwhelming sense of cynicism has greeted the NPP. "It is just as well if it is not implemented," says Kishwar. "It enhances the power of the state to interfere in the lives of the people." Shifting from the earlier government view of women as assets of the family to that of state-owned 'resources', the NPP, according to Kishwar, projects motherhood as an inevitable contribution that women must make to the nation.

But the way things are going it will not be surprising if like the 1975 Committee on Status of Women Report, a document on which no action was taken, the NPP becomes yet another testimonial to state apathy.

—SHARMILA CHANDRA

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

The Plan makes 353 recommendations. But a year after it was presented to the prime minister, little has been done to implement it.

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"The moment one dream comes true, You realise you have another."

Excerpts from the speech of the Chairman, S M Shetty, at the 6th Annual General Meeting of the Company, held on 28th August 1989

SM Dyechem Ltd

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Because of the change in our company's financial year, we are having an annual general meeting today after a gap of some eighteen rather eventful months.

During this time, the efforts made over the years to increase exports and to keep imports in check have begun to pay off.

To a substantial extent, the improvement has been achieved by slowing down the rate of growth of our imports. However, as we become increasingly more industrialised, the need for imports of various kinds will continue to rise.

Clearly, import substitution has a vital role to play. I am pleased to observe that there is an increasing appreciation of this fact at all levels.

One of the major strengths of our company lies in the fact that the majority of our products are import–substitution products. Our company has, by introducing more and more major import–substitution products over the years, been able to help save substantial sums of foreign exchange.

But what we have done so far is only a beginning. We need to greatly increase both the range and the volume of such import substitution products. At the same time, we need to diversify into other fields, in which we can develop products for exports, as well as for the domestic market.

Financial Performance

Our total income during the past eighteen months has increased dramatically by 175% on an annualised basis. The previous year, we had achieved a turnover of Rs 625.38 lakhs, itself a jump of more than 50% over the year before. This financial year, our turnover reached Rs 2579.30 lakhs. Our gross profit shot up by 242% from Rs 63.40 lakhs in 1986–87 to Rs 230.26 lakhs on an annualised basis.

This spurt in our growth continues during the present year. During the first five months of 1989–90, our turnover has been Rs 1210.00 lakhs, an 85% jump over the turnover of Rs 650.00 lakhs during the corresponding period last year.

Net profits after interest and depreciation are estimated to be Rs 115 lakhs, an increase of 130% on the previous period's figure of Rs 50 lakhs.

Dividends

It gives me great pleasure in recommending a dividend of 36% for the eighteen month period. As required by law, this dividend will be subject to deduction of tax.

Substantial Growth in Speciality Chemicals

During the last year, we have made substantial increases in the market shares of our speciality chemicals.

The new product introduced during the year, under collaboration with Allied Colloids of UK, filament sizing chemicals for air and water jet looms, received tremendous response.

We added substantial new capacity for manufacturing pesticide emulsifiers through our plant in Thane. With this, we have diversified into agrochemicals which is a core sector of the Indian economy.

The company's ethoxilated division was successfully commissioned during the year, and the company had a historic day when the plant was formally inaugurated on March 27, 1988, by Shri N D Tiwari, the then Union Minister for Finance and Commerce.

The entire division has been transferred to our new company, SM Zschimmer and Schwarz Chemicals Limited in which our company holds 40% equity.

Foods Division

Our Foods Division has introduced a new range of 100% hygienic and nutritious snack foods, marketed under the brand name "Peppy". These products have been successfully launched in western India a few months ago.

The first products proved so popular that they have been followed by two more flavours, as well as by a new potato–based snack, under the brand name "Piknik". Both brands have now also been launched in northern India. These products will be progressively marketed in other parts of the country.

Our company's turnover will get a tremendous boost in the coming years, with wider distribution of these products and the addition of a further range of products, soon to be introduced by the Foods Division.

New Projects

Our company is diversifying into other petrochemical and consumer products. The company is setting up a project to manufacture Ethylene Oxide and Mono Ethylene Glycols in a backward area near Pune, in Maharashtra.

Both of these are major import substitution products and there is a very major gap between the country's need for them and the capacity to manufacture them.

The raw materials, process know–how, project management services and detail engineering services for this project have already been tied up with world– renowned companies, and the various approvals are at an advanced stage of clearance.

The necessary land allocation and MPCB clearance is complete, and we intend to bring this project to operational status within a record time.

We are working out the means of financing the project, keeping in mind the interests of the public in general, and of our shareholders in particular. On our part, we are looking forward to continued support from you.

Methanol, another petrochemical product, is increasingly being used all over the world along with petrol as an automotive fuel. We hold SIA registration for the manufacture of 3 lakh MT of methanol per annum, and have already signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a company overseas, who will take up 50% of our production on a buy–back guarantee, and negotiations with other overseas parties are under way for the balance quantities.

In view of this, our company proposes to implement a 100% Export Oriented Unit for the manufacture of methanol. The necessary clearances required for this project are also at an advanced stage.

We are also planning to enter another booming consumer product market, i.e. beer, with complete know–how from Danbrew Consult Ltd, a member of the world– famous Carlsberg Group. We have submitted an application for a letter of intent for this project, and our application is presently under process.

With the major expansions of the projects already in hand, and for our new projects, a considerable amount of engineering back–up support will be needed. Our company is actively considering investments to set up or take over engineering companies with established infrastructure.

Once all these projects come into operation, our company will be a diversified, multi–product, multi–division organisation, active in several different areas, and with sizable additions to our gross block, turnover and profits.

All these projects are the result of careful planning and study of our company's strategic options. Even while these projects are being implemented, the strategic planning group at SM Dyechem will be working on others. For we have all seen that, the moment one dream comes true, you realise you have another.

Note: This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting

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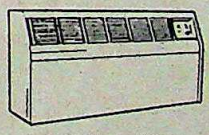
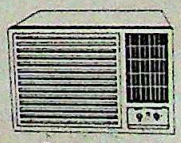
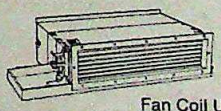


Split Airconditioner



Room Airconditioner



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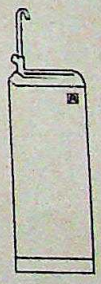

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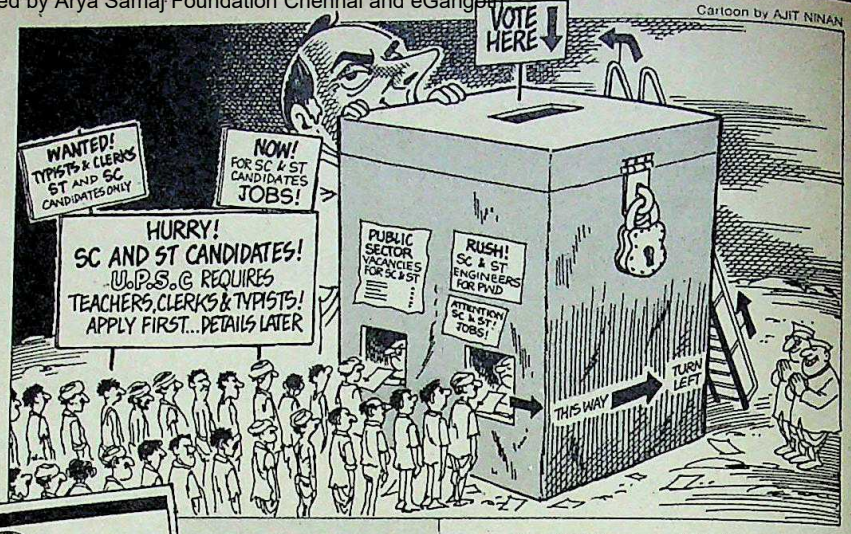
BACKWARD COMMUNITIES

Job Gambit

Suddenly, a recruitment drive



WHEN election clouds hover overhead, governments rain compassion. The Rajiv Gandhi Government is no exception. It has been showering goodies on the backward communities, trying to win them over to its side. And as the elections draw near, the drizzle is turning into a downpour.

During its last session, Parliament passed a bill authorising the Government to set up special courts to try caste offences. In April, Rajiv announced a new university in Lucknow named after Babasaheb Ambedkar, leader of the depressed classes. Last month he installed a portrait of Ambedkar in the Central Hall of Parliament. And during his recent tour of Karnataka, he inaugurated the Siddhartha Engineering College of the Siddhartha Education Society, an institution for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST).

But the most visible—and the most controversial—part of the campaign has been the special drive launched to recruit SC/ST candidates to government offices, public sector undertakings and banks. During the last three months, there has been a plethora of advertisements in newspapers and over Doordarshan announcing the vacancies. And all departments have been instructed to make special efforts to fill nearly 45,000 vacancies by September.

The vacancies represent the backlog that has built up over the years. The official reason cited for the failure to fill the reserved quota is the lack of suitable candidates. The rule so far was that in such cases vacancies were carried forward for three years before dereservation. A new government order now bans dereservation of posts, except in the case of the top level Group A posts which can be dereserved with the sanction of the minister for personnel.

Not surprisingly, the size and frequency of the recruitment advertisements have drawn attention to the Government's motives. Says a senior Bihar Government officer: "For advertising three vacancies, you don't need a quarter-page advertisement."

Counters P. Chidambaram, Union minister of state for personnel, public grievances and pensions: "None of the advertisements is disproportionately large. Whether you advertise five posts or 50, you have to give certain essentials." And an officer in the Department of Personnel argues: "This is meant to be a high visibility campaign."

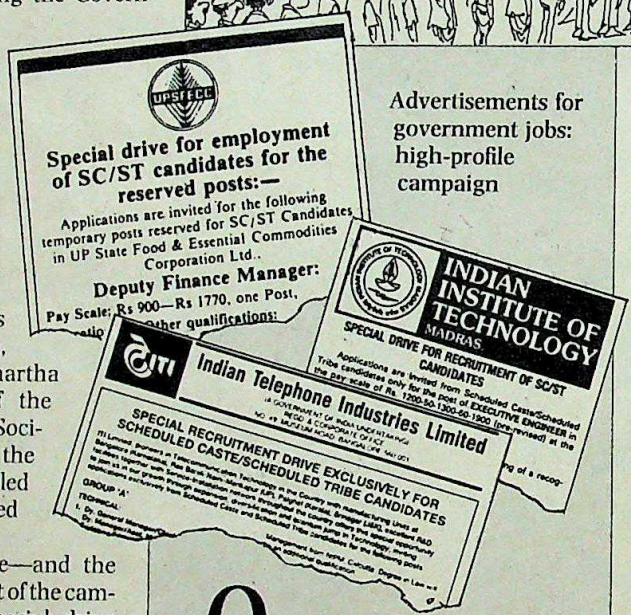
The timing of the campaign is also drawing flak. Janata Dal leader Ram Vilas Paswan labels the new drive an "election stunt". Says he: "It's an admission by Rajiv Gandhi that the governments of Nehru and Indira Gandhi were a total failure on this front."

Chidambaram doesn't go along with that. And, as for the campaign coming just before the election, he says it's only a coincidence. His explanation: since reservations are carried forward for three years, a meaningful study of the process of backlog creation takes at least three years. Says he: "After completing the study, we submitted a proposal for a special drive as far back as June 1988." Then, he says, the proposal had to go to the Prime Minister's Office, the committee of secretaries, the committee of MPs, and finally to the Cabinet which approved it in April this year.

In any case, it's a happy coincidence for the Congress(I). And coincidentally again, many Congress(I)-ruled states are launching similar campaigns. In Bihar, Chief Minister Satyendra Narayan Sinha has declared his intention to recruit 25,000 SC/ST candidates by the year-end. The target may be a bit ambitious. Bihar has over three million registered unemployed, but only about 4,000 vacancies are created every year. While the Government has not specified what kind of jobs the newcomers would get, an official hinted that most might be employed in temporary projects on daily wages.

In Uttar Pradesh, the Government has ordered 25 per cent reservation in Group C posts and 30 per cent in Group D posts to wipe off the backlog and achieve the norm of 18 per cent. A cabinet subcommittee headed by the chief minister has been appointed to monitor the progress. Also, the Lok Ayukta has been given powers to inquire into cases where reservation rules have been flouted.

The Maharashtra Government has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Applications are invited for the following temporary posts reserved for SC/ST Candidates in UP State Food & Essential Commodities Corporation Ltd.,
Deputy Finance Manager:
Pay Scale: Rs 900—Rs 1770, one Post,
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY MADRAS
SPECIAL DRIVE FOR RECRUITMENT OF SC/ST CANDIDATES
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Advertisements for government jobs: high-profile campaign

On election eve, both the Centre and Congress(I) state governments are busy filling posts reserved for the backward communities.

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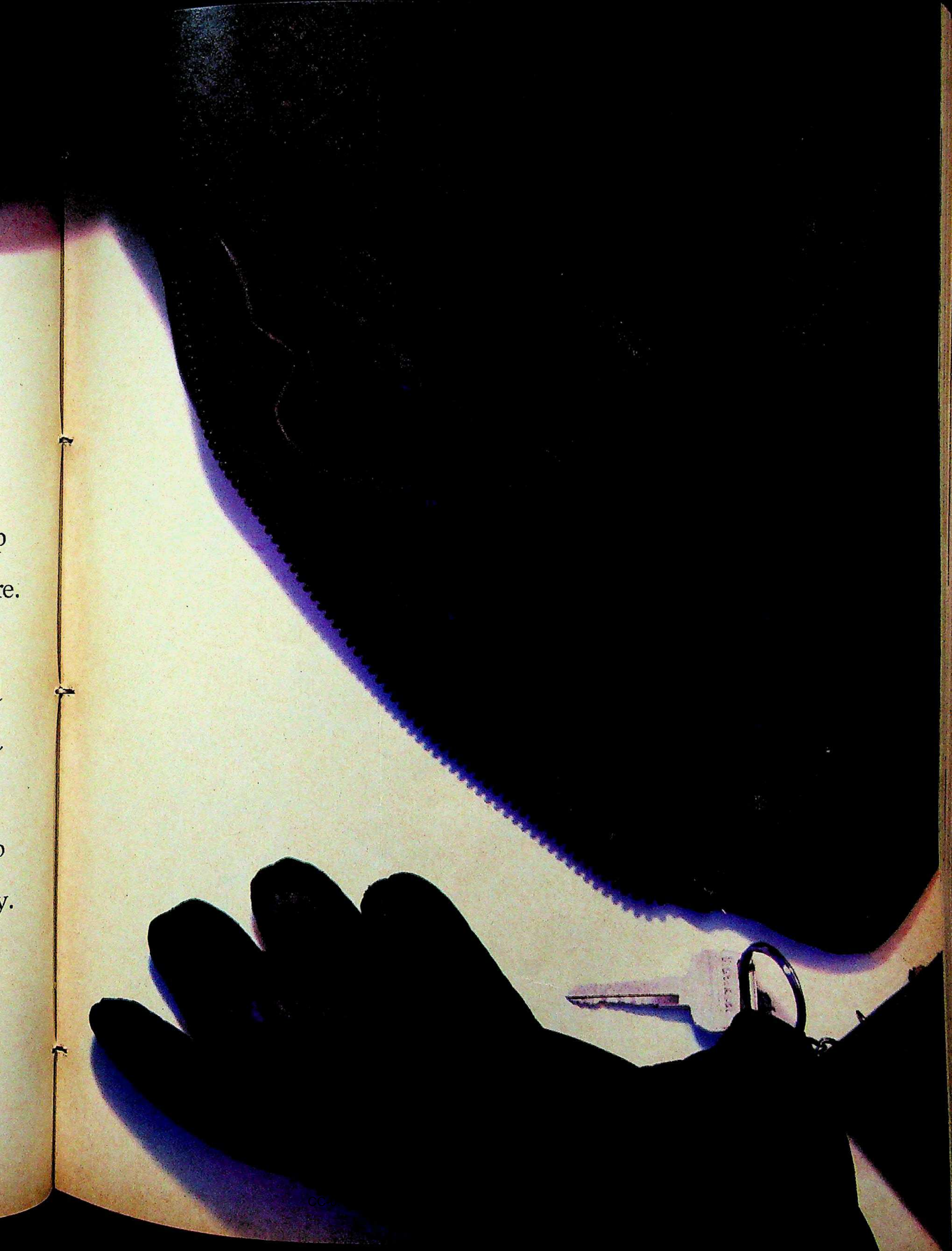

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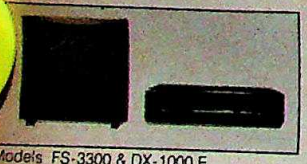

Models FS-3300 & DX-1000 E

FROM HI-TECH TO HOME TECH.

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NEC

NEC Corporation, Japan

For information pl

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asked all departments, local bodies and government undertakings to submit backlog figures by the first week of September. For filling the vacancies it has set a tough deadline: October 1.

As a result of the special campaign, opposition-ruled states have been forced to sit up. In Tamil Nadu, the DMK Government has banned dereservation of posts in state government and public sector undertakings. Incidentally, the state has practically no backlog of posts for SC/ST. A senior IAS officer points out: "As many as 40 per cent of those recruited by the state public service commission for lower grades are from the SC/ST block."

But in trying to match the Centre's recruitment drive, the DMK Government has landed itself in a spot of trouble. An anonymous poster, put up in several places in South Arcot—by the Vanniar Sangam, according to police intelligence—attacks the Government for "appeasing Harijans" at the cost of other caste groups.

Still, the fact is that the Central Government's drive will scarcely affect unemployment among the backward classes. On June 30 this year, the country's employment exchanges recorded over 4.5 million SC/ST candidates. And the 45,000 or so posts being filled by the Government is not even 1 per cent of that. And at the same time, as Janata Dal's Paswan points out, the drive will "fuel resentment in other communities".

As it is, several practical difficulties in implementing the drive confront the Government. Officials say suitable candidates do not become available overnight. Also, the relaxation of restrictions regarding the domicile of candidates has led to resentment among local candidates. Another major problem is funds. The cash-strapped Finance Ministry is worried on that count. But Chidambaram dismisses the fears: "There is no additionality of expenditure. The posts will be filled anyway. We have only compressed the process that would have taken years."

This is essentially pre-election rhetoric; the grandiose declamations of a ruling party out to use all the powers of patronage at its disposal to harness votes. And the noises being made may be heard for full three months, and no more.

—ALOK TIWARI
with bureau reports

BOTTOMLINE BY D. BUNKER

Belgrade Bash

THE Non-Aligned Movement is moving at its traditional pace—like a snail with a bad hangover. But the real success of such jamborees is the informal parties that take place behind the scenes, where the heads of state really let their hair down (except Arafat whose state of head is a carefully guarded secret). An insider's account of the diplomatic banter that went on at one of the Belgrade bashes.

Rajiv Gandhi: Hello Ken. Long time no see.

Kenneth Kaunda: There's no need to speak in pidgin English. We're pretty civilised now you know.

Rajiv (flustered): Sorry. How are things in Uganda?

Kaunda: Wouldn't know. Haven't been there for years. I see you've brought your son along.

Rajiv: My son?

Kuanda: The chap holding your hand.

Rajiv: Oh, that's Mani Iyer. He's my right-hand man.

Mani: Sir, I think you should meet Arafat. He's right at hand.

Rajiv: Yessir, I mean Yasser. When are you coming to New Delhi?

Arafat (surprised): My brother, I was there last week. But I'm free next week as well. (*Patting his pistol*) Have-gun-will-travel as the Americans would say.

Rajiv (hastily moving on): Mani. You and your big mouth. Please be more careful. You never know whom you will bump into at these...Oh, hello your highness. How are things in your lovely kingdom?

King Birendra: Pretty bad, thanks to you. Didn't you hear my speech about Big Brother?

Rajiv: Er, not really. I tuned into the Swahili translation by mistake. Nice seeing you again.

Mani: There's a safe spot. Next to that woman in a sari. Must be one of ours.

Rajiv: Good idea... Oh, hello Begum sahiba. I hope you took serious note of my serious objection to the reference you made to Kashmir?

Nusrat Bhutto (sweetly): No. I tuned into the Yugoslav translation by mistake. I'm not a regular at these NAM conferences, you know.

Rajiv (moving on): Mani, can't you find one safe spot in this place?

Mani: There. Next to that kindly looking priest.

Rajiv: Good evening fath...Ranjan! What a lovely surprise. And how are things on your lovely little island?

Wijeratne: Pretty bad. Thanks to you. When are you pulling your troops out of my country?

Rajiv (hastily): Soon. Very soon. They are all dying to get home anyway.

Mani (steering Rajiv away): Sir, it's a general melee.

Ershad: No. It's General Ershad. Listen Rajiv. What are you doing about those damn flood waters that are causing havoc in my country.

Rajiv (weakly): Oh. I thought that was all water under the bridge. Anyway, we can sort this all out at the next SAARC meeting, can't we?

Ershad: No we can't. Your delegation always blocks any attempt to bring up bilateral matters. NAM is the only place we can waylay you Indians.

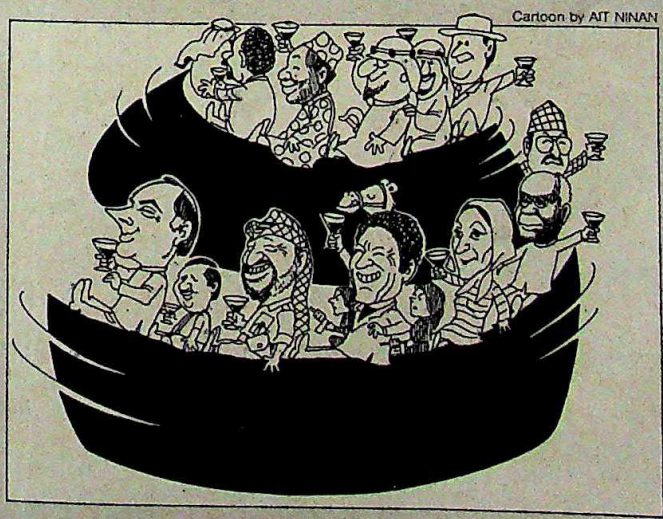
Rajiv: And I thought I was coming here to get away from it all.

Mani: Sir, I've found the safest spot.

Rajiv: Where?

Mani: Next to the king of Bhutan.

Cartoon by AIT NINAN



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WEST BENGAL

Press Protest

● FOR more than a month, the ruling Left Front Government in West Bengal has boycotted Doordarshan and AIR, protesting against its biased coverage. But on August 30, the day of the Bharat Bandh, their attack against the official media backfired.

CPI(M) workers assaulted TV cameraman Sashanka Biswas but some journalists of *The Statesman* and local newspapers too were attacked.

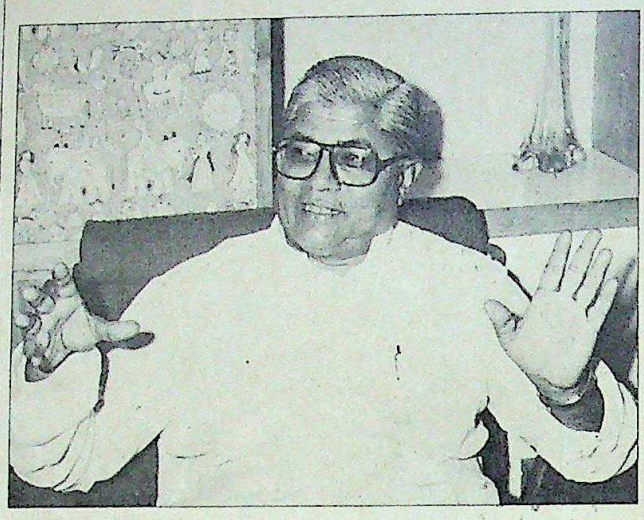
Angry journalists took out a procession against the attack. The Congress(I) expectedly made capital of the event and painted Chief Minister Jyoti Basu has an anti-press ogre. But the fact is that both Basu and Information and Culture Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya had instructed partymen not to harass the press. And after the bandh, Basu said: "Those attacking journalists are enemies of the Left Front."

Bhattacharya: unfairly targetted

There is reason for the state Government's anger. Both Doordarshan and AIR recently refused to accept advertisements for the Bakreshwar Thermal Power Project and appeals for funds. The official media insists it was following guidelines but the state Power Development Corporation has gone to court challenging its refusal. Meanwhile, the CPI(M) passed a resolution in the Assembly asking the Centre to prevent misuse of the official media. That's easier said than done.

GUJARAT

A Reversal of Fortunes



Solanki: losing support

● UNION Minister for Planning Madhavsinh Solanki must be fast realising that politics is like chess. Until recently, he was training his guns on Gujarat Chief Minister Amarsinh Chaudhary. Now, he is at the receiving end.

For with Chaudhary likely to stay on, key Solanki supporters, including Yogendra Makwana, Ahmed Patel, and Narsinh Makwana, have deserted Solanki, preferring to lie low. And rebel MLAs—Jitendra Shah, Digant Oza and Narendra Raval—who guided the "oust-Chaudhary movement" recently met Chaudhary and have since maintained a stoic silence. PCC(I) chief Prabodh Raval has also adopted a neutral stance. Moreover, all attempts by Solanki—who is considered the "Jagannath Mishra of Gujarat"—to convince Rajiv to remove Chaudhary have failed. In Gujarat's urban areas, he is still held responsible for pitting the backward classes against the upper class for political gains. Though he may seem to be losing the game, the wily Solanki can always be trusted to make a surprise move and checkmate his opponents.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Unjust Desserts

● AUGUST 30—the Bharat Bandh day—was the scene of a melee in Andhra Pradesh. It all began when Telugu Desam workers, wanting to gatecrash into the AIR's Cuddapah station, started stoning policemen on duty. The police resorted to a lathicharge and state Agriculture Minister B. Veera Reddy retaliated by abusing and throwing slippers at them. The final straw came when a car belonging to the Bandh supporters hit a policeman, fracturing his right foot.

Furious policemen stormed the Rayalaseema guesthouse in Cuddapah district where Reddy was staying and threatened to shoot him and other Telugu Desam leaders. Just then district SP Tejdeep Pratihast came to the rescue. Snatching a rifle, she threatened to shoot herself if the 60-odd constables did not surrender. Her threat worked. But Reddy, who nursed a grouse against her, demanded the chief minister take action for her "misbehaviour". An inquiry was ordered. A week later, Pratihast had to move to Hyderabad. Her new job: probing atrocities against women.

MADHYA PRADESH

Prison Tales

● IF bandit queen Phoolan Devi has ever lacked for anything, it's certainly not media attention. Several directors have even sought to recreate on celluloid her eventful life and colourful personality. Now, the notorious outlaw of the Chambal ravines, who has been cooling her heels in Gwalior Central Jail for six years, is again in the news. But this time, the media headlines are not of her own making. Phoolan Devi is seriously ill.

However, far from evoking sympathy, her illness has only led to sordid speculation. Some allege that it is the result of her promiscuity. One newspaper went so far as to declare that she had been admitted to a Gwalior hospital for an abortion. Others hinted that she was suffering from AIDS and so was rapidly losing weight.

Phoolan: headlines again

However, a Madhya Pradesh Jail Department spokesman has sought to refute the charges. Said he categorically: "Phoolan neither suffers from AIDS nor did she ever go in for an abortion." Still, many in Madhya Pradesh are reluctant to accept that statement. While they are ready to concede that Phoolan does not suffer from AIDS, they insist that Phoolan Devi has contracted a sexually transmitted disease.

If there is any truth in that, the jail authorities will have to answer one question: how did Phoolan get pregnant or pick up a sexual disease when she was behind bars?

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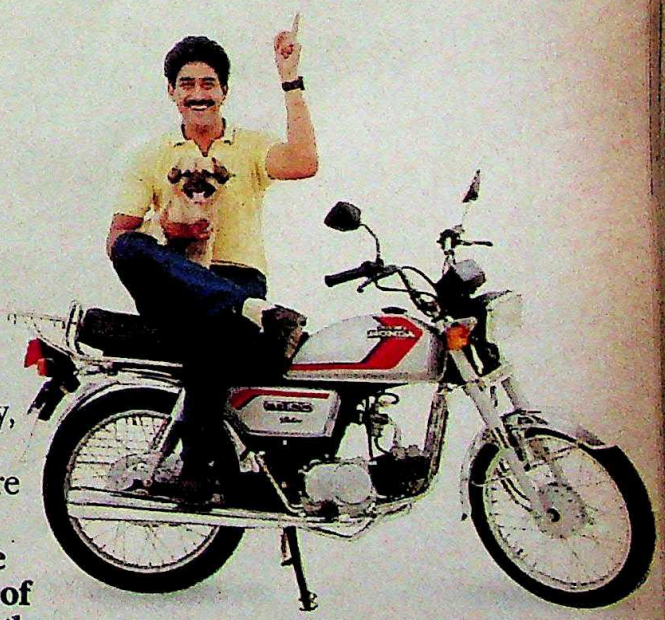

Our favourite performance figure, though, is the lakhs of happy owners. Who make the Hero Honda CD 100 India's largest-selling bike.

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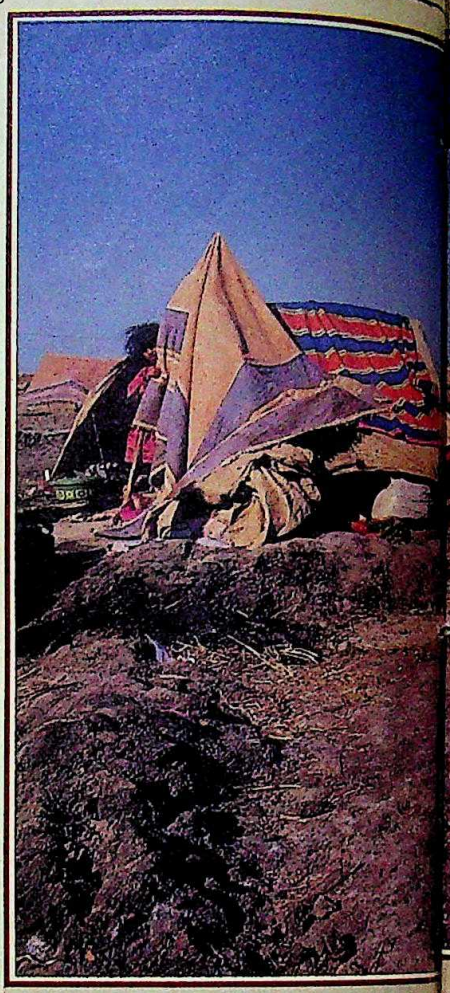
AFGHAN MUJAHEDIN

Chasing a Distant Mirage

The future looks grim for the Mujahedin, as using an effective combination of land mines and air power, the Najib Government has forced them on the defensive.



THE holy war may not have been lost, but its second round has been a disaster for the "believers". After driving out the great Soviet Army in what was, for them, the glorious first round that lasted a full decade, the Afghan Mujahedin are now licking their wounds, unable to dislodge the legacy of Najibullah's Government that the Soviets left behind.

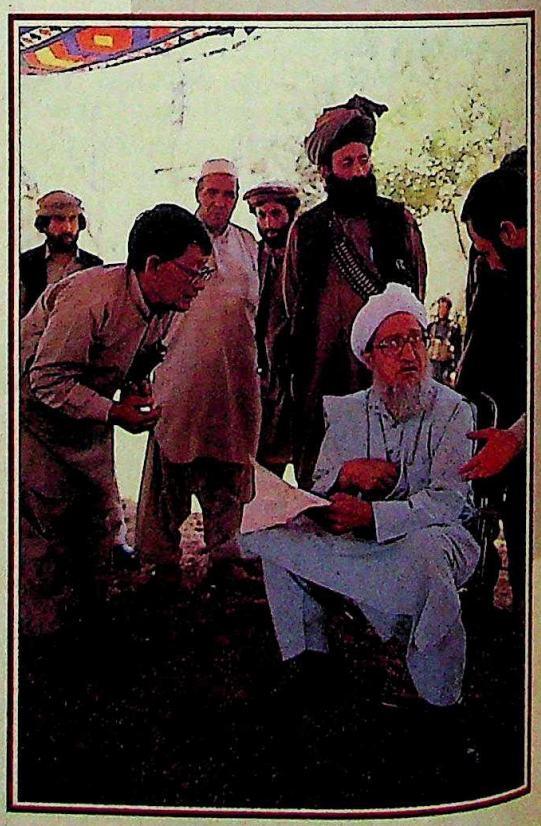
With the advance Mujahedin columns no closer to Jalalabad, Kandahar, Kabul and Herat than they were six months ago when the last Soviet column crossed the Termez bridge on Amu Darya and with winter threatening to set in early, the Mujahedin leaders are finally, if reluctantly, acknowledging defeat for the first time in the *jehad*. "We've tried everything. We just can't make any headway," admitted the leader of a moderate Mujahedin faction. The fundamentalists talk about fighting "till the last drop of our blood", but less and less of victory.

At the "headquarters" of the provisional government of the Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahedin, the mood is grim. The seven-member armed guard still smartly salutes the "president", Professor Mohammed Mojaddadi, as he drives in and out. But the "president" himself is not so sure of the immediate future. He says, his forehead creased with years of fighting and worry: "It may be a long struggle. Much longer than we had thought. But we will win ultimately, *Inshallah*."

Indeed, for the Mujahedin to make a turnaround in the military situation before winter snows block the passes, nothing short of divine intervention is necessary. "It was one thing to fight the Soviets as they moved around the roads and mountains. It's more difficult to dislodge fellow Afghans in stockaded fortresses even if they're *kafirs*," says Mohammed Nazir, 40, a veteran of many battles.

For the record, and to ensure that the supplies of arms and money keep flowing from their backers, the leaders maintain a brave front, promising a shift in battlefield fortunes. But the mood of defeat is reflected in the voices of the very people they claim to be fighting for, the refugees holed up in the many camps that dot Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province.

Nasirbagh on the outskirts of Peshawar is one of the biggest. Although Saudi and western largesse has made it one of the best run refugee camps in the world, it is sprouting new, unauthorised tented extensions every day as fresh refugees pour in. The tents are often no more than a few sheets and rags tied together and their children, with worm-bloated bellies, mill around testifying to their misery. The new settlements are not served by the camp administration. And unlike the older, settled camps, these have a much higher percentage of able-bodied men. The explanation is obvious: the new refugees are disinclined to join the fighting.



So worried have the Mujahedin groups been by this drop in the new refugees' zeal for *jehad* that the camp administrations have been persuaded to issue ration cards to a new family only after its male members enrol with the Mujahedin. But not many join, and those who do often desert. Admitted a Pakistani official running one of the camps: "Now you basically have people driven by Scuds from Najib's side and rockets from the Mujahedin's and with no stake or heart in fighting." Asks Maula Ajeeb,

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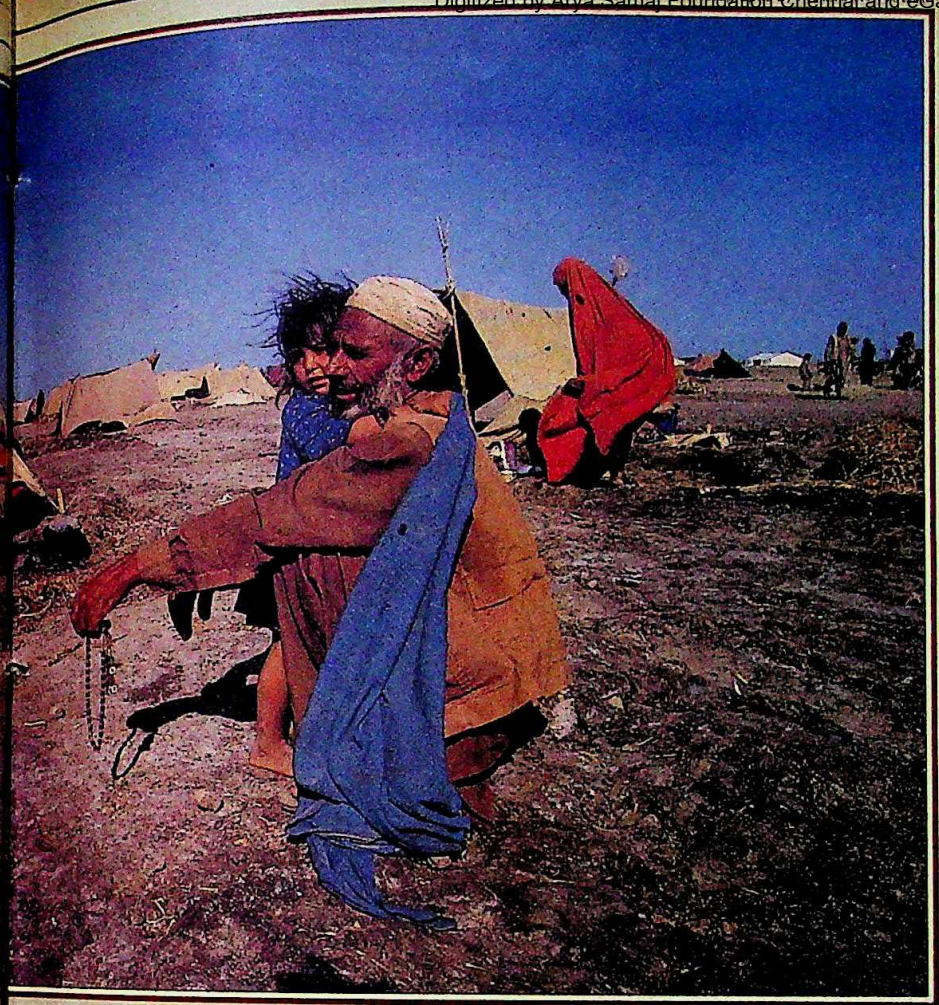
Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR



▲ Khweshki refugee camp
▶ Mine-hit Rahimullah
◀ "President" Mojaddadi

The rebels still talk about fighting "till the last drop of our blood", but less and less of victory.

70: "Who are we fighting for and to what end? If it was indeed a holy war, wouldn't Allah have ensured our victory by now?" Six of his nine grandchildren and both his sons have already been consumed by the *jehad*. No wonder he hides his only remaining grandson like a treasure.

Nowhere is defeat writ larger than on the faces of the men milling on the compound and lying inside the wards of the massive Kuwaiti Red Crescent hospital on the outskirts of Peshawar. This is not your typical field hospital right behind the battle zone: the operation theatres have the latest equipment, each ward has four Hitachi or Sanyo air-conditioners and the surgeons are well-qualified and fired by religious zeal. Some of the best surgeons from the Middle East are working here and the best medical students come here to learn and assist in the holy war. What they learn, however, is limited. A notice in the hospital compound announces a lecture for young doctors every Thursday on five subjects: wounds, infections and dressings; first-aid of severely wounded; catheters and drains; care of shock and trauma and blood transfusion therapy. "We have no time for the ordinary sick. This place is for the Mujahedin," says a Kuwaiti surgeon, instructing guards to keep out malaria and gastroenteritis victims from the refugee camps.

But one thing the hospital does not provide for is sliding morale. "We can fight bombs, rockets, planes, helicopters. But can we fight them all together? Our ammunition comes by horse, theirs by aircraft. How can we win?" complains Khan Malik, 20. Four months ago, he had lost an eye to a stray piece of shrapnel while attacking a government post in Kunar province. After recovering for two months in the hospital he returned to the *jehad* and, in a rare coincidence, lost the second eye as well to shrapnel. He says he will still fight but is not so sure of winning: "We can only win if Allah wants us to."

Others blame not communist cunning or imperialist perfidy for their plight, nor even helicopter gunships or Scud missiles, but that puny but deadly object—the anti-personnel mine which the Afghans just call "personnel". Ward after ward of war casualties with blown up legs testifies to how effectively Najib's army has used the mines.

Rahimullah, 25, had risen quickly in the ranks of Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami, becoming a commandant at 25. His first operation at the head of his command was taking the strategic Kama bridge 5 km from Jalalabad. Everything was going as planned as he led his band of barefooted attackers silently through the dark. Then the earth slipped from under his feet, quite literally. The mine blasted both his legs. Now he stares wistfully at the bandaged stumps of what was once a strong pair of legs and reflects: "If a Kalashnikov hits you, you die. A mine cripples you. I hate mines. We all hate them."

"Ninety per cent of our casualties are

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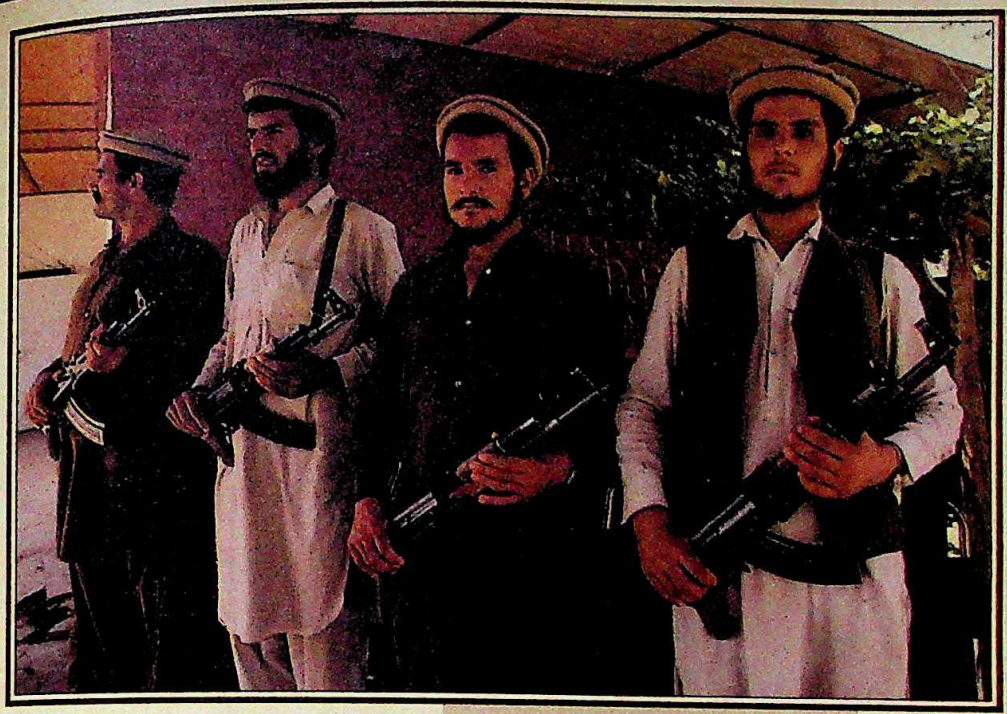

▲ Mujahedin: sagging morale

mine victims," says Dr Mohammed Jasem, the *kaffiyeh*-clad Kuwaiti assistant director of the hospital. Adds Fazli Subhan, his bearded Pakistani assistant: "Mines are Allah's curse on humanity. Why have they been unleashed on his own Mujahedin?"

EXPERTS say the effective use of mines has been the Afghan Government's military masterstroke. Since the army has no real ambitions of extending its zone of control beyond the cities it has heavily mined all approaches to them. Generous Soviet supplies of smaller, lighter and more lethal mines have helped. Millions of these have been scattered from low-flying helicopters around government posts and major towns. They come in the most unexpected shapes: leaves, butterflies, even dolls. Says Esa Mohammed, who lost his right leg to the dreaded "personnel" in Kunduz: "There are so many of them. You could spend the rest of your life clearing them or risk sprinting across and ending up here."

Militarily, Najib's tactics have been extremely effective as is apparent from its success in Jalalabad. The deadly mines have been aided by a combination of long-range Scud missiles fired from Kabul and high-altitude bombing. "Earlier we could deter the communist bombers with our Stingers. Now they're so high you can barely see them," complains Abdul Aziz, just back from the battlefront to spend a week with his family in the sprawling Khweshki refugee camp around 60 km from Peshawar.

For the first time, rebels are wondering if negotiation is not a better alternative to fighting the Afghan Army.

Learning from the example in innovation set by the Indian Air Force in the 1971 war with Pakistan, the Afghan Government has modified its four-engined AN-12 transports for high-altitude bombing. They have fitted the cargo cabin with rails for the bombs which are dropped from altitudes higher than 30,000 ft. The bombing is seldom accurate but each AN-12 carries 10 tonnes of explosives and combined with the Scuds keeps the Mujahedin heads down. Says a western military expert: "Najib knows if combat ever became close the Mujahedin will win against his conscripts. So he has chosen deterrence: expensive but effective."

So effective, in fact, that for the first time in a decade several Mujahedin leaders are wondering if negotiation is not a better alternative to banging their heads against the Afghan Army's defences. But such talk does not please the fundamentalists. The differences have spilled into the Mujahedin's own side of the battlefield with several groups turning their gun-barrels at one another. Last month, Hekmatyar's followers killed over 30 followers of Ahmed Shah Masoud, the legendary commander of Panjshir valley belonging to the Burhanuddin Rabbani group. "Just when Masoud should be rallying his men to hit the convoys bringing in supplies from Russia to stock up Kabul for the winter he is chasing Hekmatyar's bands for revenge," rues a senior US official.

The current predicament has led to introspection among Mujahedin ideologues who now feel it was short-sighted to have gone in for an all-out war against Najib without first sorting out problems among Mujahedin ranks. "It's one thing to talk of an Islamic government, but what kind of Islamic government were we promising? Was there a charter? An agenda? A leader to project? A slogan other than *Allho Akbar?*" asks a former Kabul University professor. "These are the reasons why you still have Najib in Kabul," says Haji Saeed Doud, the articulate head of the Afghan Mujahedin Research Centre, a US-funded information organisation dealing mainly with the visiting foreign press.

With the Mujahedin themselves so unsure, it is hardly surprising that even their US and Pakistani handlers are harbouring doubts. The divide in the US Embassy in Islamabad between the hard and softliners has often been documented lately by the US press. The Mujahedin's discomfiture is, in fact, helping Benazir Bhutto make a departure from Zia's Afghan policy. "Where are those who were dreaming of saying their *namaaz* in Tashkent? Can they safely visit even Peshawar now?" asks Salman Taseer, leader of Benazir's party in Punjab. If the conviction in his arguments is any reflection of the mood of Benazir's Government, the Mujahedin could indeed be left with no choice other than to talk. With a stout enemy in front and wavering allies in the rear, military victory now seems a distant mirage.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Peshawar

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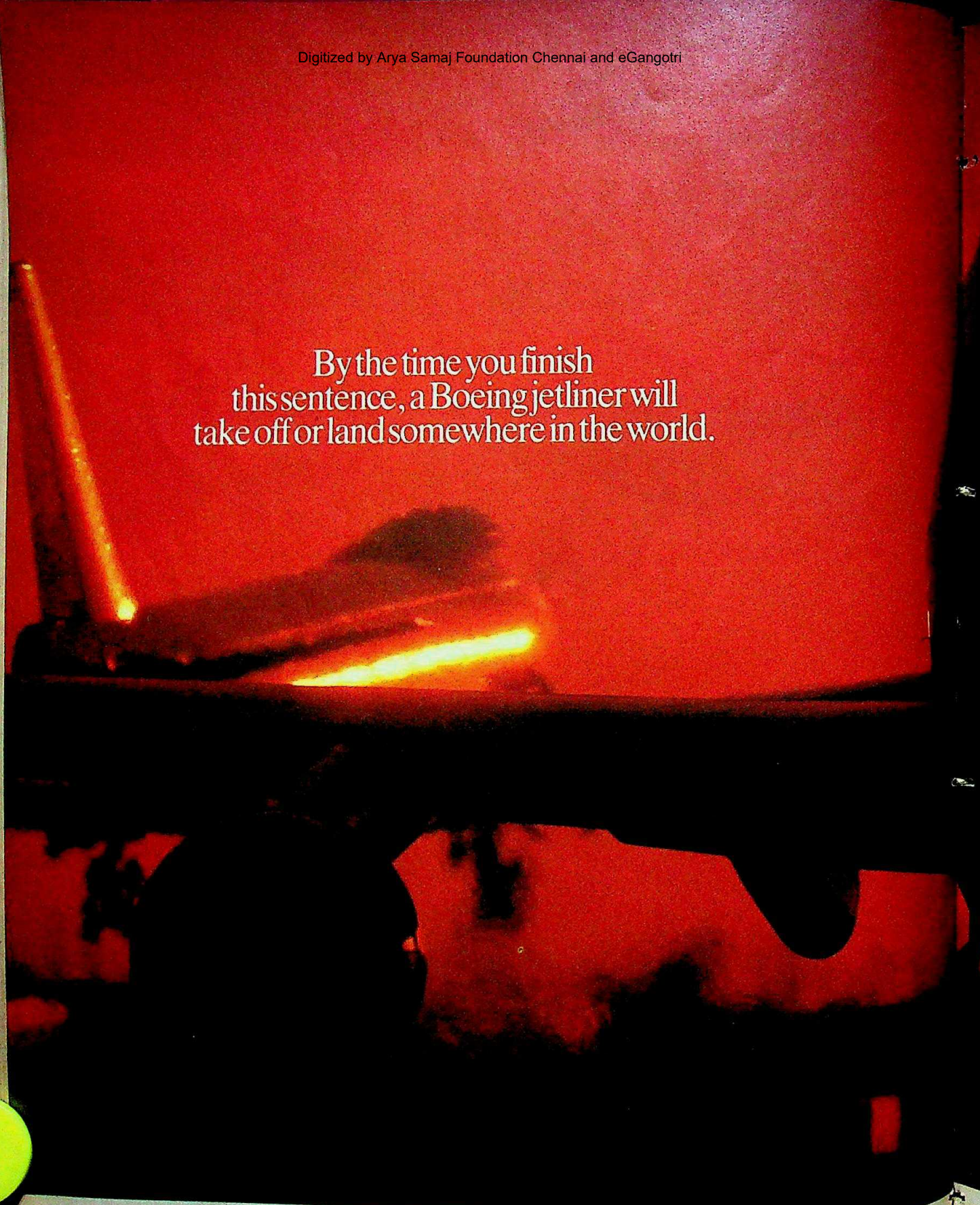

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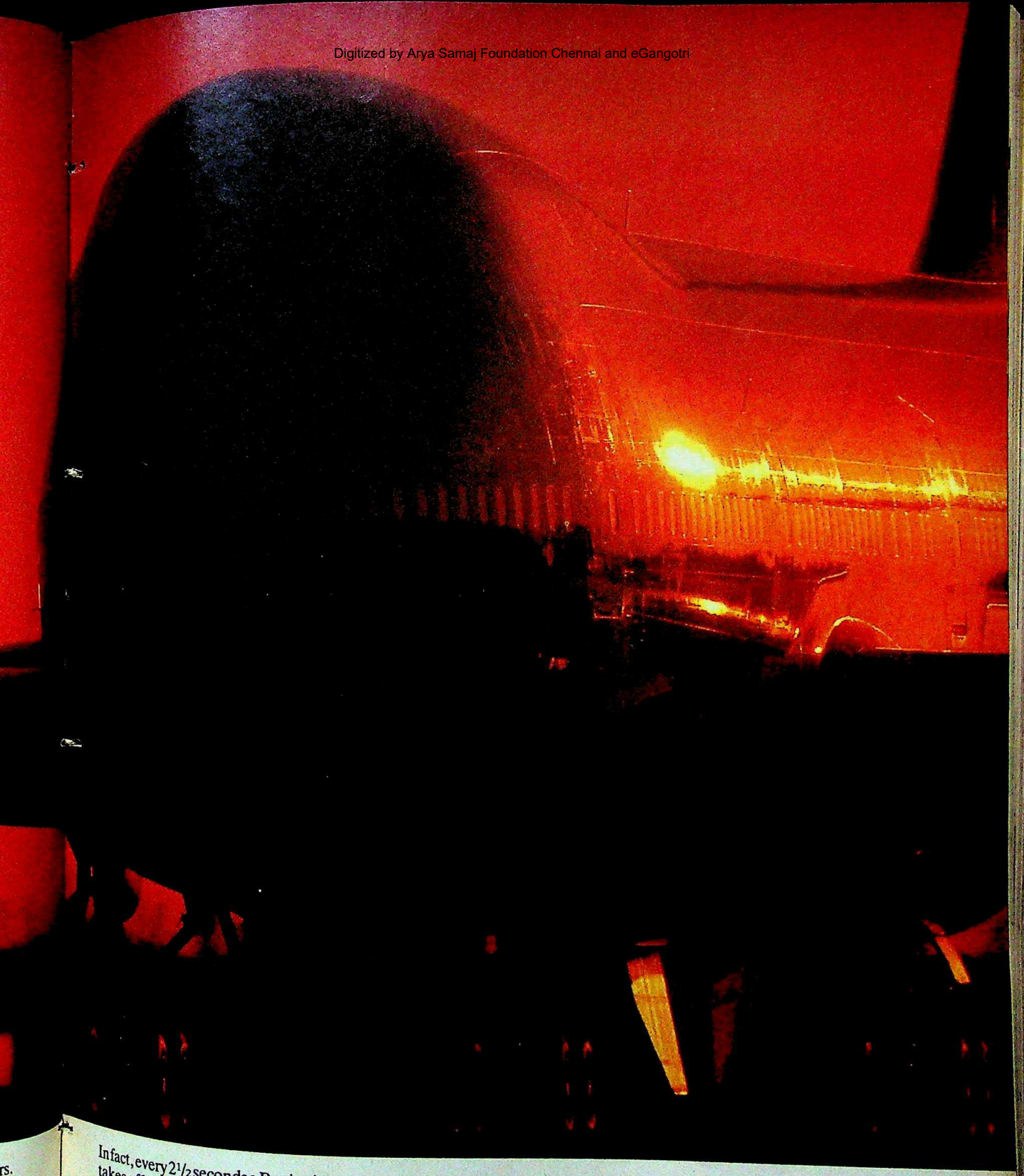

In fact, every 2½ seconds a Boeing jet takes off or lands somewhere on earth.

Boeing. We don't just deliver a lot of airplanes. We deliver a lot of people.

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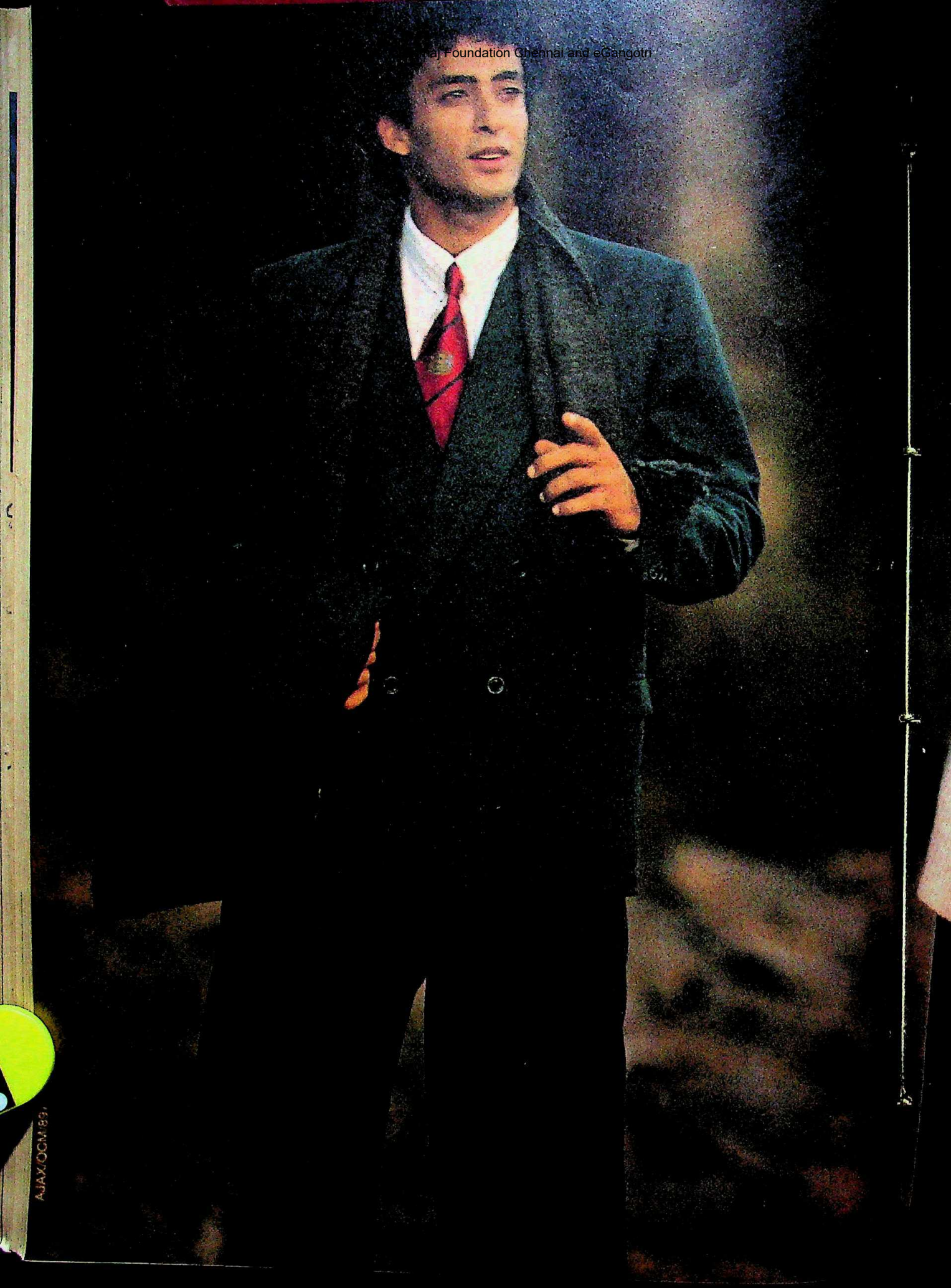

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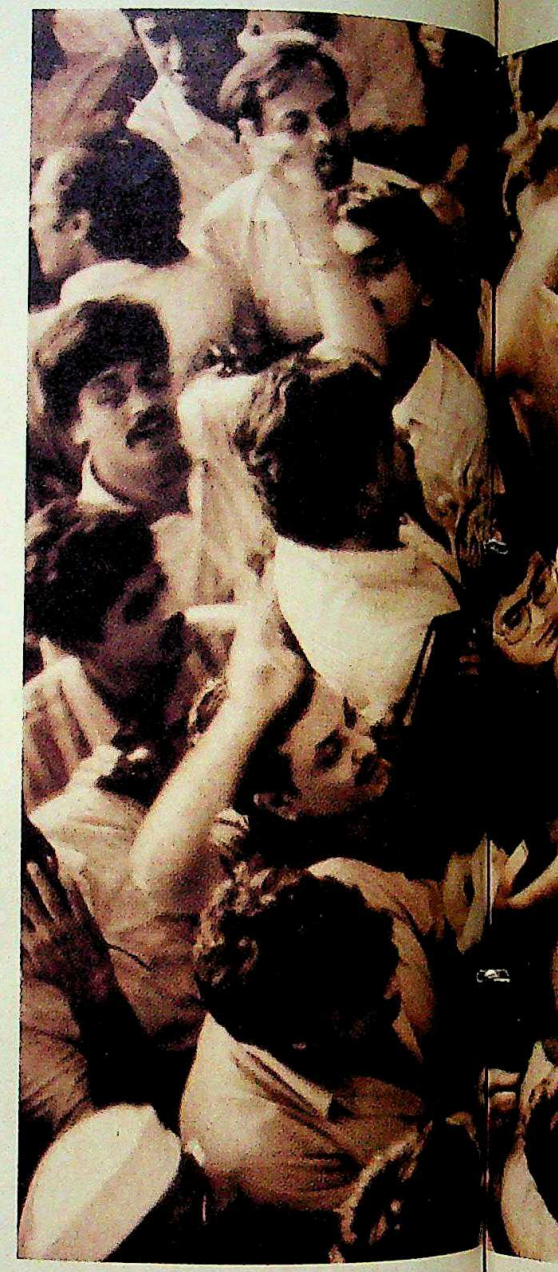
Another Quiet Day For Voltas At The Stock Exchange.



The Voltas share is, today, a star performer on the stock market.

And with very good reason, too.

Turnover is up. Profits are up. Reserves are up. An unbroken dividend

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y, a star
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dividend

record continues. New projects are getting off the ground. And the future looks more bullish than ever before.

All of this is testimony to the soundness of Voltas' master plan for growth. A master plan that has helped insulate the company against the vagaries of business cycles by making it India's most widely diversified company, handling over 800 product lines.

Some 80% of Voltas' 75,000 shar holders have never, ever, sold their holding in the company. And th company has rewarded that faith.

VOLTAS LIMITED The Results Are Showing

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FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Money Muscle

By funnelling scarce capital resources into the private sector, the country's four premier financial institutions—the Industrial Development Bank of India, the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India, the Unit Trust of India and the Life Insurance Corporation—have helped spur industrial growth. But in recent times they've been accused of succumbing to political pressure to unseat company managements and take sides in take-over battles.

ON the stage of Indian business, they've long sat in the wings. But in recent months, they've been moving centre stage and into the harsh glare of the spotlight. And like it or not, the country's premier financial institutions—the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI), the Unit Trust of India (UTI), the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI)—are finding themselves in the thick of controversy.

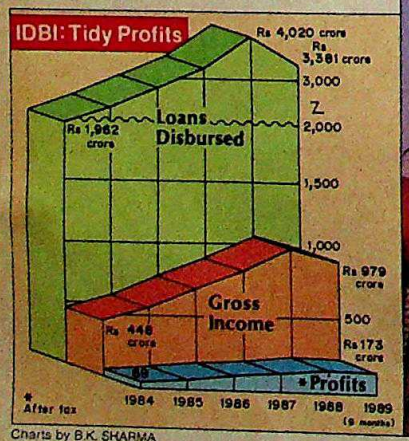
Long after the Swraj Paul raid on Escorts and DCM, the role of the institutions is again being debated, thanks to the take-over of Larsen & Toubro (L&T). The institutions held the controlling stake in the professionally-managed company. But the Ambanis acquired a 12 per cent stake and were allowed to take over. Says an institutional source: "Dhirubhai Ambani asked his friends in Delhi to speak to the institutions and the company fell into his lap."

L&T is not the only professionally-managed company the institutions have handed over to big business. Several months ago, they tacitly blessed liquor baron Vijay Mallya's bid for the Madras-based Best & Crompton.

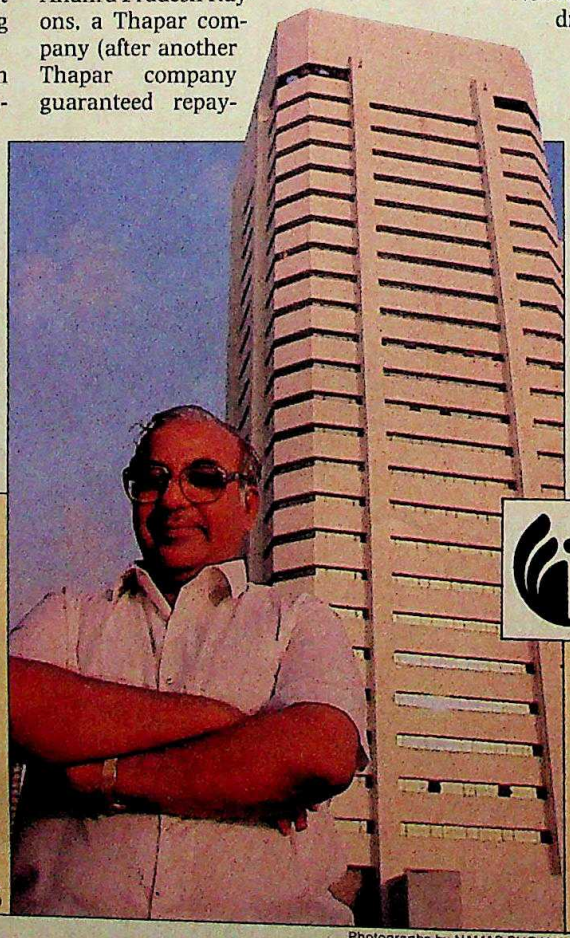
Nor have the institutions been consistent. They supported Manu Chhabria in the Shaw Wallace take-over, and opposed him in Gammon India. They waived Rs 21 crore in interest owed by the once ailing Andhra Pradesh Rayons, a Thapar company (after another Thapar company guaranteed repayment of its liabilities), but have sat tight on a similar request from Punalur Paper Mills. They've even emerged as arbiters in business family disputes (the Modi dispute, for instance).

In defence, the chiefs of the financial institutions say there can never be broad guidelines and that everything is decided on a "case-by-case basis".

Nonetheless, these controversies have drawn attention to the enormous power the financial institutions wield—and lent support to the suspicion that they are often only political tools. Says an institutional source: "We don't have a formal reporting system, but invariably work closely with the Finance Ministry." And it's New Delhi that calls the shots. At least one of the chairmen of these financial agencies is disconcerted by the institutional intervention in family disputes. "Everything has been done at the



Charts by B.K. SHARMA



Photographs by NAMAS BHOJANI

With over Rs 3,000 crore of loan funds at his disposal every year, IDBI chief Nadkarni is courted by the corporate world.

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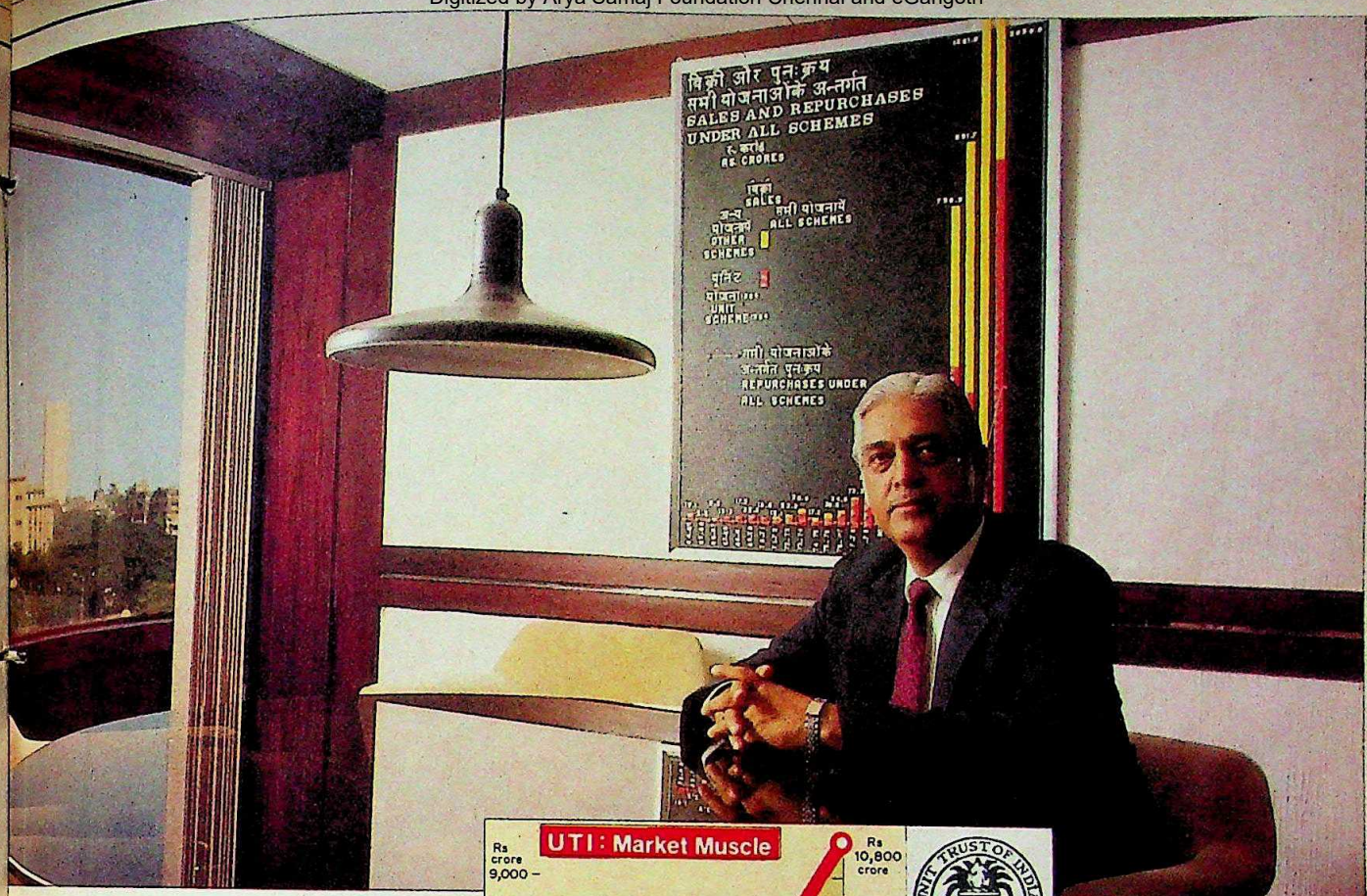

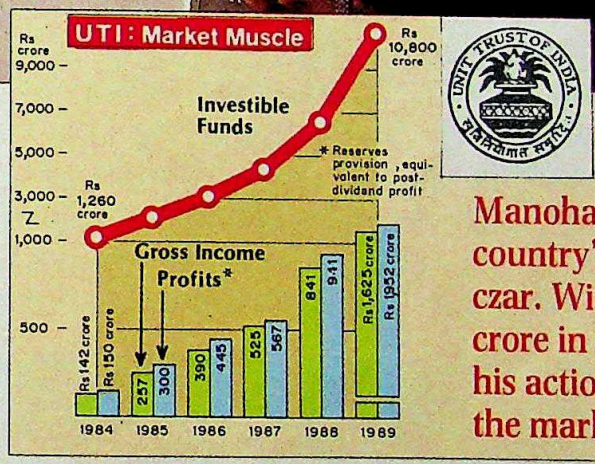

UTI Chairman Manohar Pherwani is the country's stock-market czar. With Rs 11,000 crore in investible funds, his actions determine the market mood.

instance of the Government. It will hurt the institutions," says he.

Most heads of institutions decline to talk on specific cases. But IDBI Chairman Suresh Nadkarni, 55, insists that while there are pressures from New Delhi he doesn't bow to them. "It depends on the chief executive," he says. "If he is willing to be pushed, then the organisation suffers. I refuse to be pushed."

All these institutions were set up in the early '60s, except ICICI (1955). Their goals differed. IDBI and ICICI were meant to channel funds to industry and foster industrial growth. On the other hand, UTI was supposed to invest the savings of unit holders. And LIC is an insurance and investment concern.

The heads of these institutions—Narayanan Vaghul (ICICI), Manohar Jethanand Pherwani (UTI), Narayan Krishnarao Shinkar (LIC) and IDBI's Nadkarni,—form a powerful quartet. There are other institutions too, like the Industrial Finance Corporation of India, headed by the publicity-shy D.N. Davar. But the quartet heads the biggest institutions. Together, they pack more financial power than J.R.D. Tata and all the Birlas put together.

Their power is reflected in the money they disburse. During the last nine months alone, IDBI and ICICI disbursed loans totalling Rs 4,469 crore. That's not very far from the yearly sales of all the Birla companies. And they've made tidy profits too—Rs 178 crore post-tax (IDBI), and Rs 79 crore (ICICI) during the last nine-month financial year (*see charts*).

The institutions also own substantial chunks of the equity of private concerns. Few know how much, but assessments run to over 50 per cent of the corporate sector's equity. In theory, their heads have the power to make or mar corporate fortunes, and pitch industrialists into or out of the driver's seat in companies.

Chief ministers approach them for loans for their industrial development corporations. Industrialists queue up to meet them. Among those who drop in on Nadkarni, for instance, are K.K. Birla, Aditya Birla, the bosses of several Tata firms and RPG Enterprises Chairman Harsh Goenka. Says Goenka: "I pay Nadkarni a courtesy call every month."

The institutions first attracted controversy in the early '80s with Paul's raid on Escorts and DCM. The financial institutions, which then owned the controlling stake in Escorts, backed Paul's bid for the company. But Escorts Chairman H.P. Nanda went to court and after a messy battle the institutions retreated in 1986. Says Nanda: "The institutions are supposed to be autonomous but in several cases they have followed orders from the top." A retired institution chief confirms the charge: "The decisions are political. Orders come from the Finance Ministry and we implement them."

The institutions' power is derived from the convertibility clause of their loan

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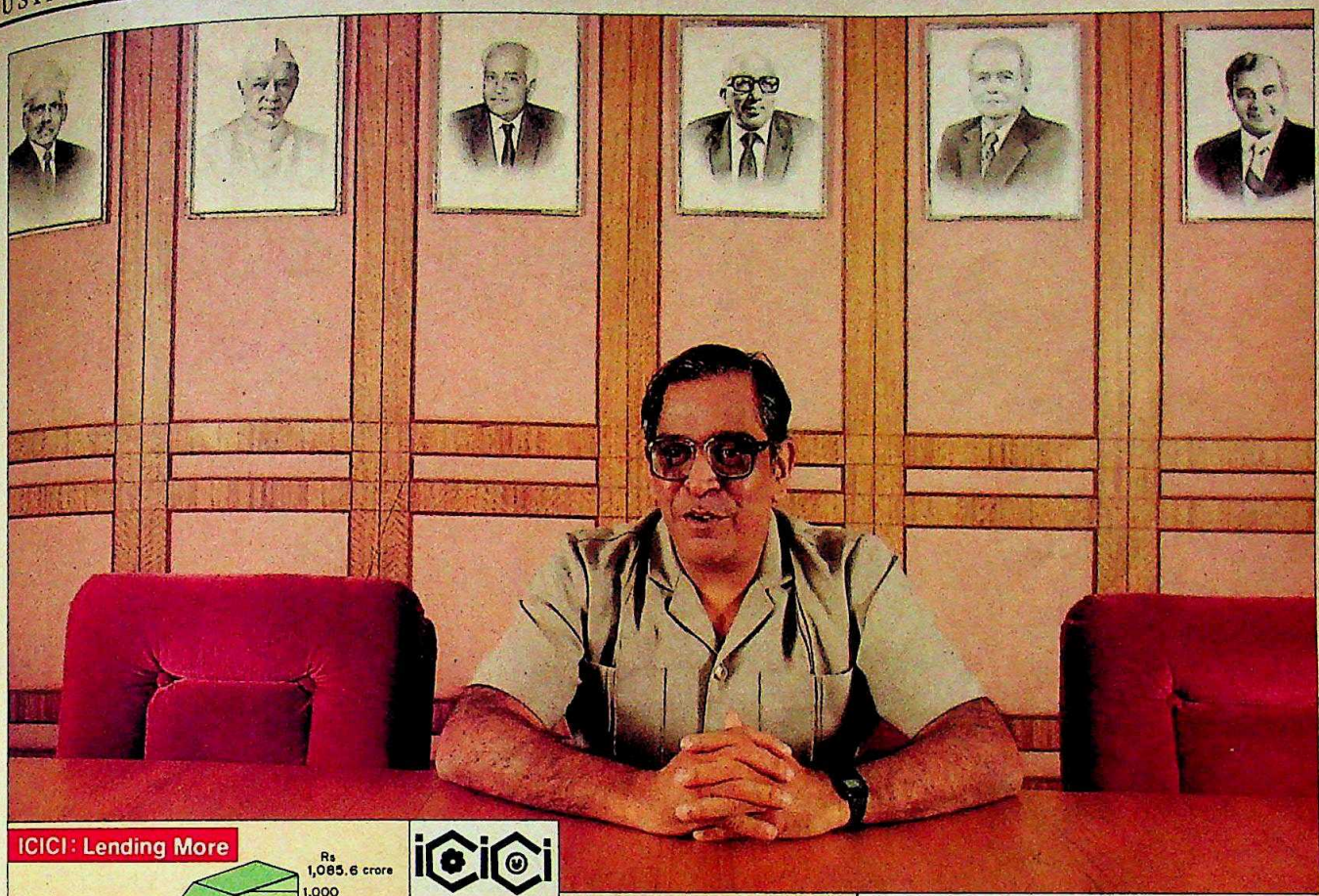

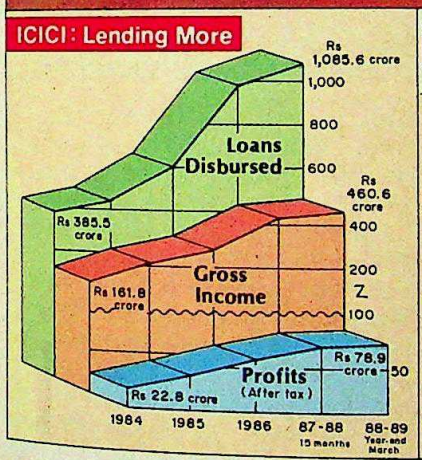

As ICICI chairman, Narayanan Vaghul has proved an innovator. In his brief tenure he has successfully floated a string of new institutions.

agreements, which permits conversion of their loans to companies into equity. After the Escorts case, companies have had second thoughts about institutional loans. DCM Toyota, for instance, chose to issue debentures in 1985. More recently, Calcutta-based businessman B.M. Khaitan split MacNeil & Magor into smaller firms and asked for separate small loans. Reason: the convertibility clause does not apply to loans less than Rs 5 crore.

The clause certainly arouses ire in industry. The institutions maintain it was introduced because businessmen got relatively soft loans, and the equity was a means of compensating the financial agencies. But several businessmen see it differently. Industrialist Y.K. Modi says: "Shareholders put in money without interest. The financial institutions lend money, get interest and get a share of the profits also upon conversion."

Many also argue that once a company becomes profitable, the institutions should sell their shares and invest in new ventures. H.T. Parekh, a former ICICI chairman, says the institutions should take a long-term view of returns and should be prepared to risk funds in new areas of growth. "They have a developmental role to play," he says.

In all fairness, they have played that role. Says Nanda: "The development banks helped people like me who didn't want to go to the commercial banks because they were then controlled by the large business groups."

Today, they're certainly playing a more innovative role too. Some of the credit for that goes to ICICI's Vaghul, 53. In his brief tenure, Vaghul has successfully floated a string of new institutions—the Shipping Credit and Investment Corporation of India to replace a similar defunct body, the Credit Rating and Information Services of India Ltd (CRISIL) for credit rating activities, the Technology Development and Information Corporation of India for venture capital funding. And his report on money and finance has helped liberalise the country's money markets.

IDBI on the other hand hasn't been much of an innovator. It has set up the Small Industrial Development Bank of India to cater to the small sector. But the major source of revenue is still conventional lending operations.

Among the financial institutions, UTI boasts the most spectacular growth, most of it under Pherwani, 56, the undisputed czar of the stock-markets. At 11 a.m. each working day, he and his senior staff decide what shares UTI will buy or sell. Minutes before trading begins at the Bombay Stock Exchange at noon, their decisions are conveyed to some of the 60 stockbrokers with whom the 1200-employee UTI deals.

Those decisions will probably decide which way the markets move. For UTI's investible funds now amount to Rs 10,800 crore, up from Rs 2,200 crore five years ago, at the beginning of Pherwani's tenure. And gross annual

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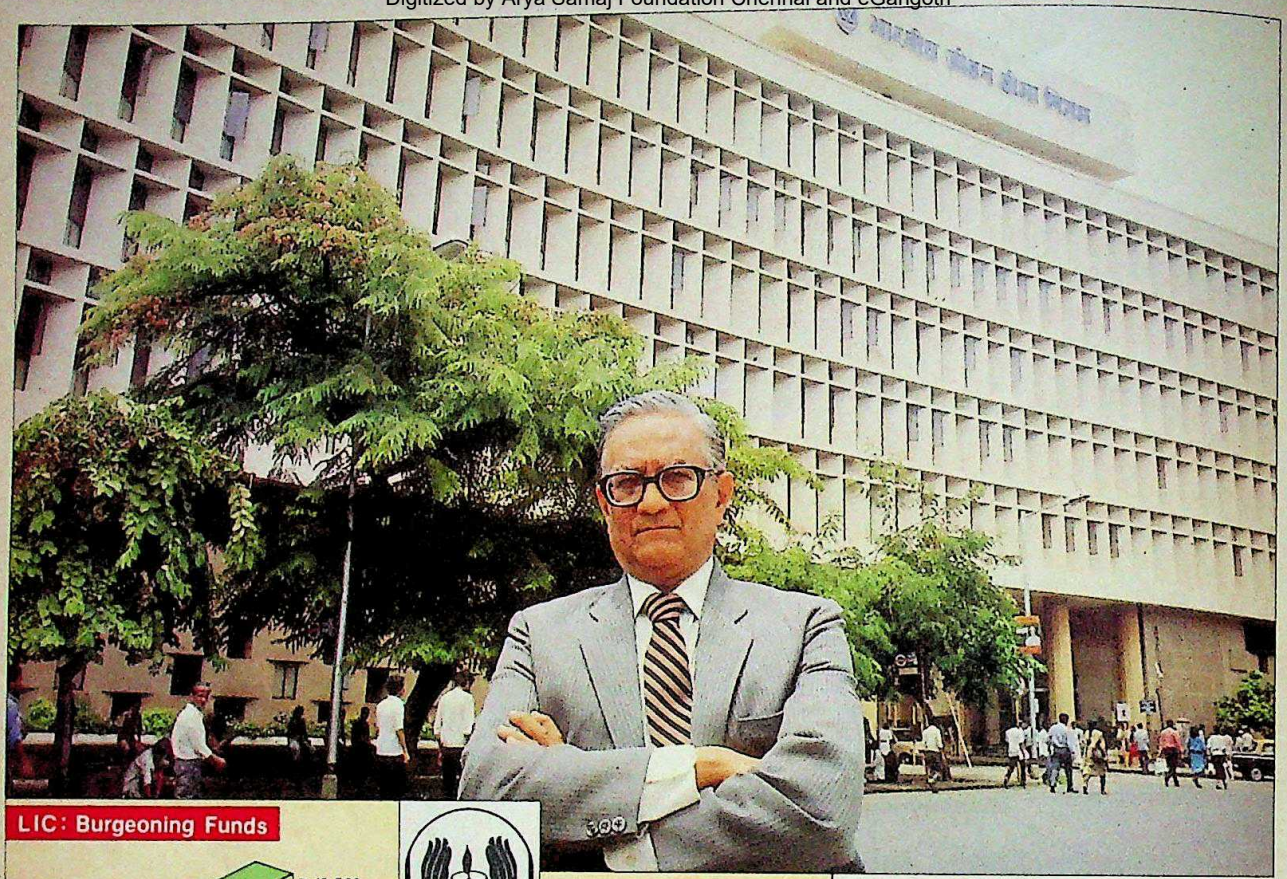

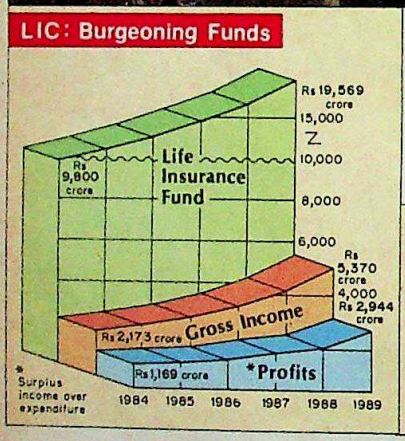

LIC Chairman Shinkar is trying to improve his organisation's poor image. He has also launched a mutual fund and an overseas venture.

income over the same period has shot up from Rs 142 crore to Rs 1,625 crore.

Pherwani succeeded G.S. Patel in 1984 at a favourable juncture—when UTI's financial position was sound and the stock-markets were about to boom. But he has also set up two international funds—the India Fund registered in London and the India Growth Fund in New York—and launched a new domestic mutual fund, Mastershare.

But though his primary responsibility is to get the best return for his investors, the onus of maintaining stability in the stock-markets also falls on him. Pherwani has successfully walked the tightrope. UTI has consistently outperformed the equity indices. For instance, the net asset value of Mastershare rose 124 per cent between December 1986 and June 1989 while *The Economic Times* share price index rose only 68 per cent. But now the monopoly UTI has long enjoyed is being eroded. Several banks—Canara and State Bank, among others—have floated mutual funds. And the sweeping tax benefits it enjoys may not last for ever. Reserve Bank Governor R.N. Malhotra hinted as much when he said recently that there should be a level playing field for all.

Right now, it's hardly that. Shinkar, 58, of LIC, for instance, says "his hands are tied". The 75,000-employee organisation has investible funds of Rs 3,000 crore a year. But about 85 per cent of it has to be invested in government-approved programmes with poor yields. Only about Rs 300 crore a year is freely available for investment.

Worse, LIC is viewed as a bureaucratic giant that has failed to respond to market needs. The returns on policies are negligible. And it's been accused of being dilatory in settling claims.

Now there are signs that the giant is stirring. This July, it launched a mutual fund. It also set up an insurance outlet in Bahrain. And the number of outstanding claims as a proportion of total claims has come down from 11 per cent in 1986 to 4.99 per cent. The accent is on service. Says Shinkar: "LIC is a marketing organisation. We approach people for business, not the other way round."

LIC is not the only institution that has come in for flak. Small industrialists complain about the lengthy appraisal procedures of IDBI and ICICI. And UTI is accused of artificially propping up the market. Says one stockbroker: "The market cannot be on a permanent high, some corrections are necessary. But each time the markets go down, his institutions go on a buying spree."

Certainly, the four institution chiefs have a tough job. Succumb to pressure and the institutions are compromised. Disregard it and your job is on the line. One retired institution chief described the dilemma accurately: "A circus acrobat would be perfect for the job. But he would have to be a banker too."

—S.N. VASUKI with bureau reports

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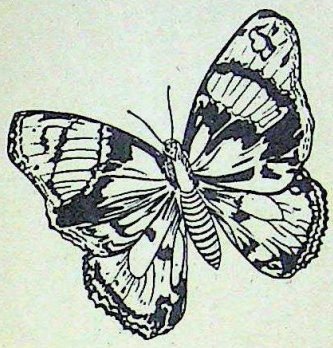

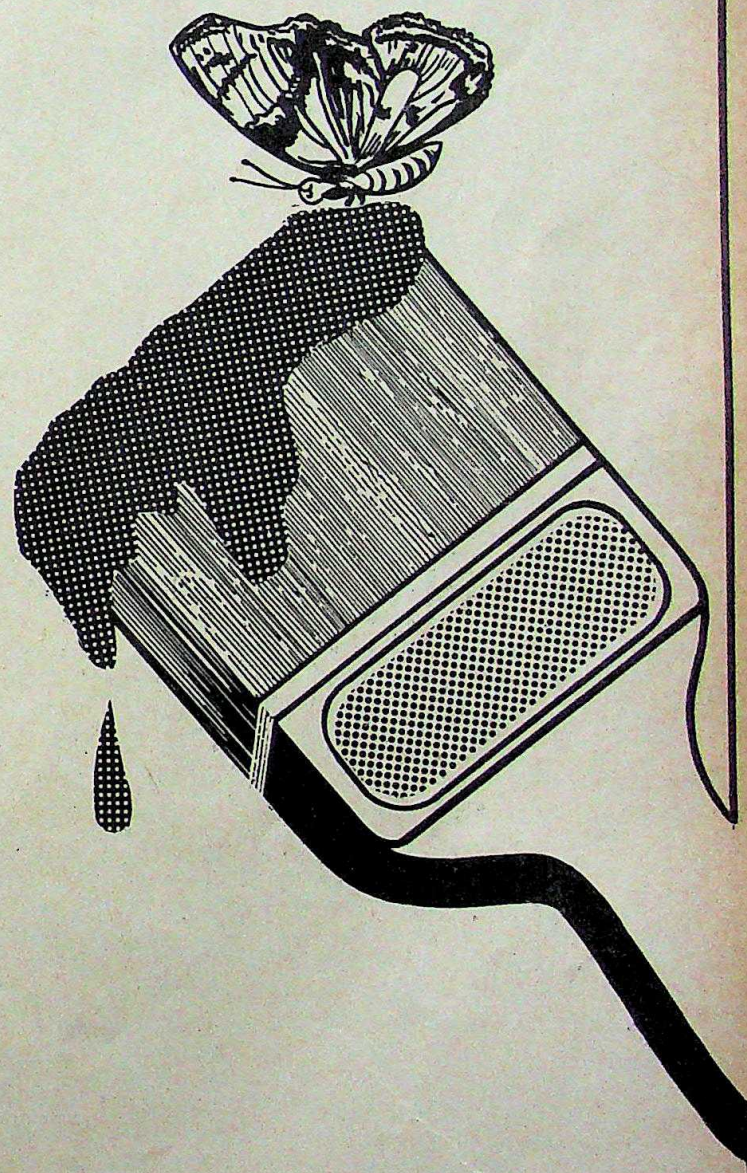

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MARKETING REPLICAS

VINTAGE cars have been sporadically exported for years, but the State Trading Corporation (STC) is now entering the act—in a manner of speaking. STC plans on promoting the export of, not vintage cars, but imitation vintage cars. The public sector company has already identified a small Indore-based firm, Barwani Replicar Motors, to supply imitations of the real thing, and is on the look-out for more suppliers. The move is a fall-out of STC Chairman Bhupinder Singh's recent visit to the US and West Germany where a market exists for vintage car replicas. A car which is more than 45 years old can cost anything in the region of $200,000 (Rs 33 lakh). But an imitation vintage car made of the stripped parts of cars and jeeps is priced at under $30,000 (Rs 5 lakh)—within reach of aficionados who can't afford the real thing. Whether STC's latest export drive gets into high gear remains to be seen.

BACK IN THE RACE

CITIBANK is back in the race to acquire Diner's Club, the market leader in the credit card business. Earlier, it had pulled out when the State Bank of India (SBI) expressed interest in acquiring the credit card company. A few months ago, SBI had made an informal offer to the Aggarwals who run Diner's, but the price fell short of their expectations and the deal failed to materialise. So now Citibank is once again in the reckoning. Apart from Citibank, several other banks are believed to be in the running for Diner's. Still, it's unlikely that a quick sale will take place: it may take up to a year before any deal is struck.

BIG TIME

AFTER coming out in rapid succession with a dazzling range of watches, the Bangalore-based Titan is going very, very upscale—watches priced at an incredible Rs 40,000. In comparison, the most expensive Titan watch today costs just Rs 1,700. Over the next six months, the Tata company will begin its move upmarket by launching watches in the Rs 2,000 to Rs 5,000 watch range. But the most expensive watches will come later. And what will a buyer get for Rs 40,000? The details have still to be worked out, but in all probability it will be a gold watch, studded with gems. The gambit is to sell watches as a life-style item rather than just as an instrument that tells the time. At the other end of the scale, Titan is introducing plastic watches.

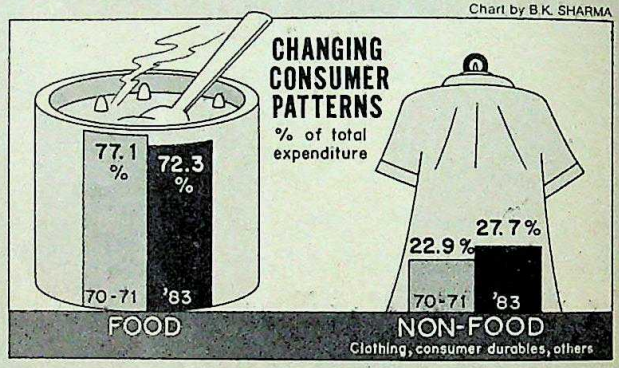
HARDLY TAXING

QUITE some time ago, the taxman had served show-cause notices on a lot of companies alleging that they had evaded huge amounts of excise duty. The Tax Department has now started dropping some of these cases. And in other cases it has lowered its stiff demands. In two separate orders, one in April and the other last month, the Government has dropped all charges that Kelvinator of India had evaded Rs 32 crore in taxes. In another development, Fedders Lloyd, which faced additional tax demands of Rs 19 crore, will now have to cough up a far lower amount—Rs 1 crore. The third case involved the Delhi beautician Shahnaz Hussain. In 1987, Hussain had been accused of exporting cosmetics under the garb of ayurvedic medicines and was served with tax notices for Rs 3 lakh. But that demand has now been scaled down to just Rs 5,000. Evidently, all the Tax Department's allegations were unfounded and the tax demands were grossly inflated.

CONSUMER CULTURE

THE Planning Commission has confirmed what some have suspected: consumerism is deep-rooted and not confined to the middle class. Drawing on National Sample Survey data on expenditure by people from the bottom 40 per cent of the population, a Planning Commission report

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



says that incomes have gone up, and that while food is still important, its once pre-eminent position in the hierarchy of priorities is giving way to non-food consumer goods (*see chart*). Indeed, lower income groups—which the report defines as those earning less than Rs 18,000 a year—accounted for 61 per cent of all the consumer goods bought in 1986. What is more, the popular perception that consumerism is affecting the savings rate may not be true. The study says that household savings as a percentage of total savings in the economy have steadily increased from 68 per cent in the '60s, to 75 per cent in the '80s. If the overall savings rate has remained stagnant, it's because of the drop in the public sector's savings and the near-stagnation in the corporate sector's savings. In other words, people can continue spending on consumer goods without feeling guilty about upsetting the economy.

SOVIET ADVERTISING

INDIAN companies have flocked to the Soviet Union to set up a host of joint ventures in areas ranging from hotels and soft drinks to engineering items. Now, the Soviets are scouting for an Indian partner who'll set up an advertising agency in the USSR, with the Soviets holding 51 per cent of the equity. The new agency is meant to advertise Soviet products in India, as well as the wares of Indian joint ventures and exporters in the Soviet Union. The proposal is still at a preliminary stage, but at least one leading Indian advertising agency is said to be seriously interested in it.

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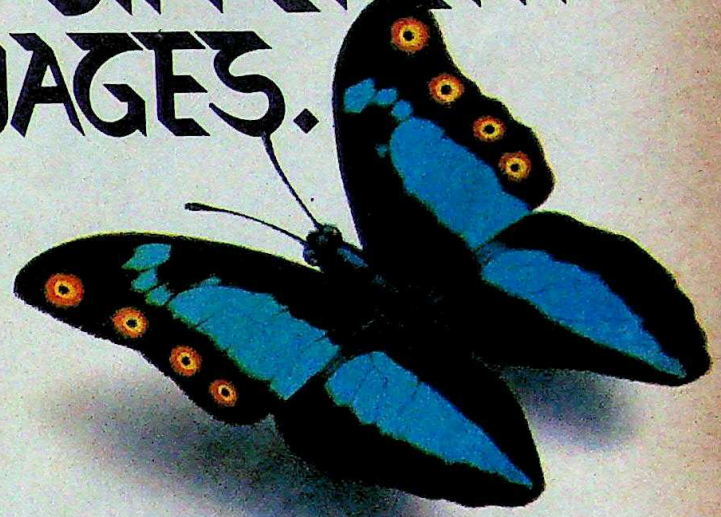

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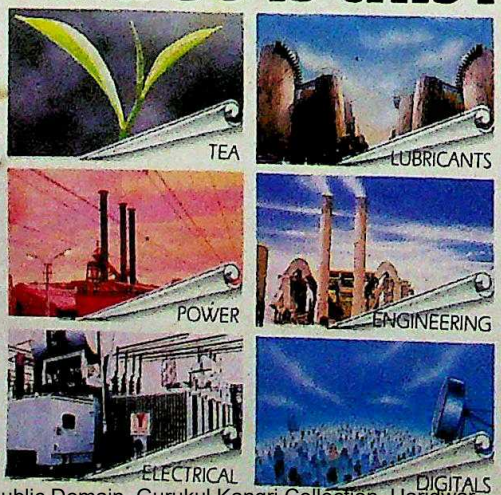

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MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA

Stepping on the Gas

The automotive giant is on an expansion drive

GATEWAY Building, the three-storeyed headquarters of Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd (M&M), is neatly tucked away from public sight behind the Royal Bombay Yacht Club. Not unlike its physical location, the Rs 992-crore M&M has done little to attract public attention.

Mahindra & Mahindra is moving on to the fast track. Two new vehicles are to be launched in the next two years.

NAMAS BHOJANI

Keshub Mahindra; and pick-up truck

But in a series of deftly orchestrated moves that have taken many by surprise, the once-sleepy automotive giant has now stepped out into the corporate sunlight. Says Chairman Keshub Mahindra, 66: "M&M's objective is to be the leading multi-disciplined engineering and multi-product company in the nation's priority industries." So, M&M is busily planning a foray into pick-up trucks and five-door station wagons. On the anvil too are an upgraded engine for its jeeps and perhaps for the pick-up, and a programme to modernise its tractor and automotive division. The price-tag for all this: between Rs 350 crore and Rs 400 crore, over the next five years. To part finance the expansion, M&M will issue, on a rights basis, convertible debentures and an innovative financing instrument—zero-interest bonds which will later be converted into equity. Total value: Rs 91.78 crore.

These moves top a spate of take-overs and diversifications. This month, M&M closed a deal with the Calcutta-based Guest Keen Williams Ltd (GKW) for its automotive pressing unit at Kanhe near Pune. Price: about Rs 30 crore. Last February, M&M acquired a controlling stake of 26 per cent in the ailing light commercial vehicle (LCV) manufacturer Allwyn Nissan for Rs 5.10 crore.

Last year, M&M also branched out into the oil business by buying an offshore drilling rig for $10.75 million (Rs 17.7 crore). Finally, it has formed a new company, Mahindra British Telecom, in collaboration with British Telecom to provide telecommunication services to Indian industry.

The most exciting development, however, is the plan to introduce two new vehicles. The first, a station wagon built around the chassis of an M&M jeep using dies manufactured by the Japanese Fuji Tools and Dies Co Ltd, is expected to roll off the production lines in the third quarter of 1990. And a 2,500 cc engine pick-up vehicle, in collaboration with Automobile Peugeot of France, is slated to hit the roads in late 1991.

There has also been some talk that M&M is negotiating with more than one US automobile giant on an undisclosed venture. In town recently was a team from Chrysler Corporation. Says M&M Managing Director B.R. Sule: "Till now Chrysler was concentrating on the north American market. They are now looking to go overseas. Our negotiations are at a very preliminary stage." And Mahindra says enigmatically: "We are negotiating with lots of people, for lots of things."

While these moves are in step with M&M's mainline automobile business, its forays into telecommunications and oil are not. Is there any synergy in all this? "There most certainly is," says Mahindra. "Very simply put, the synergy is high technology." But high technology is not the only reason for expanding. Explains Sule: "Having consolidated ourselves in the automotive and tractors market, we wanted to diversify in other non-related areas, so that we would not be subjected to the cyclical pressures of a single industry."

Also, the acquisition route for expansion and diversification makes eminent sense. Argues R.K. "Pit" Pitamber, M&M's flamboyant deputy managing director (operation): "In the case of the GKW acquisition, we got a first rate pressing unit with 11 imported machines plus 120 acres of land."

While the company is racing ahead with expansion and diversification, its mainstay—tractors and jeeps—is coasting along comfortably. M&M accounts for 23 per cent of the tractors market. And in jeeps, which account for 60 per cent of its turnover, M&M has an 85 per cent market share.

Still, M&M is heading for quite some competition. The Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company (TELCO) will be challenging M&M's monopoly in jeeps by launching one in a year or so. Mahindra, however, says he's not worried. "If you have a product which is internationally competitive like ours is, it has to be domestically competitive. I do not mind

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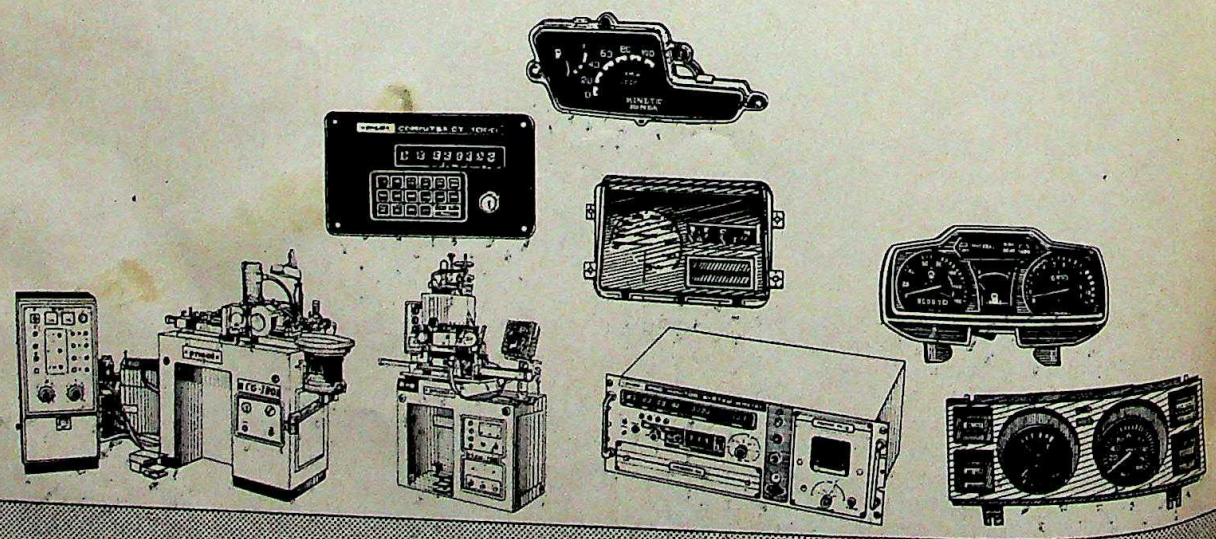

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competition at all."

The market for pick-up trucks too could get crowded: the Tatas already have one on the roads, while DCM Toyota proposes to bring out one shortly. "The pick-up is a strange combination of a consumer product and an industrial product," notes DCM Toyota Managing Director Vivek Bharat Ram. "It's hard to gauge what will happen but there should be a reasonable market."

Another area where competitors are breathing hard on M&M's heels is in the 2.5-tonne truck category. First quarter sales for 1989-90 have dropped to 704 units, versus 1,090 for the same period in the previous year. Market analysts attribute this to a poor product with low fuel efficiency and a poor engine. Claims a rival: "M&M's general product line is one of the worst in the country in terms of performance and breakdowns."

However, in the international arena M&M continues to surge ahead. It has exported jeeps to Iran for a few years, and this year, hawked tractors in the US. And buoyed by a successful foray into the Australian jeep market, K.K. Basrur, vice-president (overseas operations), is confident M&M can get to the US soon.

Meanwhile, a question raised within and outside M&M is that of succession. Keshub Mahindra has three daughters but no sons. However, he insists that the company is a professional one and all decisions on succession will be taken on that basis. One possible successor: Anand Mahindra, 34, deputy managing director and president of Mahindra Ugine Steel Co Ltd (MUSCO), a Mahindra group associate company run by Keshub's first cousin Harish.

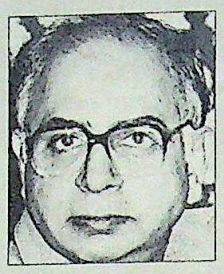
Speculation about Anand's prospects were fuelled when in late 1988, a merchant bank—on behalf of a client—started buying up M&M shares, sending the share price climbing from Rs 65 to a dizzying Rs 122. At that stage MUSCO picked up a little over a lakh of shares. Says Anand: "It is absurd to link up the two incidents. Our purchase of M&M shares was purely professionally motivated, and to a certain extent a consolidation of the family holding. In any case we do not hold more than 0.5 per cent of the share capital in M&M. It is equally absurd to believe that I will waltz in there one day and simply take over as chairman of the company."

Whichever way the succession question is resolved, M&M certainly is a valuable inheritance. By next year, its sales are poised to cross the Rs 1,000-crore mark. That's a long haul since it was set up 43 years ago as a single product company assembling jeep kits at Mazagon in Bombay. —SHIV TANEJA

BUSINESSPEAK

SURENDRA AMBALAL DAVE

Changing the Stock-Market



HIS favourite movie is the Hollywood box-office hit Wall Street, *Oliver Stone's saga of greed and guilt in the stock-markets. That's not at all surprising: Surendra Ambalal Dave, 52, is chairman of the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI). An economist, Dave worked for the Reserve Bank of India and the Industrial Development Bank of India—where he was executive director—before moving to SEBI last year. But the stock-market watchdog agency has already run into rough weather. The Finance Ministry has yet to approve its draft legislation, and several of its proposals have invited flak. Unfazed, Dave argued in a conversation with Senior Correspondent S.N. VASUKI recently that investor protection is SEBI's principal responsibility—and that the stock-markets need major reform.*

THE securities business today falls under the jurisdiction of four different laws or bodies: the Securities and Contracts Act, the Companies Act, the by-laws of the various stock exchanges and the Finance Ministry's Controller of Capital Issues (CCI). The stock-markets have grown tremendously in size over the last five years, and it's time to introduce comprehensive legislation that will govern the securities business.

The draft legislation that SEBI submitted to the Government brings together for the first time all three segments of the capital markets: those who issue securities (the corporate sector), the investor class and the intermediary group consisting of stockbrokers and merchant bankers.

A question that frequently crops up is: is a new act for the stock-markets really needed? The answer is yes. Look at the lacunae in existing laws. The office of the CCI was established in 1946. There was no licensing for industry at that time, and the CCI's principal objective was to allocate scarce financial resources. We have to examine the utility of the CCI today. The Vadilal Dagli Committee on controls even questioned whether the CCI was really needed.

There are other areas which need restructuring too. A company's prospectus is a vital document. Investors take decisions based on the information published in this document. Today the guidelines for issuing a prospectus fall under the Companies Act. But in the last 40 years not a single company has been pulled up for making false and misleading statements in the prospectus. The disclosure requirements are inadequate. At SEBI we have prepared a draft of a new prospectus.

Similarly, the Securities and Contracts Act is an anachronism. Merchant bankers and sub-brokers have tremendous influence today but are not covered by the Act. Merchant bankers acted recklessly, supporting dubious issues in the past. With more and more mutual funds which use 100 per cent investor money, there should be more accountability.

Then, the safeguards against unfair practices like insider trading are inadequate. The penalties are too small to act as a deterrent. This is because the governing boards of the stock exchanges are loaded heavily in favour of stockbrokers. We need to broadbase membership. Also, the financial institutions and banks must have a system to prevent insider trading. For instance, nominee directors should not be allowed to buy or sell shares of the companies they represent. A code is needed for financial journalists too.

The critical question today is whether the capital markets need drastic surgery or whether we should allow things to evolve naturally. There is some criticism of SEBI too. Why are we asking for so many changes at one time? My own feeling is it's a zero sum game. We can let a few things evolve. But change is necessary. At SEBI we are trying to strike a balance between change and continuity, between stability and dynamism. But we are clear whose interest we represent. After all, there are only 6,000 companies which issue capital but 10 million investors. Their interests have to be fully protected.

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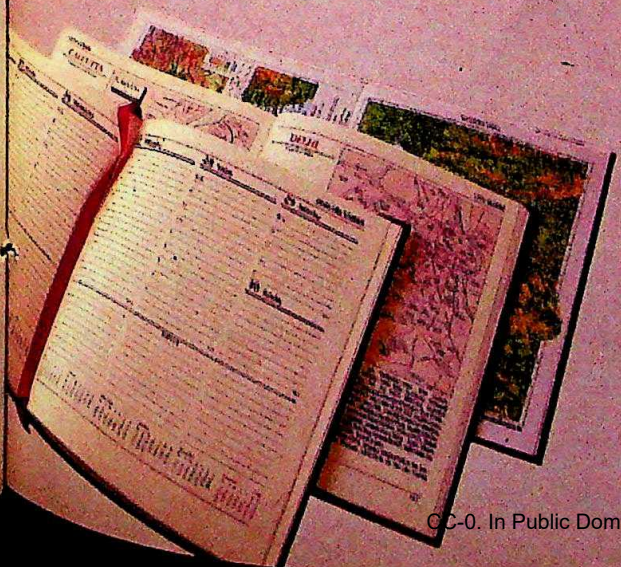

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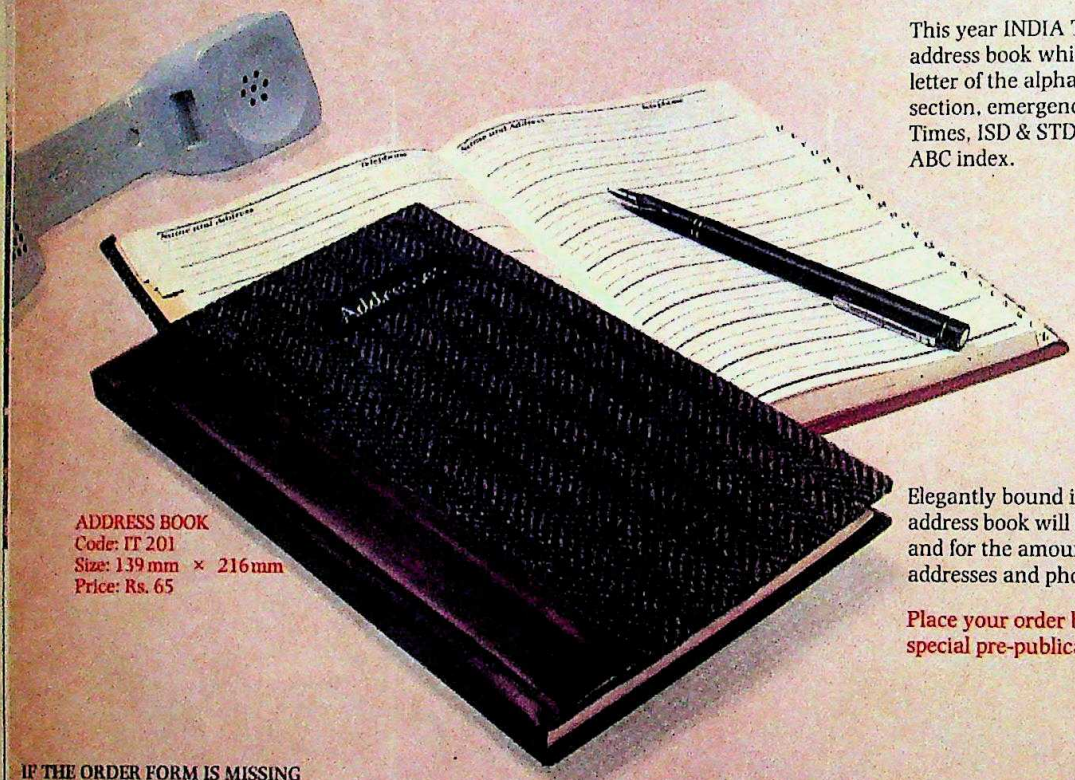

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OIL INDUSTRY

Hitting a Slick

A torrent of controversies

UNTIL recently, oil drilling was monopolised by the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) which used the expertise of multinationals. In the early '80s, however, ONGC decided to build local expertise and invited the Indian private sector in.

The outcome has been a rush into the business—and a torrent of controversies that rage as furiously as an uncapped oil well. Companies are riven into camps, with each accusing the other of manipulating official policy.

Right now, the major private sector players in the industry are the Tatas' Hi-Tech Drilling Services, the Ruias' Essar Shipping, Bombay Offshore Supplies and Services (BOSS), Mahindra & Mahindra, Great Atwood, Aban Lloyd, Jagson International and Jindal Drilling. Waiting in the wings are a host of others. The Government has cleared some 70 joint ventures and collaboration agreements, including those of big groups like the Thapars, the Modis, the Chhabrias and the Ambanis. Not all may get going, given the quick policy changes that have recently plagued the industry.

Drilling is a tough business. Explains Prem Sawhney, managing director of BOSS: "It's capital intensive, and if you have a lot of money to burn, this is the right place." Adds A.P. Abraham, managing director of the Madras-based Aban Lloyd: "You need super management skills to survive." So why have all these firms leaped into the industry?

For one, there's plenty of action. In the seventh plan ONGC spent over Rs 10,000 crore on exploration and drilling, and its kitty is expected to swell to Rs 21,000 crore in the eighth plan, a chunk of which will go to private enterprises. ONGC Chairman S.P. Wahi says: "The private sector will have a major share of ONGC's eighth plan outlay. There is going to be a phenomenal spurt in activity." For another, the gross profits can be up to 7 per cent of the contract. With contract values running to many crores, profits can be respectable enough for those who manage to stay afloat.

Private enterprises are involved in several areas. Some conduct exploratory surveys while others provide support services, such as operating offshore supply vessels. But drilling is the most lucrative area. Here, Indian companies charter rigs to ONGC—jack-up rigs for shallow depths, drillships for deep waters and semi-submersibles for deeper waters.

And it's here that the most violent controversy is raging. Ranged on one side are companies which have bought rigs. On the other are companies which have leased rigs from abroad. ONGC now has 32 offshore rigs in operation, seven of them bought by concerns such as Hi-Tech, Essar, Mahindra & Mahindra, Great Atwood and Aban Lloyd, and another seven taken on lease by Jindal, the Shipping Corporation of India and Jagson. The rest are owned either by ONGC or by foreign companies.

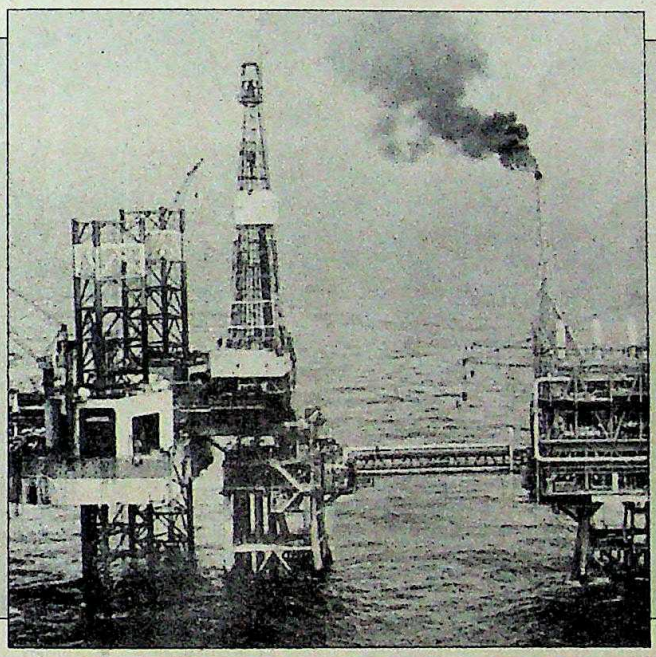
Till early last year, companies which owned rigs used to charge ONGC around Rs 3 lakh a day, versus the Rs 3.5 lakh charged by foreign operators. Then in early '88, the world drillships and rigs market slumped. In March 1988, the Government allowed Indian companies that had leased equipment to quote for ONGC jobs. With world prices low, they quoted far lower rental charges—around Rs 2.7 lakh per day. So rig owners had to fall in line and lower rates, to what they call unprofitable levels.

Expectedly, they have been sounding off. Says Vijay Sheth, head of Great Atwood: "There should be a reward for taking risks. Our capital investment is large and ONGC should offer us protection." In a memorandum to the Government last July, the Confederation of Engineering Industry, the apex association for engineering units, urged that purchased assets be given preference over leased assets. The reasoning: in the '90s, international leasing prices could climb, and the Government should get ready for this by encouraging companies to buy assets now. Explains an official: "Companies that own assets have a greater commitment to the industry."

Hogwash, say companies that lease equipment. Says D.P. Jindal, chairman of Jindal Drilling and Industries Ltd: "There is no difference between the two. The Government should only be concerned about the outgo of foreign exchange." In fact, adds Jagson International Chairman J.P. Gupta, foreign exchange can be saved this way. The lease lobby contends that it offers lower rates and more flexibility by using different types of rigs incorporating the latest technology.

The whole debate could be dismissed as tiresome were it not for official tendering and other procedures. These, it is

Amidst a rush into the oil business, charges of hanky panky and government favouritism are flying thick and fast.



Oil rig: sharp divisions

Rig owners: aggrieved

- Hi-Tech Drilling Services
- Essar Shipping
- Mahindra & Mahindra
- Great Atwood
- Aban Lloyd
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Companies with rigs on lease: facing flak

- Shipping Corporation of India
- Jindal Drilling and Industries
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alleged, favour the lease boys. ONGC allows Indian contractors 180 days to deliver the rig after it issues a firm telex order. In offshore tenders, companies have even less time. But Indian companies buying rigs abroad require nearly eight months to get the Government's approval to pay in foreign exchange and mobilise the rig. In contrast, companies that lease rigs abroad need only a customs clearance permit, which requires five months to obtain. So, those who've been buying equipment abroad believe that the decks are stacked against them. The Tata-run Hi-Tech has now decided to try its luck with leasing too.

More serious are charges that godfathers in the Government influence decisions. Since all depend on ONGC, no one is willing to complain in public. But a common grouse is that Jagson, for instance, has walked away with several lucrative orders, thanks to influence—a charge Jagson denies.

The third area of contention is the Government's frequent somersaults on the customs duty on offshore drilling equipment. Until end-December 1988, the duty was zero. Then the Government slapped 30 per cent duty, withdrew it for three months from April to June and reimposed it from July 1. Predictably, this sparked off accusations that this was meant to favour particular companies. Example: On March 29, Jindal got a telex order from ONGC for the deployment of a second rig. On April 1, the duty was cut from 30 per cent to zero and Jindal managed to mobilise a rig from the North Sea to Bombay High. A Jindal spokesman denies any hanky-panky: "It's just that we were quick on the job."

The Government and ONGC have also been charged with favouring some rig owners. In September 1986, Essar and ONGC signed an agreement for the import of three land rigs. Unusually, ONGC assumed Essar's liability to pay 20 per cent customs duty, amounting to Rs 1.42 crore. It also agreed to bear the customs duty on the spares. Until December 31, 1986, the minimum customs duty was 45 per cent. This was reduced to 25 per cent for barely one month. During that time the rigs were imported; so Essar paid only 5 per cent customs duty. Duty was later raised to 45 per cent again.

Asked to comment on the welter of allegations and counter-allegations, ONGC Chairman Wahi said that he was not involved in the nitty-gritty. In the surcharged atmosphere, what's becoming clear is that the brave effort to indigenise has so far struck more dross than black gold. —S.N. VASUKI and PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA

FINANCE COMMISSION

Unequal Slice

Rumpus over new proposals

ARCANE economic controversies rarely hit the headlines, but this one involves a weighty institution: the Ninth Finance Commission. The issue: whether the commission has made a *faux pas* in its first report. At stake: the share of poor states in Central resources for the next five years.

Under the Constitution, finance commissions are set up every five years to provide ground rules for the distribution of income tax and excise duty revenues between the Centre and the states, among other things.

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN

"The states face financial chaos."
ASIM DASGUPTA
Finance Minister, West Bengal

"The commission's exercise is absurd."
PRADHAN H. PRASAD
Director, A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Sciences

The controversy was triggered off with a report in a mainline daily. It cited a letter Pradhan H. Prasad, director of the A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Sciences in Patna, wrote to Finance Commission Chairman N.K.P. Salve last month questioning the commission's new approach to distributing the Centre's kitty. This approach assumes that a state should be raising a certain amount of tax revenue. Earlier, commissions have looked more at the states' actual revenues and expenditures, rather than what they ought to be raising or spending. So states that met their revenue targets—usually the richer ones which could tax more—wound up subsidising states that fell short of targets.

Prasad, when asked by the Bihar Government to study the report, found serious problems with it:

► It would lead to inflated assessments of the states' tax capacities. Under the new system, Bihar's tax capacity this year would go up by 32 per cent, from Rs 956.50 crore to Rs 1,264.01 crore.

► Since Central grants to states are linked with taxes they raise, poorer states like Orissa and Bihar might be penalised with lower grants.

► The econometric model the commission used was flawed.

Says Prasad: "Never in my life have I seen such an absurd economic exercise as this one." He believes Bihar will lose about Rs 81 crore in Central grants under the new system.

Economists expressed concern. Says C.H. Hanumantha Rao, a former Planning Commission member and member of the seventh and eighth finance commissions: "I sympathise with Prasad's fears about poor states suffering"

In fact, West Bengal Finance Minister Asim Dasgupta ordered a study on the implications of the new approach and discovered that on one count alone, his state's tax capacity had been overpitched to the tune of Rs 250 crore.

But, the commission has some support. In a letter to the daily, some National Institute of Public Finance and Policy economists dismissed Prasad's objections. Adds K.L. Krishna, econometrician at the Delhi School of Economics: "The procedure is statistically valid."

The new system will penalise inefficiency in raising resources and reward efficiency. Planning Commission Member Raja Chelliah—also the Finance Commission's member (finance), concedes that states not collecting enough revenue owing to administrative or political problems could suffer. He insists that poor states will not lose out on a systematic basis. Chelliah adds firmly: "We will not reject the normative approach—we can talk of details."

That's what worries the states. Says West Bengal's Dasgupta: "Unless immediate and significant modifications are made in the commission's methodology, the states face financial chaos." As the debate heats up, what seems clear is that yet another Centre-state confrontation is on the cards.

—SHANTANU DEY with bureau reports

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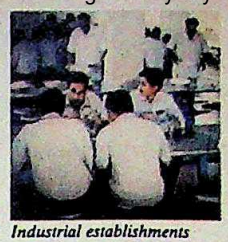
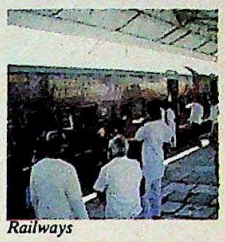
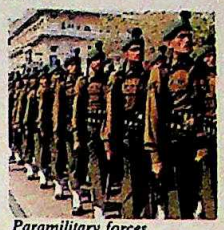
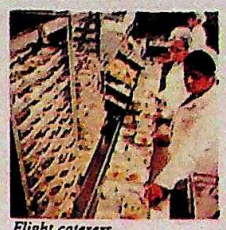

Industrial establishments

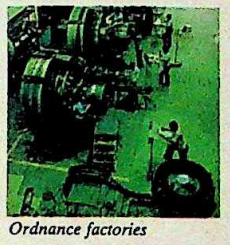
Hotels

Airlines


Railways


Paramilitary forces


Flight caterers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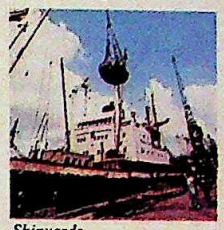
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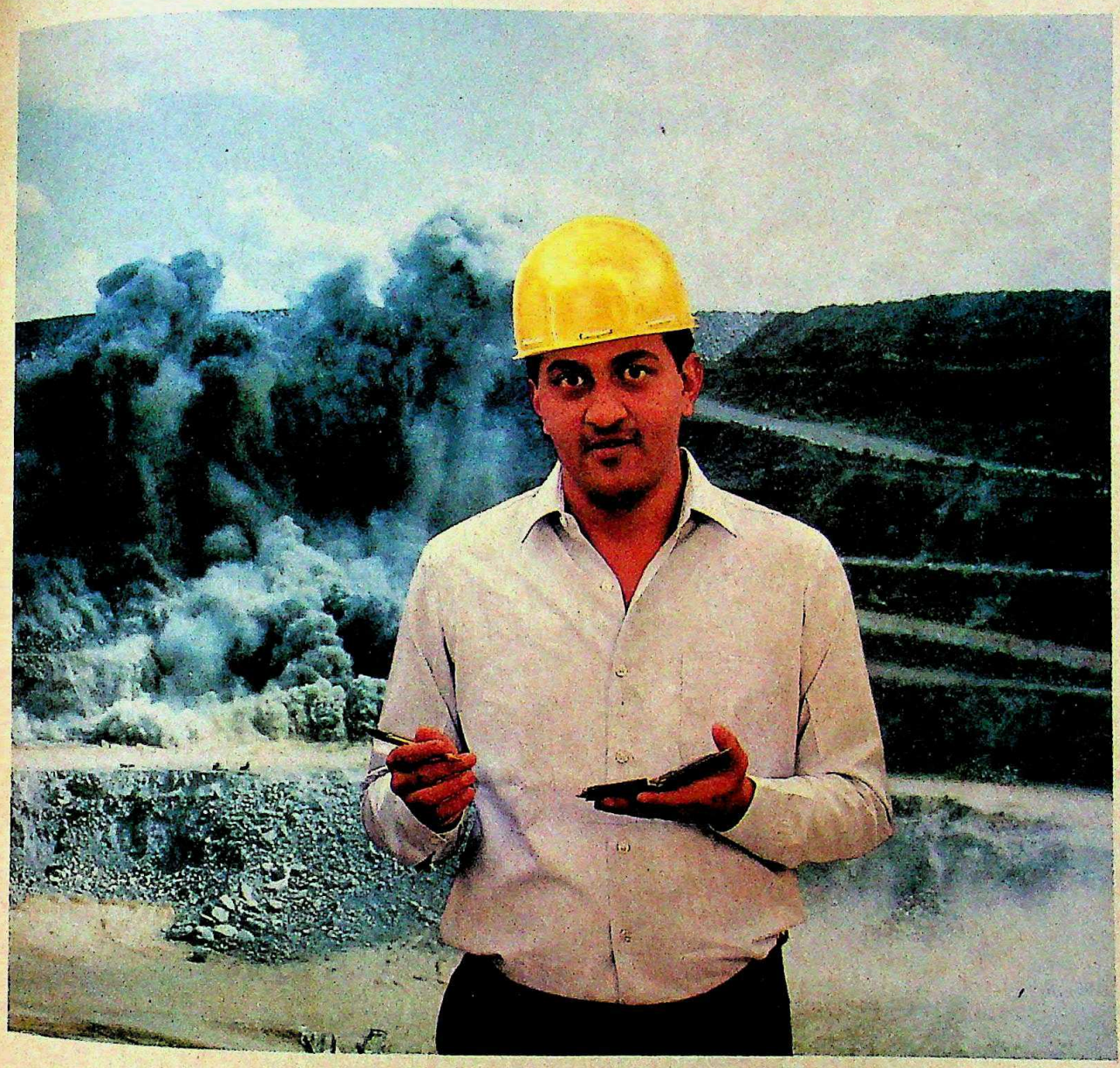

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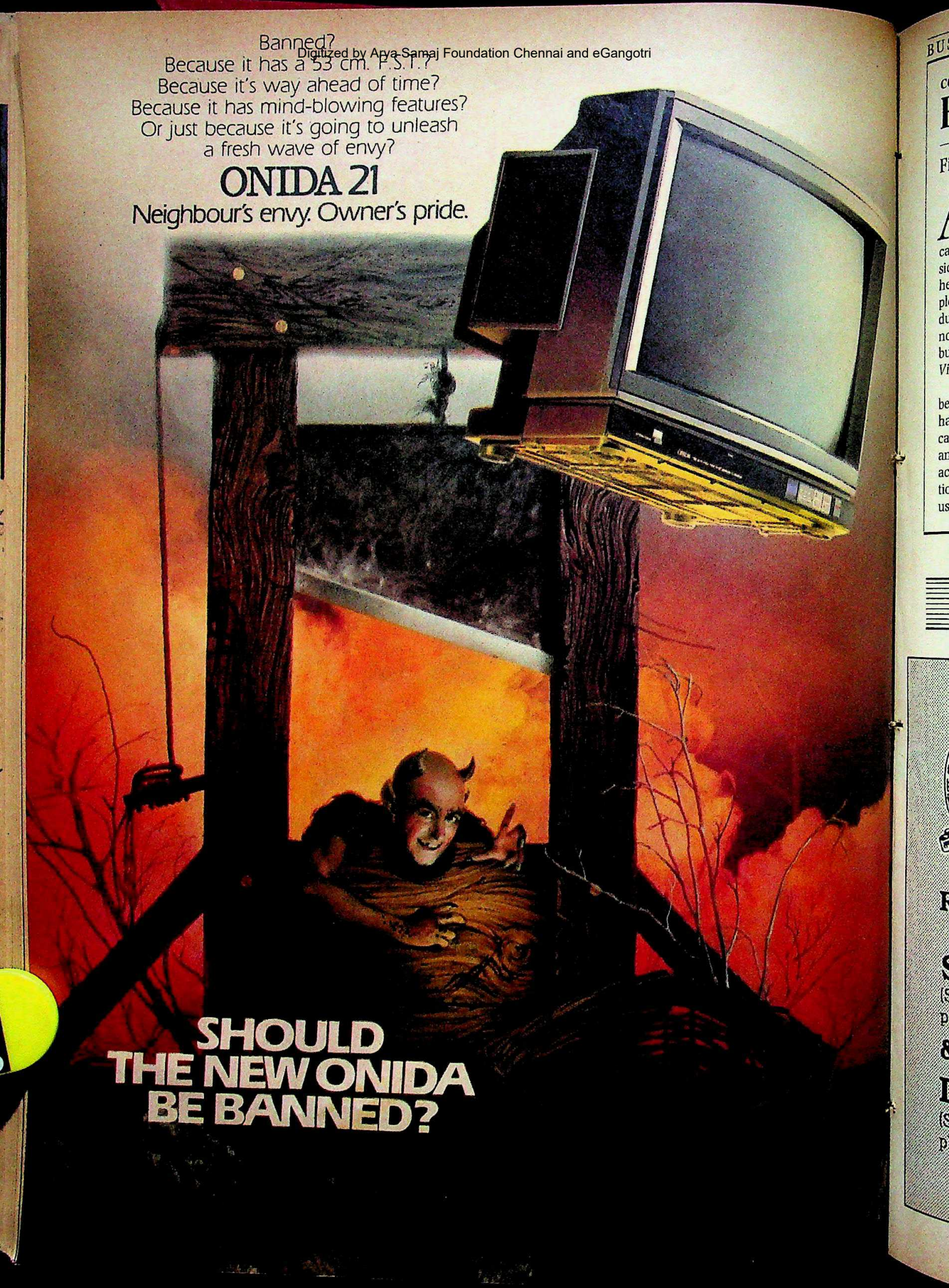

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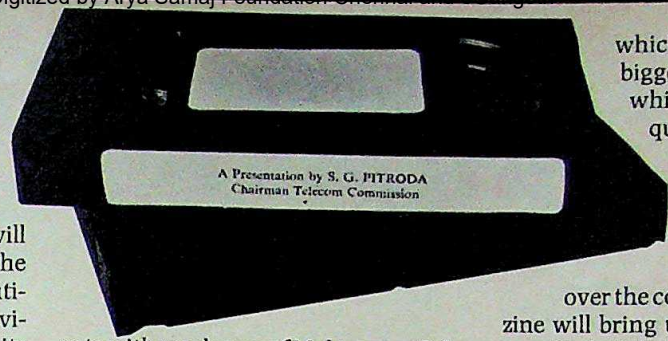
COMMUNICATION

Home Show

Firms take to video films



AT Glaxo India Ltd, lunch time will never be the same. Last month the Bombay-based pharmaceuticals company installed a colour television set and video cassette player at its head office. The company's 2,000 employees were then invited for a screening during the lunch break. There they saw not the latest Amitabh Bachchan starrer but a 16-minute programme titled *Glaxo Video News*, a house magazine on video.

Glaxo is not the only company that's been bitten by the video bug. Voltas Ltd has just launched a video magazine called *Voltrack*. Even the Government and the public sector have got into the act. Department of Telecommunications Secretary Sam Pitroda recently used a video programme to communicate with employees of Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd. The State Bank of India too is planning a video magazine to be distributed to all its branches.

Communicating with employees is the primary goal. Glaxo's monthly news letter will continue and the video magazine adds a personal element. Says a Glaxo spokesperson: "Our staffers even want to take a cassette home to show their families." The Glaxo video has been produced in Hindi, English and Marathi.

The 75-minute Voltas video provides, among other things, a bird's-eye view of the site of the Pepsi project in which Voltas is one of the biggest investors. *Voltrack* which will be produced quarterly, has an anchorman too: chemicals division staffer Stanley Saldana. Says a Voltas spokesman: "Voltas has factories all over the country. The video magazine will bring us closer."

Both Voltas and Glaxo sought outside help for the video magazines. United Television worked on *Glaxo Video News* while Enterprise Advertising handled *Voltrack*. Advertising agencies in Bombay are now being flooded with requests for similar video programmes. Says Mohammad Khan, Managing Director of Enterprise: "We are pretty confident that it will be a growth area. Video after all is today's medium."

Clearly, more and more employees will get to watch a different kind of soap opera at lunch break.

—S.N. VASUKI

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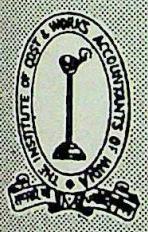

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THE MARKETS

Scrips Spurt

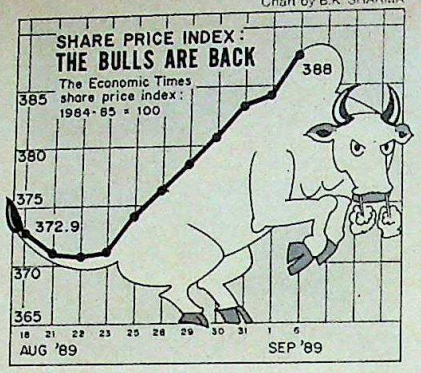
A mildly bullish phase

IT looks as if the stock-markets have finally pulled out of the uncertain phase they went through in August. As punters returned to the markets last fortnight, share prices climbed steadily, though not spectacularly. This despite two more bulls on the Ahmedabad Stock Exchange having defaulted on their payments.

The overall mood was mirrored in the share price indices. *The Economic Times* index first drifted lower from 372.9 on August 18 to 370.9 on August 22 before perking up. By September 6, the index had shot up to 388, gaining over 16 points over the fortnight.

What is more, the revival of buying was not due to financial institutions going on a share-shopping spree. Some of the buying was speculative. But it was also underpinned by expectations of positive news. There are straws in the wind that the labour strife at the Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company may be drawing to a close. Also, rumours persisted that Darbari Seth, chairman of Tata Chemicals, would take over as chairman of the Associated Cement Companies from lawyer Nani Palkhivala. Seth is regarded as the Tata man who rarely goes wrong.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



At the same time, the prices of key scrips such as Century Spinning and Century Enka spurted chiefly because the companies reported better earnings. The prices of tea company shares also rose fairly sharply. The demand for tea in both domestic and foreign markets has gone up, as have prices. Further, shares of many synthetic textile manufacturers did well. As the market for polyester fibre and filament yarn firmed up, prices of hitherto neglected scrips like Baroda Rayon, Indian Organic and Garware Nylon soared.

With the market turning mildly bullish, the mood spilled over into the so-called non-specified shares listed in the cash section of the stock exchanges. Trading in these shares is done on the basis that the shares have to be taken delivery of, and payments cannot be deferred. But amidst a scramble for shares, sellers often did not deliver shares: there was a 60 per cent shortfall in the number of shares delivered.

It is in this context that the present market rally spells hope. The big question is: will the rally persist? What goes against it is the spate of mega issues that is in the offing. Within the next five or six weeks, companies have lined up rights and debenture issues valued at over Rs 3,000 crore. These shares and debentures are being issued at prices that are below today's market prices. Unquestionably, investors will be tempted to liquidate a part of their existing portfolios to buy these attractively priced shares.

Precisely what impact all this will have on the stock-markets remains to be seen. The only thing that seems clear is that one phase of uncertainty just might be followed by another.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1989 HIGH	1989 LOW	CLOSE 21.8.89	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	84.00	61.00	72.00	10.00 +
Associated Cement	345.00	230.00	283.00	42.00 +
Asian Paints	226.25	165.00	210.00	17.50 +
Atlas Copco	53.00	32.00	43.00	9.00 +
Bajaj Auto	450.00	310.00	326.25	3.75 +
Baroda Rayon	732.50	285.00	665.00	115.00* +
Bata India	89.00	60.00	68.00	3.50 +
Bayer	910.00	580.00	740.00	15.00 +
Bharat Forge	202.50	70.00	80.00	3.75* –
Birla Jute	73.75	41.50	56.00	6.00 +
Bombay Dyeing	162.00	104.00	124.00	1.00 +
Britannia Ind.	120.00	89.00	112.00	10.00 +
Brooke Bond	155.00	75.00	84.00	5.00 +
Century Spinning	2160.00	1230.00	2155.00	160.00 +
Chloride India	88.50	72.00	81.50	1.00 +
Colgate Palmolive	371.25	162.50	178.75	128.75** +
Cyanamid	92.00	55.00	84.00	7.00 +
DCM	85.00	31.00	53.00	2.00 –
Dunlop	95.50	70.00	79.50	0.50 +
E.I. Hotels	68.00	50.00	56.00	2.00* –
Escorts	81.00	58.00	81.00	7.00 +
Finolex Cables	430.00	312.50	327.50	10.00 +
Food Specialities	224.00	154.00	163.00	5.00 +
Garware Nylon	54.50	36.00	54.50	9.50 +
G.E. Shipping	46.50	33.75	40.75	0.50 +
G.S.F.C.	177.50	123.75	165.00	7.50 +
Grasim Ind.	137.00	75.00	109.50	1.00*** +
Hind. Aluminium	327.50	155.00	267.50	32.50 +
Hind. Ciba	1090.00	600.00	880.00	80.00 +
Hind. Cocoa	135.00	98.75	130.00	15.00 +
Hindustan Lever	101.00	69.50	99.50	5.00 +
Hindustan Motors	52.50	26.75	32.00	0.60* +
ICI India Ltd.	68.00	39.00	56.00	2.50 –
Indian Organic	48.00	23.00	46.50	8.00 +
Indian Rayon	106.00	75.75	82.50	5.50 +

	1989 HIGH	1989 LOW	CLOSE 21.8.89	Change in Fortnight
Indrol	335.00	218.75	263.75	18.75 –
Ingersoll-Rand	423.75	267.50	415.00	10.00 +
ITC	129.00	46.25	63.00	57.50** +
J.K. Synthetics	92.00	66.00	80.00	5.00 +
Kinetic Engineering	395.00	130.00	155.00	18.00 +
Kirloskar Cummins	88.75	54.50	70.00	5.00 +
KSB Pumps	445.00	305.00	380.00	10.00 +
Larsen & Toubro	128.00	81.50	102.00	5.50*** –
Lipton	85.00	65.00	74.50	6.50 +
LML Ltd.	28.00	12.50	19.50	2.50 +
Madura Coats	104.00	92.25	96.25	0.75 –
Mahindra & Mahindra	113.50	76.50	91.00	3.50 –
Milk Food	300.00	180.00	205.00	15.00 +
Motor Industries	695.00	560.00	630.00	35.00 +
Mukand Ltd.	140.50	75.00	130.00	3.50 +
National Organic	1080.00	710.00	1060.00	85.00 +
Nirlon	17.00	8.00	11.25	1.75 +
Orkay Silk Mills	29.00	13.50	15.50	0.50 +
Peico Electronics	30.50	16.50	21.25	1.25 +
Pfizer	80.00	58.00	66.00	6.00 +
Ponds	212.50	151.25	170.00	8.75 +
Premier Auto	65.00	40.00	60.00	5.50 +
Raymond	85.00	65.50	81.00	2.25*** +
Reliance Industries	158.00	103.00	105.00	1.00 –
Siemens India	95.00	65.00	71.00	1.00 +
Shaw Wallace	103.25	62.00	96.00	9.00* +
Shriram Fibres	94.00	64.00	81.00	nl
SKF Bearings	3020.00	1140.00	1270.00	70.00 +
SPIC	67.00	39.00	53.25	7.75 +
Tata Steel	1580.00	1062.50	1218.75	6.25 +
Telco	1075.00	657.50	1042.50	25.00 +
Vam Organic	178.00	136.00	165.00	15.00 +
Videocon Int.	137.50	55.00	135.00	25.00 +
Voltas	885.00	470.00	850.00	5.00 +
Wimco	32.00	15.00	16.75	0.25 –

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Bahrain	Dinar	1	44.3670	44.1820
Bangladesh	Taka	100	52.2992	52.1426
Canada	Dollar	1	14.2789	14.1301
Denmark	Kroner	1	2.1838	2.1612
Egypt	Pound	1	6.1060	6.0500
France	Franc	1	2.5641	2.5000
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.1573	2.1355
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.930	0.860
Iran	Rial	100	22.5520	22.5000
Italy	Lira	100	1.1840	1.1713
Japan	Yen	100	11.6822	11.3895
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7713	0.7125
Kuwait	Dinar	1	55.8660	55.7018
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.2335	6.1688
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.0526	1.0000
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6828	0.6329
Netherlands	Guilder	1	7.5236	7.4450
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7928	0.7460
Singapore	Dollar	1	8.5226	8.4330
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1320	0.1300
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4560	0.4420
Sweden	Kroner	1	2.5163	2.4903
Switzerland	Franc	1	9.8677	9.7633
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.1160	0.1000
Thailand	Baht	100	63.2660	63.1511
UK	Pound	1	26.0044	25.8131
USA	Dollar	1	16.8492	16.6806
UAE	Dirham	1	4.5000	4.4500
USSR	Rouble	1	25.7560	25.7000
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	8.6505	8.4317

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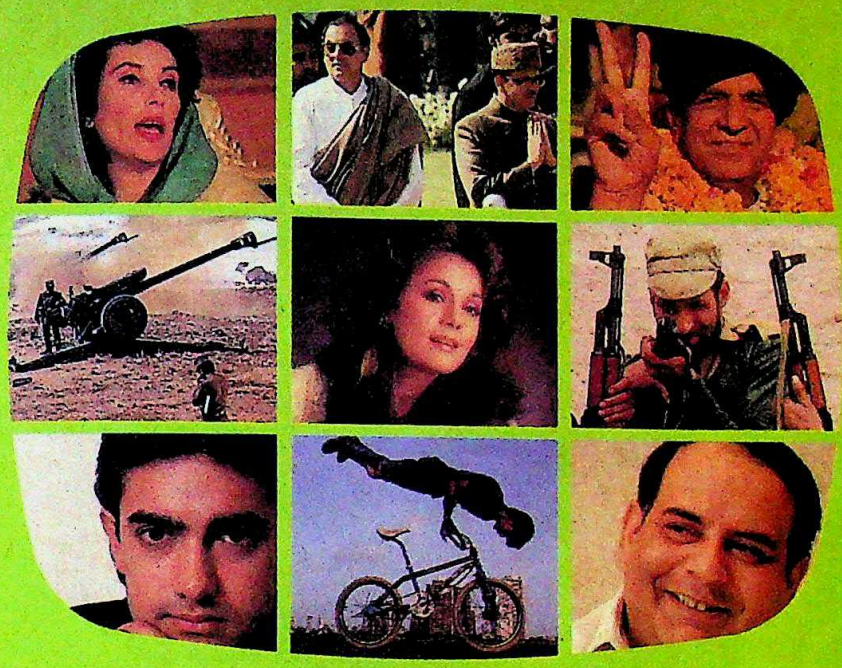

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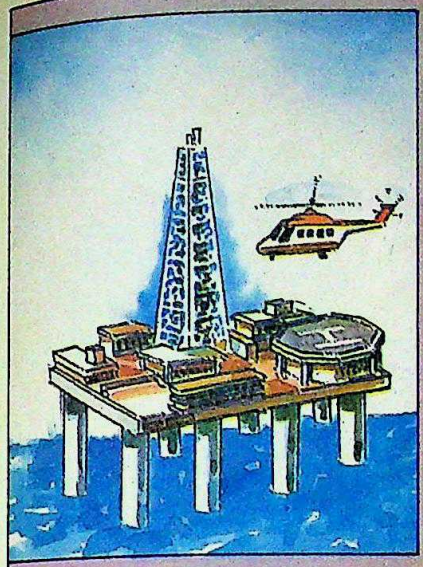

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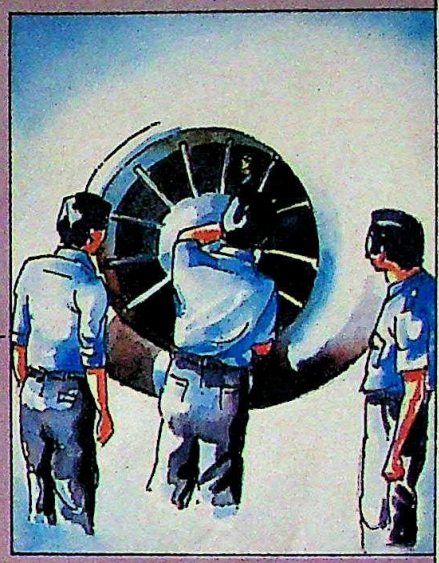

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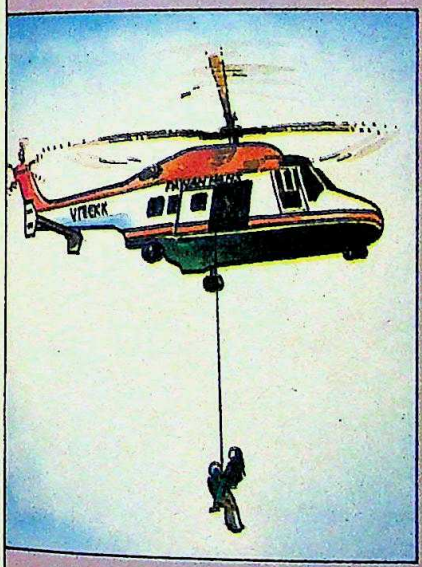

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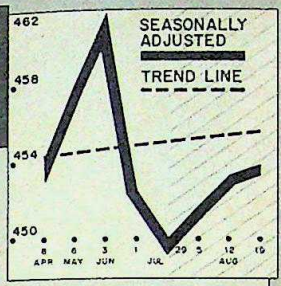
A poor fortnight for the Indian economy. The industrial production figures show a sharp fall and are a major cause for concern. Industry—both manufacturing and infrastructure—needs an immediate boost or this year's growth rate is going to be very low. Prices too started their remorseless climb once more. And, with stocks and the bullion market stagnant, there were virtually no positive signs for the Indian economy last month.

All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.

Wholesale Price Index

1970-71 = 100

Current Trend
0.75 p.a.

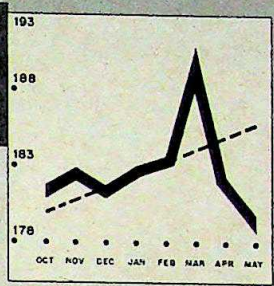


Prices accelerated again last fortnight. The normal down-turn that takes place at this time of the year has not yet occurred.

Industrial Production Index

1980-81 = 100

Current Trend
5.5% p.a.

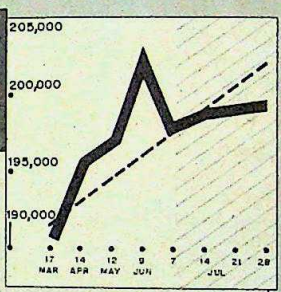


The last two months indicate recessionary conditions in industrial production for the first time in three years.

Money Supply

Rs Crore

Current Trend
14.6% p.a.

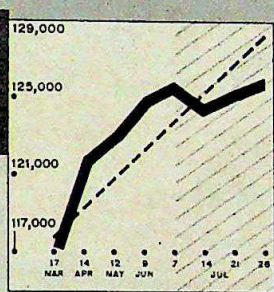


The supply of money in the economy remained well under control last fortnight and the long-term trend is on target.

Commercial Bank Credit

Rs Crore

Current Trend
23.4% p.a.

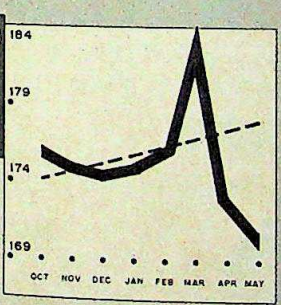


Credit conditions remained easy last fortnight—this should continue in order to give a boost to industrial growth.

Manufacturing Index

1980-81 = 100

Current Trend
3.8% p.a.

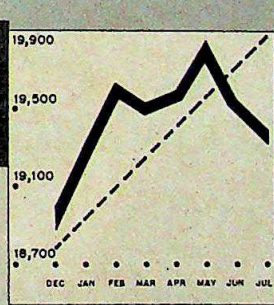


The sharp drop in manufacturing output registered in the economy last month is a major cause for concern.

Electricity Generation

Million kWh

Current Trend
9.7% p.a.

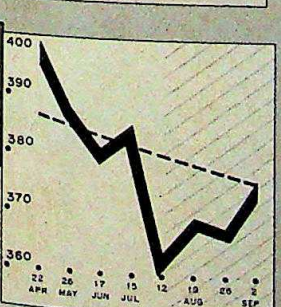


Infrastructural conditions deteriorated during the last fortnight with a drop in electricity generation.

Share Price Index

1984-85 = 100

Current Trend
7.5% p.a.

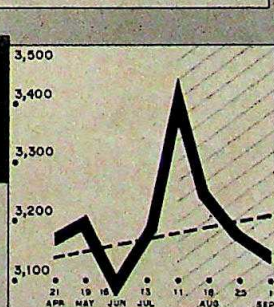


The stock-market did show some signs of life—although a full recovery still seems only a distant possibility.

Closing Gold Prices

Rs per 10 gm

Current Trend
6.2% p.a.



The bullion market showed no sign of an upswing. It remained stagnant—as it has been for most of the past year.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 1st fortnight of August 1989

	% Growth
Ceramic Tiles	7.44
Mining Machinery	6.34
Transformers	5.40
Groundnut Oilcake	4.60
Moong	4.50
Tea	4.45
Hindes Raw	4.44
Iron Ore	4.37
Cotton Seeds	3.64
Fish	3.50
Cashew-nut	3.50
Linseed Oil	3.45
Khandsari	3.17
Cotton Raw	3.06
Whisky	2.64
Mustard Oil	2.61
Barley	2.50
Gingelly Oil	2.45
Tapioca	2.25
Pete Crude & Natural Gas	2.21
Mustard Oilcake	2.09
Cars	1.86
Meat	1.83
Cotton Yarn	1.82
Bajra	1.74
Bananas	1.67
Jute Textile Machinery	1.44
Radio & T.V.	1.39
Caustic Soda	1.34
Cables & Wires	1.33
Aviation Spirit	1.32
Masoor	1.20
Jowar	1.18
Internal Combustion Engines	1.16
Silk Raw	1.09
Sugar	0.98
Art Silk & Artificial Fabrics	0.90
Machine Tools	0.88
Coir Yarn	0.87
Nitrogenous Fertilisers	0.86
Atta	0.86
Tyres	0.83
Plywood	0.81
Tubes	0.80
Tractors	0.80
Zinc	0.76
Milk	0.75

Of the 138 series considered, 87 of them with a total weight of 47.788 had a positive growth and 48 of them with a total weight of 38.202 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1989	1988
Fertilisers		
Thousand Tonnes, July	710.9	695.2
Electricity		
Mill Kwh, July	19269	17075
Plant Load Factor		
Per Cent, July	49.8	49.5
Revenue Earning		
Million Tonnes, July	24.93	23.35
Goods Traffic Call		
Money Rate Per cent, July	10.63	9.82

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80% of all human diseases are water-borne

Water-borne Diseases	Caused By	Combatted By Tap Attachments/ Conventional Filters	Combatted By Chemicals & Disinfectants	Combatted By Aquaguard
BACTERIAL DISEASES				
Gastro-enteritis	Bacteria	X	✓	✓
Typhoid	Bacteria	X	✓	✓
Cholera	Bacteria	X	✓	✓
Paratyphoid	Bacteria	X	✓	✓
Dysentery	Bacteria	X	✓	✓
Diarrhoea	Bacteria	X	✓	✓
VIRAL DISEASES				
Polio	Virus	X	X	✓
Hepatitis	Virus	X	X	✓
Gastro-enteritis	Virus	X	X	✓

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LPs :
Ragas Durga & Nandkauns • Ragas Sughrai Kanada & Jhinjhoti • Raga Shyam Shree.

Cassettes :
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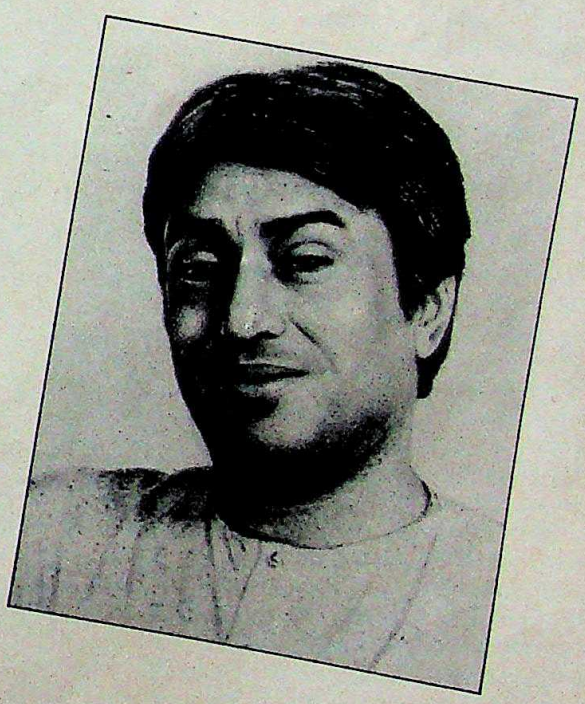

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INDIAN-AMERICANS

The Lobbying Game

The community organises itself politically

IN the whirligig of coalition politics on Capitol Hill, India with depressing regularity comes out a loser. In July, an anti-Indian amendment to the Foreign Aid Bill narrowly missed being passed in the House of Representatives. Were it not for the intervention of Indophile and liberal Democrat, Stephen Solarz, the Herger Bill, as it was called, was likely to have been approved.

Solarz lobbied House members against an amendment which, as he says, would have made $25 million in development assistance to India contingent upon whether some police officers were punished in a rape incident in Punjab.

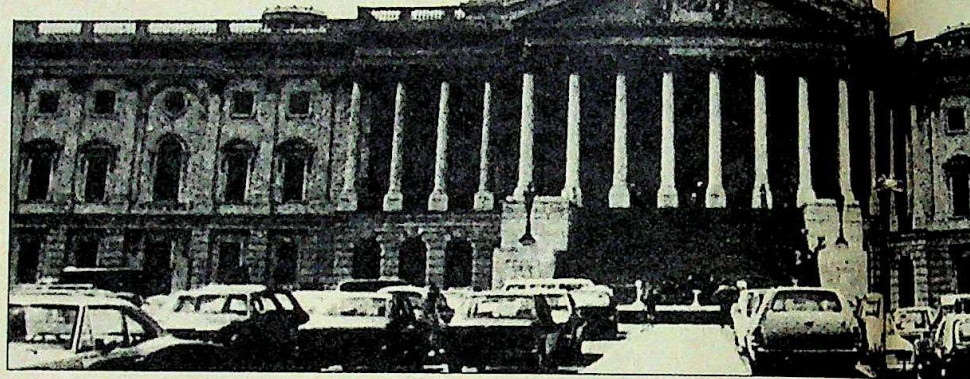
The vote was a close one: 212 to 204. Wally Herger, a relatively obscure Congressman from Yuba City, California, had enlisted the support of conservative Republicans, ranged against India because of its support of Cuba, its position on Afghanistan and its voting record in the UN. What was unexpected was the groundswell of bipartisan consensus on India's alleged human rights violations in Punjab.

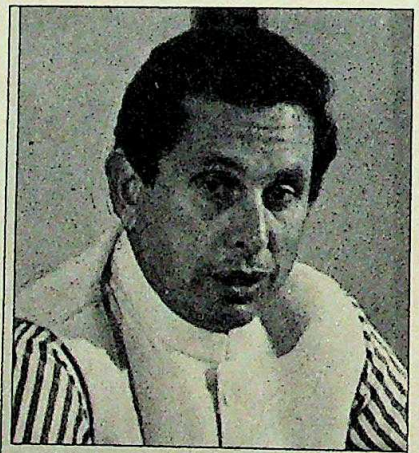
The controversial Herger Bill was itself the work of the indefatigable Indian-American lobbyist, Gormeet Singh Aulak. A former medical researcher at Harvard, Aulak is the president of the Washington-based Council for Khalistan. He found in Herger a ready ally. Herger's congressional district includes Yuba City which has a large number of Sikh constituents, including millionaire farmer Didar Singh.

Last fortnight, the new Indian Ambassador, Karan Singh, made a firm move to counter the impression created about human rights violation in Punjab. He invited Thomas S. Foley, Speaker of the US House of Representatives, to lead a congressional delegation to Punjab. And the Congress(I) MP, M.C. Bhandare, presented a letter to Foley, signed by 58 MPs, protesting against such allegations made during the discussion on the Herger Bill.

But it is becoming increasingly evident that in congressional circles, India, the awakening Asian power, can no longer trade on the goodwill of being the world's largest democracy. Last May, there was little opposition in Congress or the Administration when India, along with Japan and Brazil, was labelled an 'unfair trader'. In February, Herger had been able to mobilise the support of 24 Congressmen to introduce an amendment that threatened to deny India the Most Favoured Nation status unless it improved its human rights record in Punjab, which Amnesty International alleged was poor.

Indian Embassy sources in Washington dismiss these developments as mere irritants, unlikely to affect what was an enduring upswing in Indo-US relations. They confidently recite the long—and impressive—list of agreements for co-operation in science and technology, including collaboration on the Light Combat Aircraft. But clearly, they are uneasy. The embassy is now frantically looking to hire a professional lobbyist to woo Capitol Hill. William Chasey, who had offered the services of his Washington-based lobby firm free of charge for a year, has not been found satisfactory.





Stephen Solarz: backing India

As chairman of the subcommittee on Asia, Solarz's commitment to better relations with India has won him many generous Indian-American admirers.

Part of the efforts to hire a lobbyist are to counter Pakistan's consummate success in working the public policy process of competing interests. General Zia's Pakistan had enlisted the services of Denis Neil & Co to broker a compromise formula in 1987 which would secure congressional support for the $4.2 billion aid package without any fresh constraints on its nuclear programme. Now, Benazir Bhutto has brought in a friend from her Radcliffe days, Mark Segal.

But in a world of intensive lobby politics, where professional lobbyists are necessary, does India have the resources to stay on the inside track? More so in a system where every third lobbyist in Washington is in the pay of a Japanese company. Most observers believe that a cheaper and more effective way is to mobilise the thousands of highly skilled.

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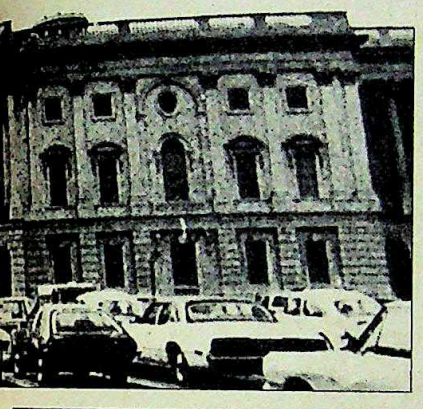
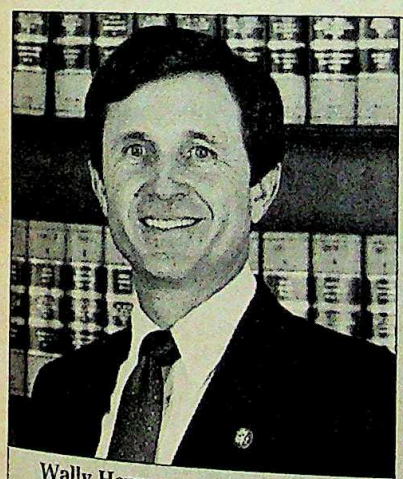
well-paid professional Indian-Americans.

It is a message that Solarz has been seeking to impress upon the Indian-American community here. Addressing a recent fund-raiser in his honour in California, Solarz said: "I think the time has come for the Indo-American community to shape US foreign policy in India." Describing the community as a "vibrant and increasingly vigorous factor in American politics", Solarz told INDIA TODAY: "The community has not yet woken up to its full potential. But when it does it can be counted upon to exercise a political clout far greater than their number would suggest. A disproportionately large number of Indian-Americans are highly educated, relatively well-paid professionals."

Capitol Hill: powerful lobbying





Wally Herger: supporting Sikhs

In February, Herger had mobilised support to introduce an amendment to deny India the Most Favoured Nation status unless it improved its human rights record in Punjab.

The 48-year-old Democrat from Brooklyn, a predominantly white Jewish constituency, Solarz has amply benefited from the political emergence of the Indian-American. As chairman of the subcommittee on Asia, he has been singled out for his steadfast commitment to better relations with democratic India. An exasperated Zia-ul-Haq once called Solarz, "the voice of India". Says Solarz: " He meant it as a criticism. I took it as a compliment."

Such a stance has won him many generous Indian-American admirers—who have contributed handsomely to his election funds—headed by California cardiologist Virendra Bisla. Moreover, it is not at all unusual for Solarz, garbed in a *sherwani*, to raise thousands of dollars at fund-raising meets organised by Indian-Americans. His appearance at the California fund-raiser on July 22 netted him $16,500.

BUT even without Solarz's exhortations, there are signs that Indian-Americans are starting to organise themselves politically. The most visible example is the Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE). The moving force behind the IAFPE and the wider Asian American grouping, the Asian Voters Coalition is Joy Cherian, currently the highest ranking Indian-American in the Bush Administration. Cherian, 47, an immigrant from Cochin, is the equal employment opportunities commissioner, a sub-cabinet rank equivalent to an assistant secretary of state.

Flanked by what suspiciously looked like a red chillies shrub on one side and a curry leaf plant on the other, Cherian spoke about taking the Indian community first to "Capitol Hill, then the White House and now the Supreme Court". When IAFPE was created in 1983, its members had virtually to drag congressional representatives to attend their annual reception. Today, five years later, the reception held by them boasts of attendance by such figures as Senator Edward Kennedy, Paul E. Arbanes, John Warner and Rudi Boswitz.

Cherian has a vision: an Indian-American community, modelled on the Jewish-American lobby. He told INDIA TODAY: "In the case of Polish-Americans, an American President makes a statement on Solidarity in Michigan. We will have come of age when, similarly, an American President will find it politically opportune to make a policy statement on India before an audience of Indian-Americans."

Yet can the Indian-American community hope to achieve any real political clout when it numbers barely 1 million (according to the 1980 census) or just 0.2 per cent of the population? In at least two states, they are already large enough in numbers to make a difference. Around 17.5 per cent of the population of Indian-Americans are in New York state and 15.4 are in California. Their strength is now such that they are an important electoral consideration. "In a tight election, Asian votes can swing votes in key electoral states like California and New York," says Cherian, former chairman of the Asian Voters Coalition.

But there is another problem, as Gopal Sivaraj Pal of Virginia, a founder-member of the IAFPE, points out—the division of opinion within the Indian-American community. Indeed, a quick survey of the 310 Indian-American organisations shows that it was open to question whether there was any validity in using the term 'Indian-American' as denoting a homogeneous grouping. Divisions within the community were embarrassingly evident at last year's Republican National Convention when Indian-Americans held three different receptions.

Only too aware of this political weakness, Cherian in his farewell presidential address to the IAFPE, admonished the community for behaving like divided Indians on the narrow basis of "back home identities" with hyphenated American status. Moreover, while middle class professionals may have become more unified during their stay here, Amrita Basu in her recent study on Indian immigration, indicates that new immigrants are likely to have stronger regional, linguistic and ethnic identities. "There are fewer professionals. They are from small towns, they like to be self-employed and are, thus, isolated from the pressures to conform to mainstream America," she says.

Moreover, less than 20 per cent of Indian-Americans are registered as voters and the dominant mood of the community remains politically apathetic. For most, a reception thrown by the Indian ambassador is far more of a draw than that by their local Congressman.

There is, however, an undeniable drive amongst the older, first generation immigrants—well-placed professionals between 35 and 45 years, who are keen to participate in the political process. They provide the backbone for the four major umbrella associations that have increasingly come to represent the political interest of the Indian immigrants: the

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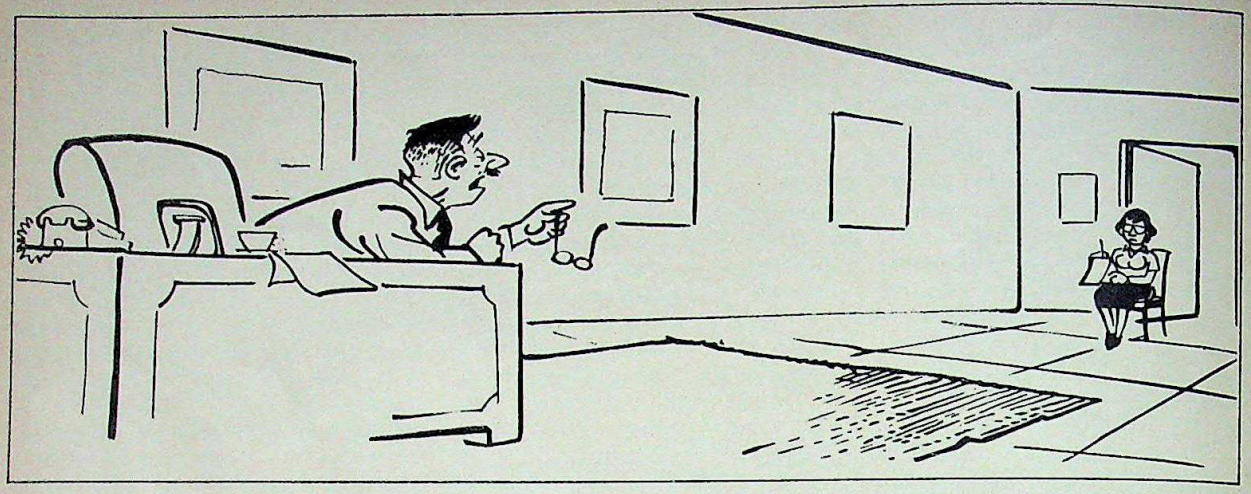

Does your Secretary keep a respectable distance when taking dictation?

Nobody likes being near a person who smells. Yet so many of us don't even know when we suffer from Body Odour.

A lot of people believe that perspiration causes Body Odour. However, perspiration, by itself, is odourless. It only starts smelling when it is decomposed by the bacteria that are always present on and in the underlayers of the skin.

Regular soaps can only wash off surface dirt and bacteria. But very soon after a bath, bacteria settle down on the skin and multiply. And you're never really free from Body Odour.

THE SNIFF TEST

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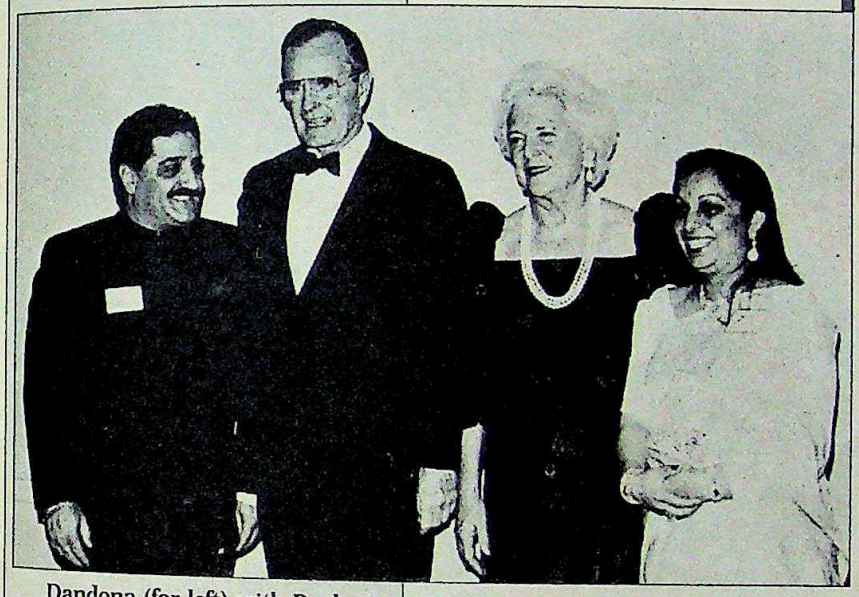
Cherian: man with a mission

There is a section of wealthy Indian-American professionals who have been in the US for around 25 years and have both the money and the time to acquire political influence.



Dandona (far left) with Bush

Association of Indians in America, the Federation of Indian Associations, the IAFPE and the National Association of Asian Americans of Indian Descent.

LACKING numerical strength, it is through money power that Indian-Americans can hope to acquire political clout in a system where electoral campaigns require millions of dollars in fund-raising. Congressional elections average up to $ 500,000 and Senate elections three to five times as much. Financial contributions by Indian-Americans to the presidential elections have been held up to demonstrate the community's political mobilisation. Republican Indian-Americans managed to raise $ 100,000, while Ramesh Kapur of Boston, on the Board of Directors of Michael Dukakis' campaign, raised $ 350,000 for Dukakis and $ 300,000 for the Democratic National Committee.

The overall record of fund-raising by Indian-Americans has been a very mixed one. The most glaring examples are the fund-raising dinners for Maryland Senator Paul Sarbanes and California Congressman Mervyn Dymally. At the dinner for Dymally, doctors earning above $ 100,000 a year, embarrassingly contributed a total of just $ 450. At the dinner in honour of Sarbanes only $ 2,500 was raised by the affluent residents of the exclusive Potomac area.

Dr Navin Shah, executive director of the International Association of American Physicians (IAAP), dismisses such members of the community as 'photo opportunists'. Tersely commenting on the IAFPE, he said: "They talk a lot, but make no significant financial contribution and are not serious enough to hire a lobbyist."

IAFPE activist G.S. Pal agrees that Indians are not in the habit of contributing to fund-raisers. "They would much rather give for a temple or an evening of Asha or Lata's songs," he said. Pal was nonetheless able to persuade his fellow Indian-Americans to raise more than $ 100,000 million for the Bush-Quayle election campaign. Therefore, when Pal sought the ear of Congressman Frank Wolf on the Herger Bill linking the Most Favoured Nation status with human rights violations in Punjab, he was not only heard but was successful in persuading Wolf from swelling the ranks of the Bill's sponsors. The Indian Embassy had no doubt included the Congressman in its vigorous letter campaign to project its viewpoint on Punjab. But it was Pal, whom the Congressman heeded.

Nascent Indian-American activism has also taken the form of open appeals to the community through the ethnic press to write to their Congressmen. Petitions are passed around at dinner in the home of wealthy Indians, often in the unobtrusive presence of a senior Indian diplomat. Even the Sunday TV programme for Indians in Greater Washington, *Darshan*, has been active in mobilising the community to oppose the Herger Bill.

The ease with which it is possible to travel has tempted a few Indian-Americans to pursue political interests in both countries. The high political visibility in the US of Indian-American Kamal Dandona derives from his closeness to the Congress (I). It is his reception in New York that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi graces. It was also Dandona who mobilised some 300 Indian-Americans from the east coast to demonstrate on Capitol Hill against the proposed sale of Airborne Warning and Control Systems to Pakistan. Also present were Solarz and Dymally.

Community leaders, however, say much also depends on how successful the serving Indian ambassador is in reaching out to the community and mobilising them politically on issues concerning Indian interests. Every six months, over the last two years, the Indian Embassy has encouraged an informal gathering of representatives of various organisations in an effort to build a forum for discussion and eventually political cohesion.

Former ambassador P.K. Kaul's activism on this issue has coincided with the discernible growth in the political involvement of a section of Indian-Americans: wealthy professionals who have been in the country for about 25 to 30 years. It is they who have the time and money to acquire political influence. Eventually, if the hundreds of Congressmen have to be reached, it is the Indian-Americans they will listen to.

—RITA MANCHANDA in Washington

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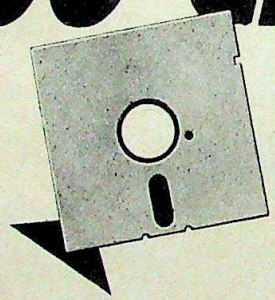

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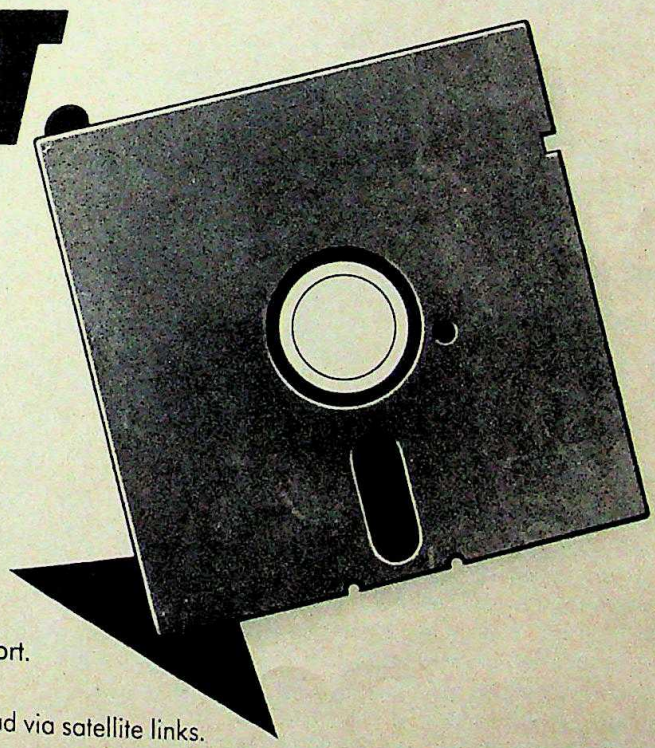

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ATHLETICS

Fast Forward

A talented new crop emerges

FOR the past five seasons the field was fallow. There were no signs of a good crop. Now, finally there are signs that some new talent may be sprouting on the Indian track and field.

The unusually busy 1989 athletics season which kicked off last fortnight with the 28th National Open championship in Madras showed the arrival of an ambitious, new breed of hard-working young champions.

Among the most promising is discus-thrower Shakti Singh: "My personal target is to cross the 60-metre barrier," he says. An inspector with the Central Industrial Security Force, Singh at 24 is rather young in an event where champions often mature late. With the first throw of 57.70 metres, the spirited Haryanvi erased Ajmer Singh's five-year-old national record of 56.92 metres.

Singh's improvement is remarkable since his first national appearance was with a mediocre throw of 52.42 metres at the National Games in Trivandrum in 1987. He failed to cross the 50-metre mark all through 1988. But a short stint in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) earlier this year helped hone his skills, refine his technique and finally add more than a remarkable five metres to his previous best throw. And while internationally there may be several throwers capable of hurling the disc to more than 65 metres, anything close to 60 metres would put him in line for a medal at the November Asian Track and Field Championships.

Another 24-year-old sensation is the lanky Bahadur Prasad. He completed a unique treble by bagging golds in the 1,500 metres, 5,000 metres and 10,000 metres—no one has done this in a national meet—in the sweltering heat. He followed it up with another win in the 1,500 metres on the first day of the Trivandrum Masters meet.

For one who finished third in the 10,000 metres in his Nationals debut last year, Prasad has done Harry Wilson, his British coach, proud. His Madras timings were still below the past Indian bests. But his 29.48 minutes for the 10,000 metres at an international competition in Lahore earlier this year is the best by an Indian in the event in the past three years.

Says Prasad, who is a railway ticket examiner at Agra: "If I am allowed to train in England for another six months I will bring back at least one gold from the Beijing Asian Games next year." The claim, though enthusiastic, is a hard one as that will mean clipping nearly two minutes from his own career best. Cautions former middle distance star Sriram Singh: "Prasad must make his choice of one or two events to tune himself well to changing the pace or quickening the rhythm during the race."

An event in which India does well at the Asian level is the shot put. The towering 1.97-metre Shivappa Durgappa Eashan, 27, a railway ticket collector in Bangalore, seems to be a worthy successor to the old Indian tradition. He heaved the iron ball to a career-best distance of 18.28 metres. The best Indian effort is by Iqbal Singh who touched 18.77 metres last year and Na Yongfeng of China has crossed the 19-metre mark. The visiting GDR coach, Jorg Ramalow, helped Eashan achieve better synchronisation and balance. Lamented Eashan: "I could have done even better but for an injured right ankle." He has still to add another half a metre to be among the finalists in a top-of-the-line Asian contest.

Ashwini Nachappa, nick-named India's Flo-Jo due to her flamboyant style and appearance is now concentrating on the 200 metres and timed 24.3 seconds—clipping one tenth of a second off her previous best. She is inching in on Usha's Asian record of 23.44 seconds. Zenia Ayrton who trained at Crystal Palace in England and K. Saramma are the other bright sprint prospects.

And one poised to reach greater heights is the 18-year-old high jumper Angela Lincy. With her career best of 1.73 metres already in the books, the sprightly Lincy is chasing the 1.89 metres mark of Zheng Zheng of China. Says she: "Give me more competition and you will see my best come out."

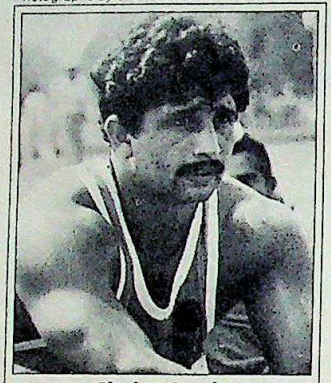
The new crop of middle-distance runners like Avtar Singh (800 metres) and 18-year old Harjinder Singh (400 metres) have rekindled hopes of a revival of Indian might in these events.

Clearly, the emergence of the new talent is mainly because of better training facilities in the post-Asiad '82 phase. "Coaching and the presence of a trainer is more imperative now than ever before, for better performances," emphasises ace long jumper-turned-coach Suresh Babu. Remarks another former Asian Games medallist, shot putter Bahadur Singh: "Athletes must be exposed to competitions abroad frequently."

The coming months will, in fact, bring in a surfeit of competition. The two permit meets in Delhi and Calcutta after the Masters meet in Trivandrum and then the Asian Track and Field Championship in New Delhi are opportunities for them to knock off microseconds and add the millimetres that separate the champions from the also-rans.

—AMARNATH K. MENON in Madras

Photographs by S.N. KOUSHIK



Shakti Singh

S.D. Eashan

Ashwini Nachappa

The emergence of new talent is mainly because of the better training facilities in the post-'82 Asian Games phase.

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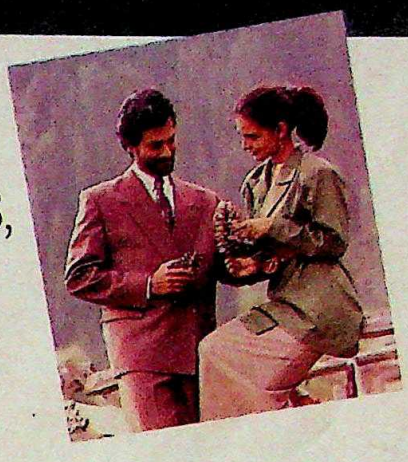

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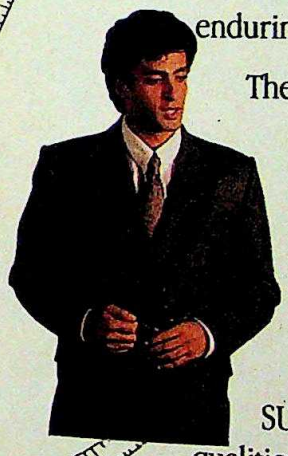

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WOMEN

Heels On Wheels

Across the country, the middle class woman is increasingly on the move. Astride the two-wheeler she is experiencing whiffs of a lifestyle of independence and convenience, a practical kind of liberation.

FOR Savita Balasubramaniam, a typical day winds through 50 km of urban jungle. The 22-year-old programmer at a Bangalore computer firm sets off from the Rajajinagar suburb at 9 a.m. for her work at Basavanagudi, 12 km away. Before returning at 5.30 p.m., she would have travelled another 20 km to meet clients. In the evening, she's off again to a business administration course at an evening college.

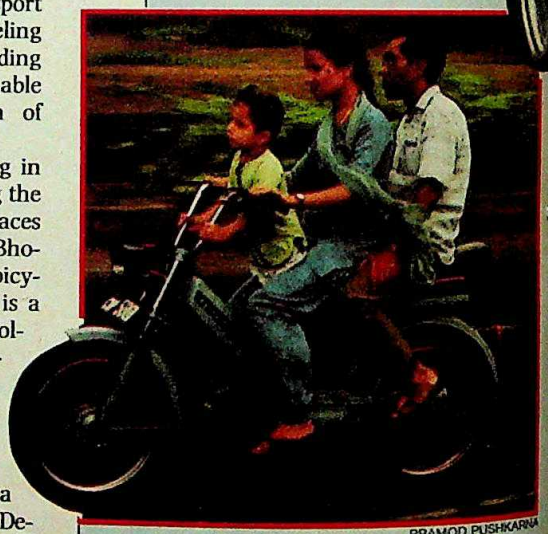
Quite obviously, what this woman needs more than rings on her fingers are wings on her heels. She manages very well, actually, with her heels on her wheels. Nothing fancy either. Her 50 cc moped is quite enough to take her places. For Savita is in the vanguard of a fast-growing movement that is taking more and more middle class Indian women into its sweep—the movement towards a pair of wheels. In plain black and white, their lives have taken flight over the tar and the zebra crossing.

Women drivers have been common for years now, particularly in the metropolitan cities. But while it needs a well-heeled woman to be four-wheeled, the two-wheeler has become the middle class woman's key to all the opportunities that mobility brings her. Today, the sight of a woman perched confidently on a moped, zipping around on a scooter, or even manoeuvring a motorcycle, is as common as a Mills and Boon novelette in a girls' library.

Many women say it's a heady feeling, hair flying in the wind, whizzing down the road to any place one wants, with not a care in the world, just the feeling of freedom, the sense of adventure and the intoxication of speed. To the working woman, the two-wheeler brings a more practical kind of liberation. Says Nupur Basu, who is an activist of the Media Forum for Women: "Riding a two-wheeler is a woman's expression of confidence. It makes us feel that we are in charge of our own lives."

It is in second rung cities—Pune, Bangalore, Chandigarh, Baroda—that two-wheelers are most visible, a fair number of them ridden by women. "Mopeds are a dime a dozen in Pune, every house has one," says Malini Wadkar, 32. Adds K. Jairaj, Bangalore's transport commissioner: "Two-wheeling seems a rage in the city," adding that there has been a remarkable increase in the proportion of women riders.

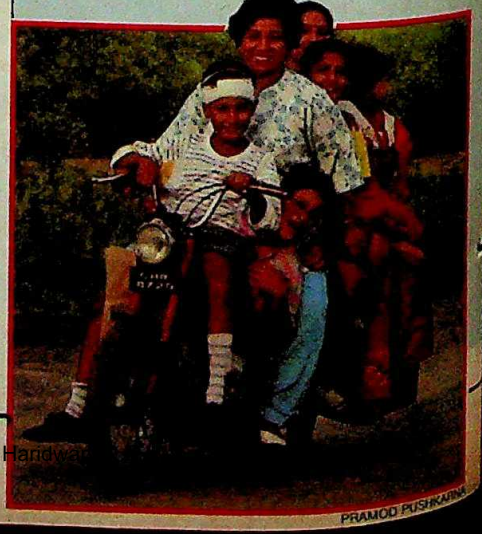
This rage is now building in less likely towns too, piercing the hidebound traditionality of places like Lucknow and Patna. In Bhopal, mopeds have replaced bicycles, and every fourth rider is a woman. At the Nutan Girls' College, there isn't enough parking space since four out of every five teachers and students now sail in on mopeds.



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Columnist Nalini Singh was amazed while making a film in Rajasthan recently. Despite the stereotype of the Rajasthani *ghunghat* (veil) right down to the waist, she says, "even in a little place like Banswara, you have these very purposeful women, gaze fixed firmly ahead, riding along on their mopeds". In Imphal, women on mopeds—whether in modern garb or traditional dress—are everywhere.

Just a decade back, the woman rider was still an oddity. "An amused group of men used to collect around me," remembers Feroza Singh, who moved to



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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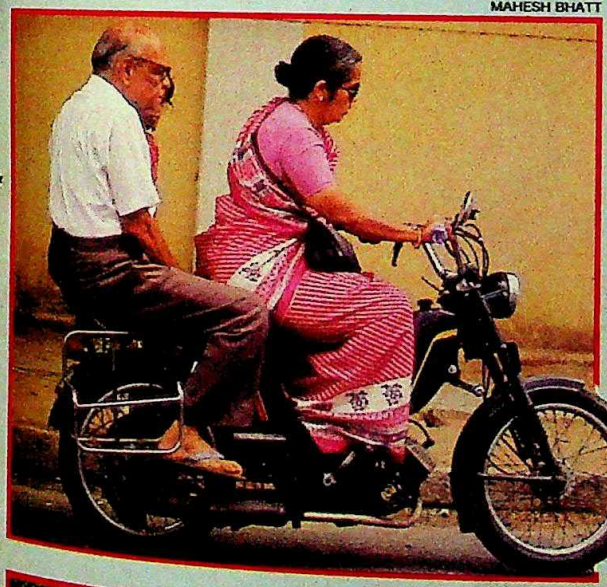
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

MAHESH BHATT



The two wheeler mania has overtaken students and even middle-aged women.

BHAWAN SINGH

Dehra Dun from Pune in 1980, after marrying a local farmer. Pune was already becoming India's moped city, but she says she was one of only two women riders in Dehra Dun then. Savita Chopra, 45, lecturer in public administration at Punjab University, says that in the '70s, she used to be stared at even in Chandigarh, which today has one of the highest ratios of women to men riders in the country.

Even today, comparatively fewer women ride two-wheelers in metropolises like Delhi or Bombay. Reason: the overpowering speed and volume of traffic. "It's just not safe," says Shabnam Sarin of Delhi. "The traffic is simply mad. It's been my life's dream to ride a bike, but I could never venture on to a Delhi road."

IN towns with a less breathless pace, though, the two little wheels revolving in tandem have spelt a big revolution on the road to independence for many women. "You just pick up your scooter and zoom off," says Vandana Kaith, 22, who teaches at the ONGC women's polytechnic in Dehra Dun.

Predictably, moped-mania is most common among students. Every afternoon, a flood of colourfully turned-out girls, riding doubles or even triples on two-wheelers, pour ebulliently out of the gates of schools and colleges. "It's thrilling," effuses Gurpreet Sahi, 19, of Chandigarh. Adds Noorainne Fazal, 19, who enjoys zooming past male riders on Bangalore's broad avenues on her modern 350 cc motorcycle: "Why should the boys have all the fun?" Most men can't resist revving their own vehicles to catch up with her. "I love racing them," she grins.

Parents generally seem to trust their girls with vehicles. Says Jija Harisingh, chief of Bangalore's traffic police: "Women are definitely safer drivers than men. They take much less risks and are generally more disciplined on the roads."

So young girls are increasingly being given vehicles exclusively for their own use. Though just 15, Ritu Narula of the Convent of Jesus and Mary in Dehra Dun has been riding a moped for a year now. And her schoolmate, 17-year-old Rachna Anand, was given a sleek silver scooter for her birthday last March.

Their younger mates are often conveyed to school on their mothers' pillions. In fact, between 7 and 8 in the morning in a lot of small towns, every second two-wheeler features a woman—her *pallu* tucked neatly into the front of her petticoat—ferrying a starched little uniformed offspring.

That kind of ability can make the crucial difference between helplessness

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and gumption for a widow like Saroj Dhiman, 38. Last year, she lost her husband in an accident. Left to care for her seven-year-old son, her life now hinges on her moped—dropping her son to school, shopping, commuting to her polytechnic. Her husband had taught her to handle it just a few days before his death, and she says: "Sometimes, I wonder what I would have done without it."

Monisha Singh, a 35-year-old schoolteacher, and widow of an army officer, endorses that. Her two sons perched neatly on her pillion, she says: "It would really have been impossible to manage without it." Her moped allowed her to keep up with friends. With the children growing up fast, she recently bought herself a scooter.

FOR many women, a pair of wheels are a professional necessity. "Without my bike, I would be sunk," says M.S. Anupama, who travels to the airport several times a week in the course of her work at her father's Bangalore-based computer export firm.

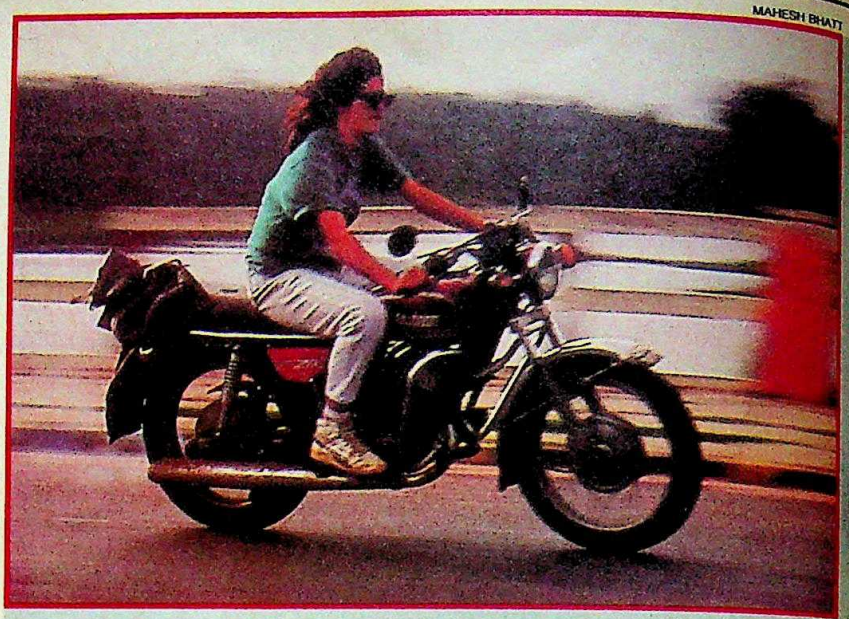
Several other working women in sectors like banking have become eligible for loans for buying two-wheelers, and many are taking advantage of it. Out of the 15 women working at the UCO Bank branch in Sector 17-B of Chandigarh, 10 have two-wheelers. Loan repayment is easy: Rs 70 a month over five to seven years.

A related factor is the virtual breakdown of public transport systems. "I get to my work in 10 minutes on my moped," says Shama Mehra, a Chandigarh hotel employee. "If I depend on local buses, it takes an hour." Adds Kavita Paalya, who runs a small advertising agency in Bangalore: "There are days I have to do upwards of 80 km within the city, visiting clients. If I depend on the state transport, I can kiss my business goodbye." Besides public transport often entails jostling with uncouth crowds.

A moped doesn't cost much more than travelling by public transport either. Harjinder Jawandha, president of Chandigarh's Union Territory Women Employees' Welfare Association, says that despite travelling 30-40 km a day, she spends just a little more than Rs 100 on her vehicle every month. Most women who simply commute to work spend no more than Rs 50.

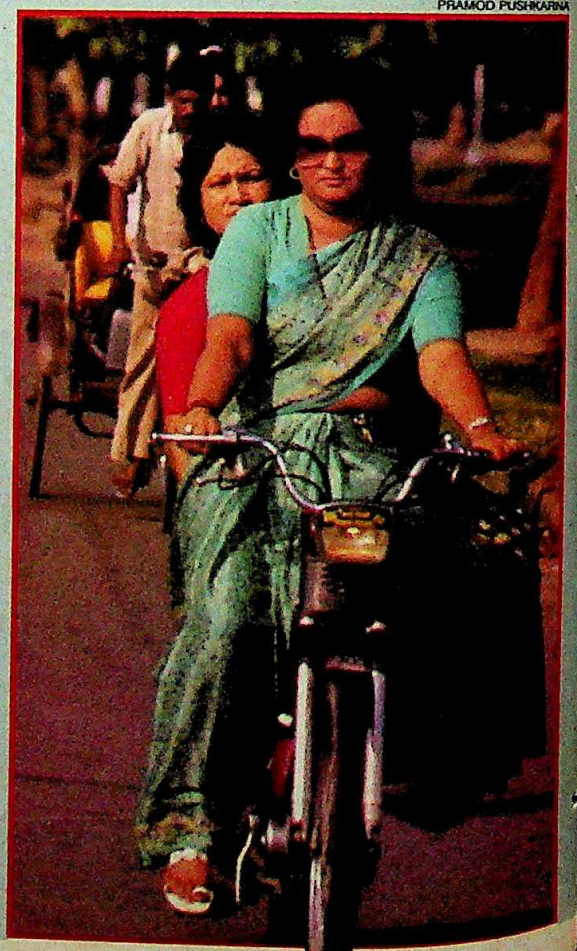
And if one has riden a bicycle before, it's easy to learn how to ride a moped. Vimala Parthasarathy, 60, picked it up at the age of 45. She even does minor repairs herself and her routine includes dropping her grandson to school. Says she: "If I could learn at the age of 45, surely all young women can do it."

MAHESH BHATT



Noorainne Fazal enjoys zooming past male riders on her 350 cc motorcycle. Most men can't resist revving up their vehicles to catch up with her.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Shama Mehra, a Chandigarh hotel employee, rides a moped to work because it takes her only 10 minutes while a local bus takes an hour.

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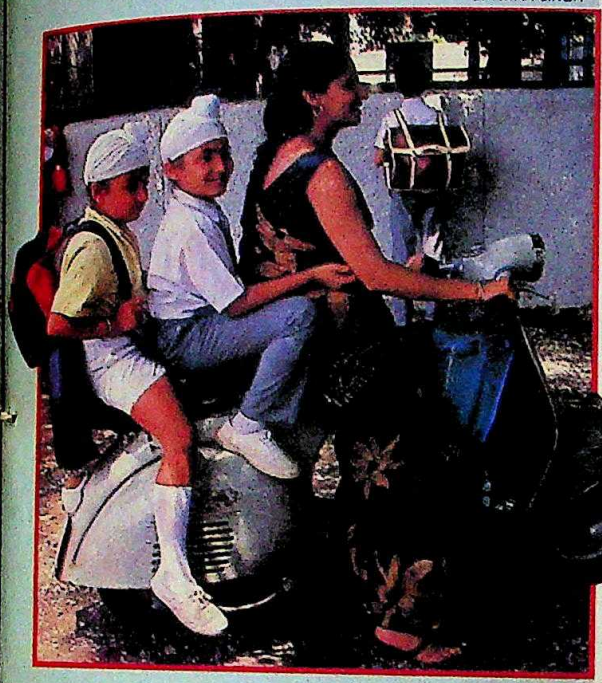
For Manisha Singh, a scooter means independence and mobility.

BHAWAN SINGH



Already, two-wheeler production in India has grown fivefold from 3.5 lakh vehicles annually just 10 years ago to over 17 lakh now, making India the second largest producer after Japan. Thanks to the new interest among women, manufacturers are gradually turning their attention to designing features especially to suit them.

While the moped still dominates the women's market, a sleek kinetic scooter featuring a switch start in addition to the kick start and automatic gear changes has become the toast of the upmarket bracket of the women's market.

But there has still not been a major advertisement thrust aimed head-on at the women's market, such as the US cigarette ad for Virgina Slims that showed a woman smoking over the blurb: 'You've come a long way, baby'. Partly, say manufacturers and dealers, this is because they are chary of having their vehicles branded as 'a woman's bike'. Men would then shy away from it.

If that's an indicator of chauvinism, a much more obvious one is behaviour on the roads. Almost every young female rider has a tale of harassment. Most commonly, it involves young men deliberately crossing their way. A Maruti car full of boys often attaches itself to a girl on a two-wheeler, somewhat like a raucous outrider, for miles on end. And boys on motorcycles sometimes zig-zag crazily in front of a girl's vehicle. "It's like trying you out, to see if you can manage," says Arunima Verma of Dehra Dun.

Sometimes, this kind of fun can be disastrous. Twenty-six-year-old Seetha Nagaraj was riding her moped down a lonely stretch along Bangalore's Ulsoor lake one afternoon a couple of months ago when a male scooterist swerved into her. Seetha was hit so hard that she toppled over, breaking her shin and kneecap. After three rounds of surgery, she still limps.

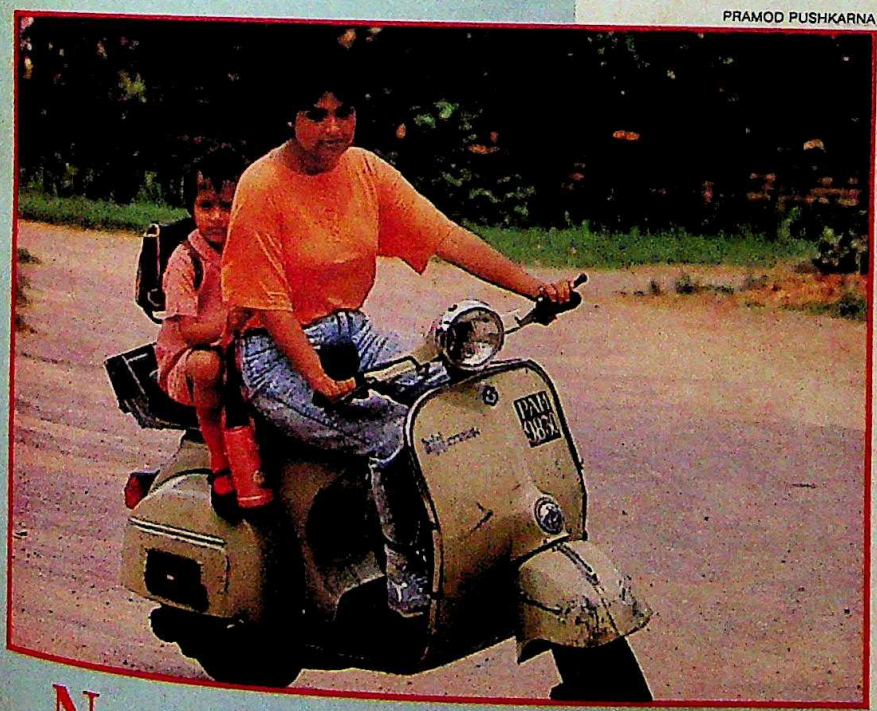
Apart from road romeos, there is the obvious danger of sari *pallus* or *dupattas* getting caught in the chain of the motor. C. Kaveri, a Bangalore schoolteacher, was placidly riding her moped recently when she suddenly found herself on the ground—her sari had got caught in the chain and the moped had cart-wheeled across the road.

Then there is the problem of repairs. Many women are forced to abandon their vehicles on the road if something goes wrong. Forty-two-year-old Usha Singh has been riding for eight years now, but she looks quite helpless as she rides along with her moped on a cyclerickshaw, carrying it to a mechanic. "Just the day before yesterday, I got it repaired. Now, look at it," she says. Adds Nidhi Bawa, 21, who has been riding mopeds and scooters since she was 11: "The mopeds that are coming these days are not reliable. After two or three years, they do tend to go off."

Chandigarh-based journalist Vijaya K. Pushkarna is also dubious about the freedom mopeds give women to do the kinds of things they couldn't in the past. "It's independence, but with an added burden," she says. "Shopping or taking the children to school was essentially a male role. This has made the men lazier."

Whatever effect it may have had on the men, however, the two-wheeler has certainly given the Indian woman a dash of dynamism. —DAVID DEVADAS and CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Nidhi Bawa, who has been riding two-wheelers since she was 11, says that the mopeds nowadays are unreliable, creating maintenance problems.

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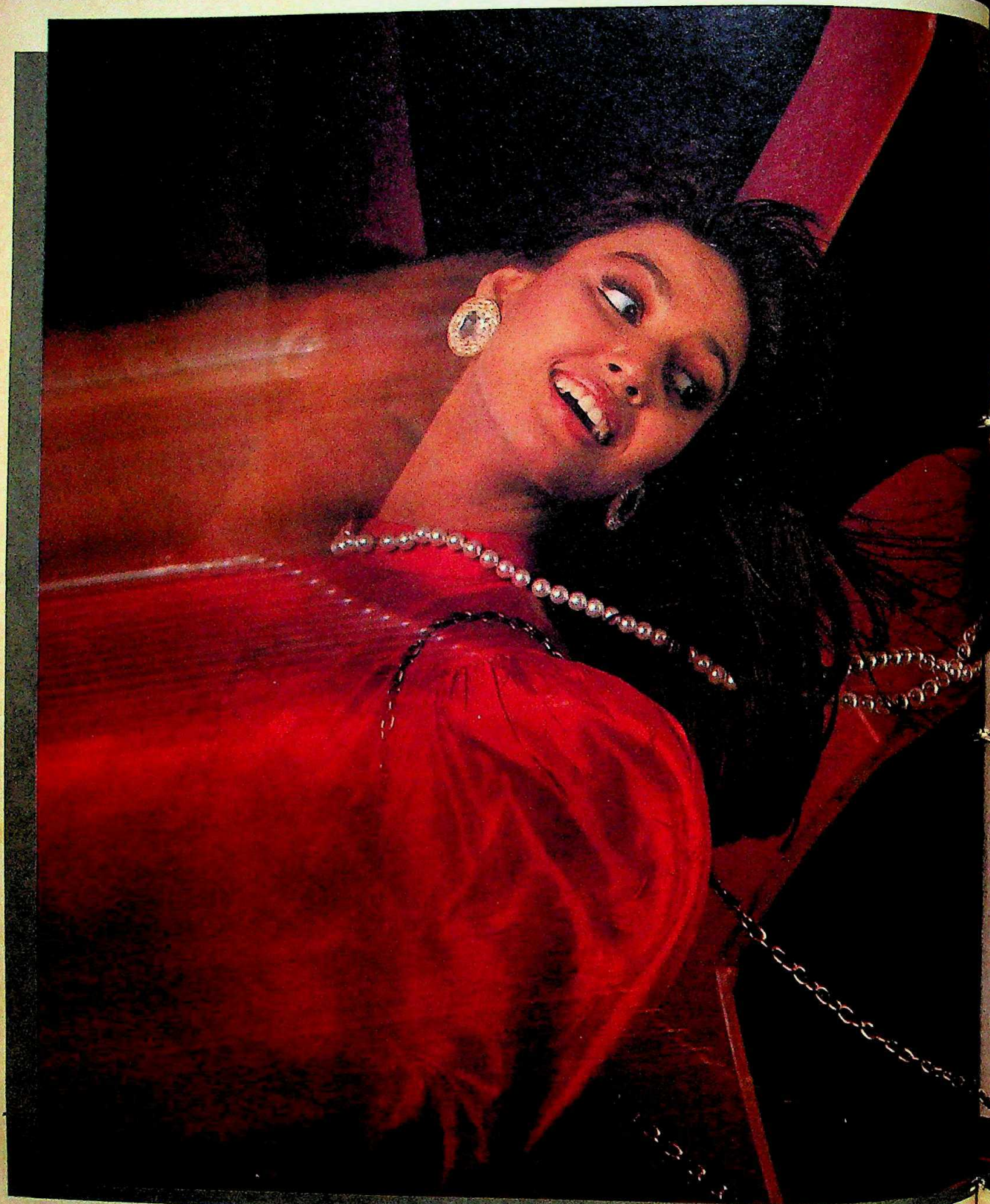
MODERN MAGNETISM



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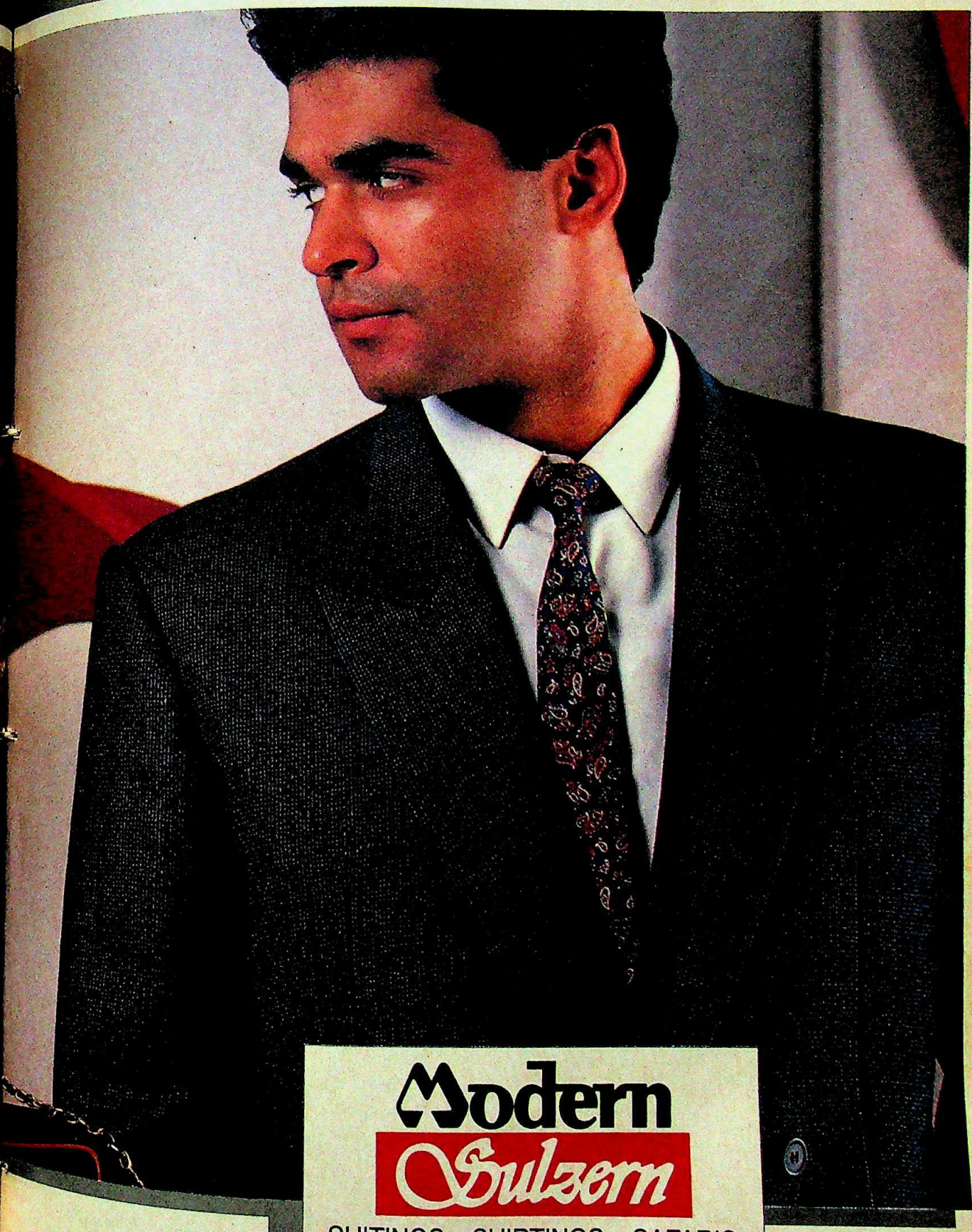

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12.54.40 C	(C) Incoming Call Time
13.01.08 E	(E) Call End Time
00.06.28 =	(=) Duration of Call
20.50.10 M	(M) Malfunction, Tel Line
20:40.50 T	(T) Tel Line Repaired
87.09.23	Record of Sept 23, 1987
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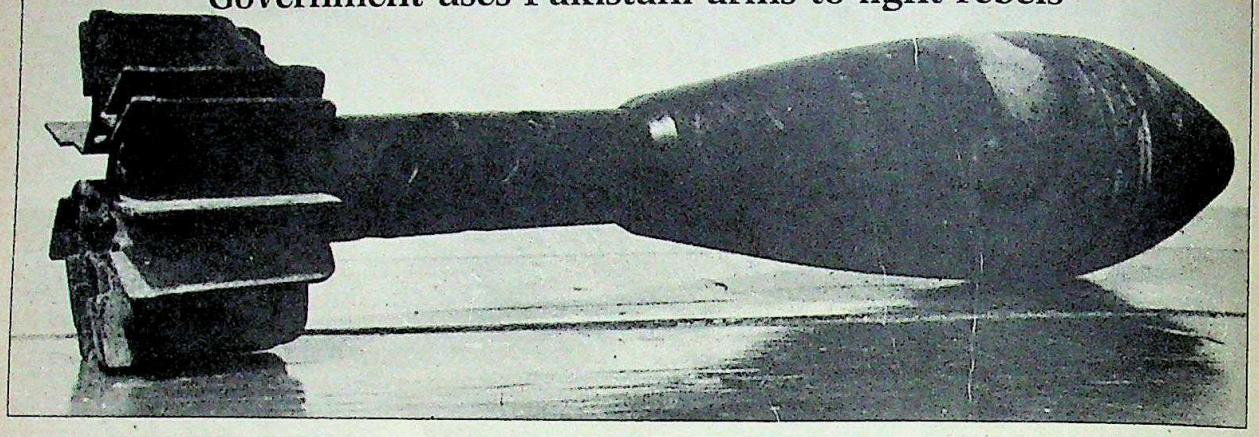
BURMA

The Islamabad Link

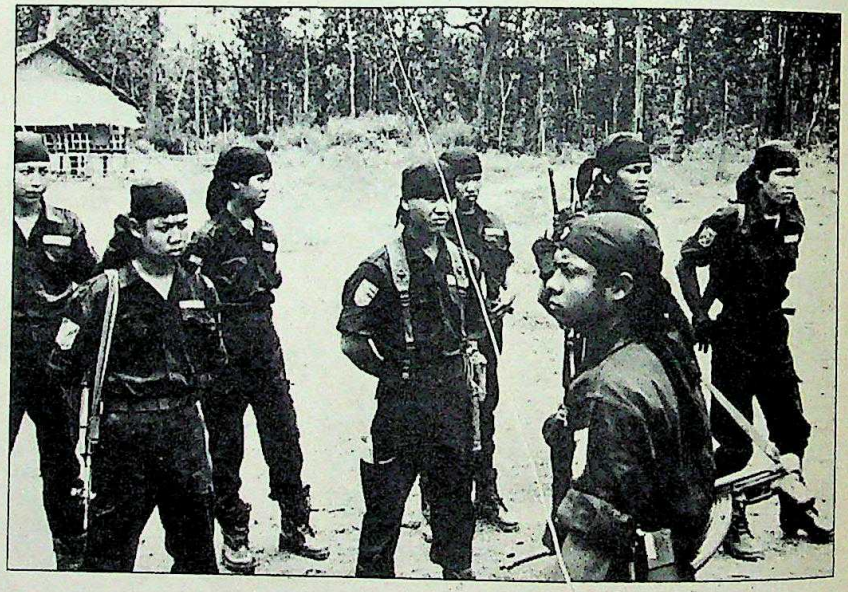
Government uses Pakistani arms to fight rebels



FOR several months now, the rumble of mortars, machine-gun fire and artillery has been heard from the Ye Gyaw guerrilla camp in eastern Burma—now renamed Myanma—near the border with Thailand. In one of its most determined offensives, the Burmese Government has unleashed a spate of attacks against the ethnic Karen rebels and dissident students who fled to resistance camps along the border when martial law was imposed last September.

So far, government forces have been unable to break through a terrain littered with mines and booby traps and have resorted to massive artillery barrages. Some shells have landed, unexploded, in the midst of Kawmoorah, the main guerrilla base near Ye Gyaw. They bear the distinct marking, 'POF'—the Pakistan Ordnance Factory. "We found that the forces were using a new type of weapon a few months ago," says Major Soe Soe of the rebel Karen National Union (KNU). "When we intercepted radio messages from the frontline troops to their rear headquarters, they said 'send those Pakistani fruit and we'll try them out'. We were puzzled, but soon discovered what it was all about."

The first confirmed report of Pakistani arms sales to Burma's military regime came in March when intelligence sources detected that a high-powered delegation had paid an unpublicised visit to Islamabad. The team reportedly included the Commander-in-Chief of the Burmese Air Force Major General Tin Tun, his deputy, Colonel Thein Win, Director of Ordnance Colonel Thein Tun and Director of Defence Industries Colonel Htay Tint. The first deal, signed in March-end, included an initial delivery of 150 machine-guns with 50,000 rounds of ammunition and 5,000 120 mm mortar bombs. This is to be followed by more military hardware later this year. The delegates also visited Pakistan's aviation industry complex, leading to speculation whether Islamabad will sell aircraft to Rangoon—now renamed Yangon—or train Burmese pilots.



Pakistani shell (top); and rebel camp: stiff fight

The news was startling. But diplomatic observers doubt whether Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had endorsed the arms sale to Burma. For, ironically, she is often compared with Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of Burma's pro-democracy movement, for daring to challenge the powerful military rulers of their countries. Aung San Suu Kyi, 44, is the daughter of Burma's national hero, Aung San, who was assassinated in July 1947. Observers feel the arms sale reflects the conflict between Bhutto and the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) and casts doubt on the strength of her Government. Clearly, she cannot control the powerful elements within Pakistan's top brass who make such deals to raise funds for their own war chest.

Whether pure economic incentives or political considerations are the main reasons for the sale of arms to Burma remains a matter for conjecture. Some

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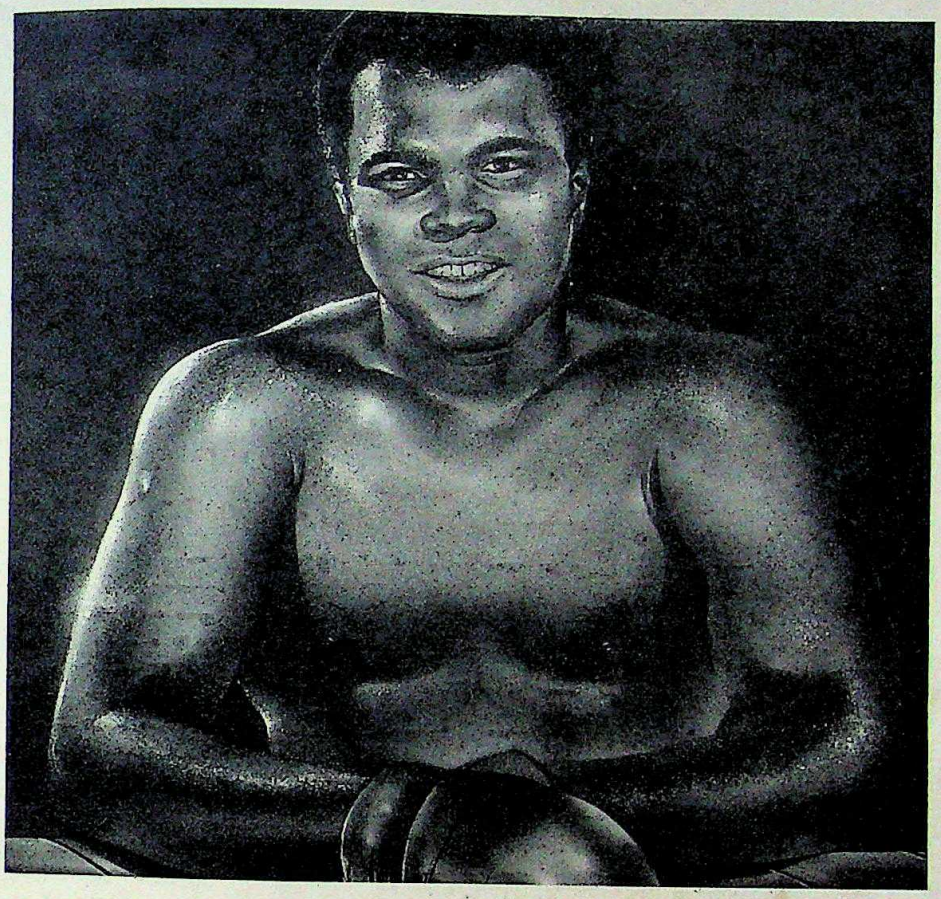

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Dissident students' army: under fire

observers are inclined to believe that the Pakistani military is trying to establish cordial relations with their ruling counterparts in Rangoon as part of a regional strategy which, predictably, has a distinct anti-India bias. Burma shares a porous, 900-mile border with India's sensitive north-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. So, improved relations between Islamabad and Rangoon could directly affect India's national security.

Improved relations between Islamabad and the Government in Burma could directly affect India's national security.

India was, in fact, one of the first countries to express its support for the undaunted resolve of the Burmese people to achieve democracy—as early as on September 10 last year. Later, when thousands of dissidents fled the bloody crackdown that followed the seizure of power by the now ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council on September 18, India became the only neighbour to adopt a clear-cut refugee policy. On October 25, India's Minister for External Affairs P.V. Narasimha Rao told a parliamentary panel that instructions had been issued not to turn back genuine refugees seeking shelter. This is in sharp contrast to Thailand's attitude which has been obscure when not contradictory.

In India, one refugee camp was built at Leikhul in Chandel district of Manipur. Two more camps—mainly for students from the ethnic Chin minority, which is closely related to the Mizos—have been established at Champhai and Saiha in Mizoram. Since then, an increasing number of Burmese students have flocked to India.

India's sympathetic attitude has also been reflected in the frankness of AIR's Burmese service, which has overtaken even BBC's Burmese service in popularity. The government-controlled *Working People's Daily* has over the past six months accused AIR of interfering in Burma's internal affairs. Significantly, AIR's Burmese service is being managed by the son-in-law of former prime minister U Nu who was ousted when the military initially seized power in 1962. U Nu re-emerged as a prominent figure for the pro-democracy movement.

PAKISTAN'S hostile reaction to this movement became apparent in March, shortly before the first Burmese military delegation visited Islamabad. A French resolution, sponsored by Washington and condemning the mass killings of pro-democracy protesters in Burma, was tabled at a meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Commission. Pakistan and China jointly opposed the resolution. Eventually Australia intervened and the commission passed a diluted statement which amounted to a mere slap on the wrist.

Meanwhile, the situation in Burma has only deteriorated further. Thousands of opposition activists have been arrested over the past month. Three-man military tribunals have been set up in Rangoon, Pegu, Mandalay, Sagaing and Magwe divisions and Chin state to try those who violate martial law. Offenders receive one of three sentences: three years' imprisonment with hard labour, life imprisonment or execution.

The draconian measures appear to have cowed the public into submission, at least temporarily, and more young activists have fled to the border areas. New arrivals are reported almost every day at the student camps. Says Tun Aung, 19, a recent arrival at Ye Gyaw: "I'd rather die here than in police custody in Rangoon."

Adds Win Myint, a 23-year-old student from Moulmein: "What can we do in the towns? Only armed struggle remains." He arrived at Ye Gyaw on August 7 after a hazardous trek through the jungles of eastern Burma to find that KNU insurgents, who host the students, are facing shortages of arms and ammunition and that no outside power has so far shown an interest in giving anything but humanitarian aid.

In contrast, the recent acquisition of Pakistani-made arms has increased the Burmese Army's firepower considerably. Hollow explosions echo from the mountain ranges south of Ye Gyaw and heavy gunfire rumbles in the distance. But students and Karen rebels are determined to defend their camps, despite the almost insurmountable odds they are up against. —BERTIL LINTNER in Ye Gyaw

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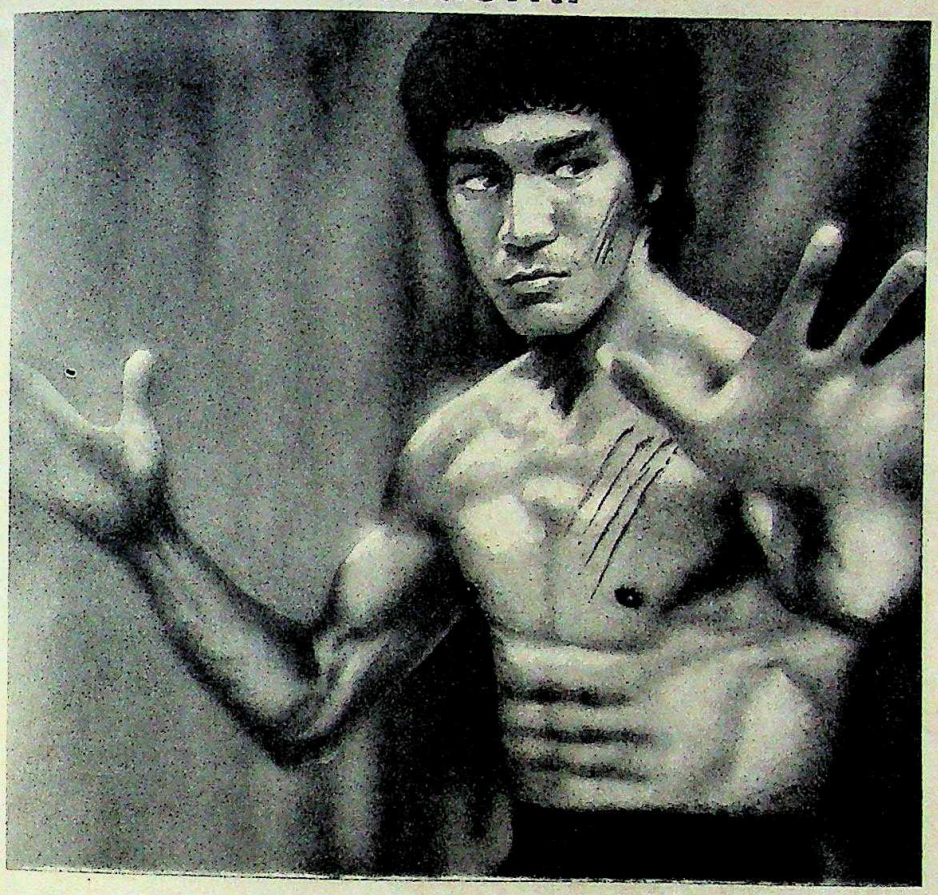
A typical Apple Computer Education student.



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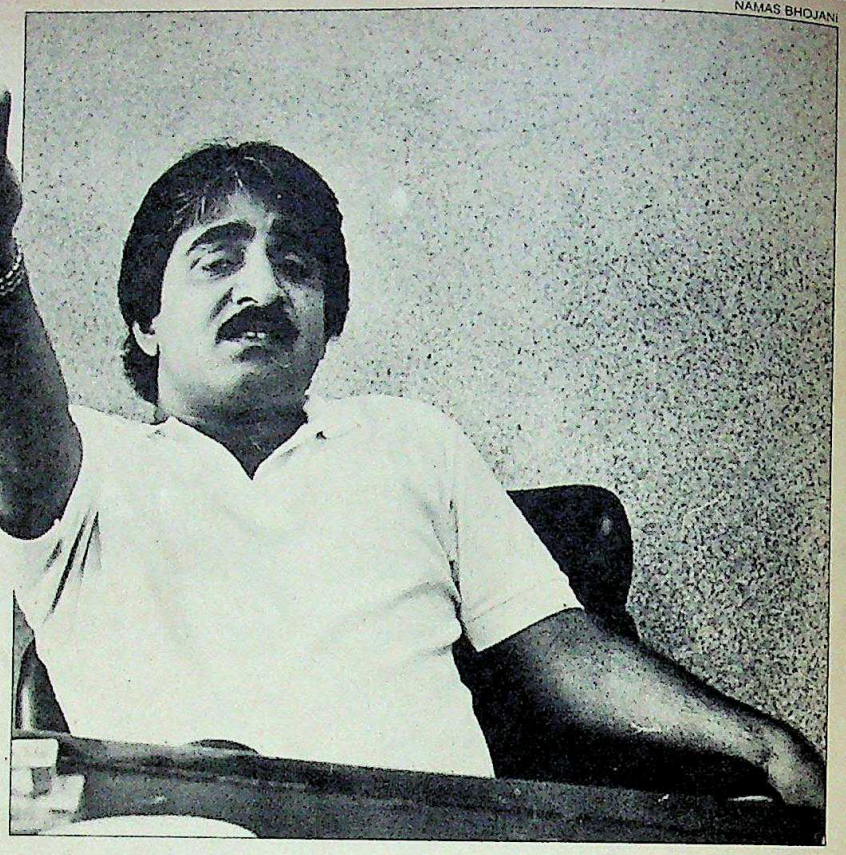
UMESH KATRE

"I don't know any of the Ambanis"



NAMAS BHOJANI

UMESH Katre, 31, the flashy son of CBI *Director Mohan Katre, hit the headlines recently when freelance journalist Maneck Davar scooped documents and a tape-recorded conversation indicating that he was a commission agent for the Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd.*

The story appeared when the CBI *was trying to take over the controversial Wadia murder conspiracy case and Mohan Katre was already being branded pro-Ambani. Umesh, according to the report, solicited clients for the sale of* LAB*—a Reliance product used in the manufacture of detergents. Davar, posing as a detergents manufacturer, not only negotiated a deal for the purchase of* LAB *but also taped Umesh lecturing him on a new detergent, Sasa, promoted by the makers of Lijjat papad.* LAB *is purchased by this company from Reliance. Umesh, officially a garment exporter, conducted the transaction with Davar from the office—which he often uses—of an old friend, Kamlesh Shah, director of Saras Chemicals. Umesh, who rides around in a late-model Mercedes and puffs on State Express cigarettes, agreed to break his silence and spoke to Senior Correspondent* HARINDER BAWEJA. *Excerpts:*

Q. *What is your relationship with the Shahs?*

A. Kamlesh and his brothers have been good friends for 15 years. Their father, Bhogilal Shah, has known my dad for 20 years. When I left Mafatlals and started Spice Islands Apparels, Bhogilal offered me use of this office.

Q. *Can't you operate from home?*

A. All members of that housing society are government officers. They would not have allowed commercial activity on the premises.

Q. *You could have rented a one-room place like this?*

A. Just can't afford it. Diners Club offers the facility for an independent office, but secretarial staff is theirs. My work needs confidentiality. Besides, banks, RBI, Apparel Exports, Shipping Agency, they're all located here.

Q. *You have got good contracts—one from Germany worth Rs 50 lakh?*

A. Contracts don't mean profits. It doesn't mean I can buy an office.

Q. *How did you acquire an intimate knowledge of the chemicals business?*

A. I don't have an intimate knowledge of chemicals. I only know of the product Kamlesh deals with from this office, and through publications of Lijjat. The Lijjat concept was a new idea in marketing. And that's what I discussed with Davar. If I had intimate knowledge, I would have asked him how the hell he planned to make detergents with LAB.

Q. *But you conducted the deal?*

A. Yes. I gave him a quotation, and later Kamlesh confirmed the prices. I also accepted the draft. I was tying up the details for my Cologne trip when this guy pulls out the letter and asks me to acknowledge it. I put my initials. My fault is I failed to see that it was addressed to me as director of Saras Chemicals.

Q. *Which means that Reliance accepts your signature?*

A. I only initialled the letter. That's not my signature. In the letter to Reliance I signed for K.B. Shah. Davar came during lunch hour, there wasn't a soul around. I had to type the letter. He fixed a time with Kamlesh, but deliberately came an hour late, after Kamlesh left.

Q. *But you called up Thyagarajan, a Reliance official.*

A. I did as I've met him several times here. If I were involved, I would have known that Thyagarajan stopped handling LAB sales in December 1988. I got to know this after I called. I acknowledged receipt of the demand draft as it is as good as cash. It's not for me to verify the antecedents of Brilliance Chemicals (the name Davar gave). No company keeps a record of signatures, unless it's going to a bank. Davar asked me what was the minimum quantity he could buy, and I said three tonnes. It could have been one barrel. I did so to get my friend business. I have no financial interest in any of Kamlesh's companies, forget about Saras. My signing as director does not make me the owner of the company.

Q. *How do you know the Ambanis?*

A. I don't know any of the Ambanis. I have never met any of them personally. All I know is what I read in magazines.

Q. *You haven't met them at parties?*

A. I don't get invited to parties they go to. I have sometimes seen Dhirubhai as he's the only guy here who drives a Cadillac. As for Reliance officials, I have met them in this office. I can't keep my eyes and ears closed.

Q. *Did you suspect Davar?*

A. Well, his face looked familiar. If I'm not wrong, he also graduated in '78 and happens to be a class-mate of my friend. I couldn't recall his name, and

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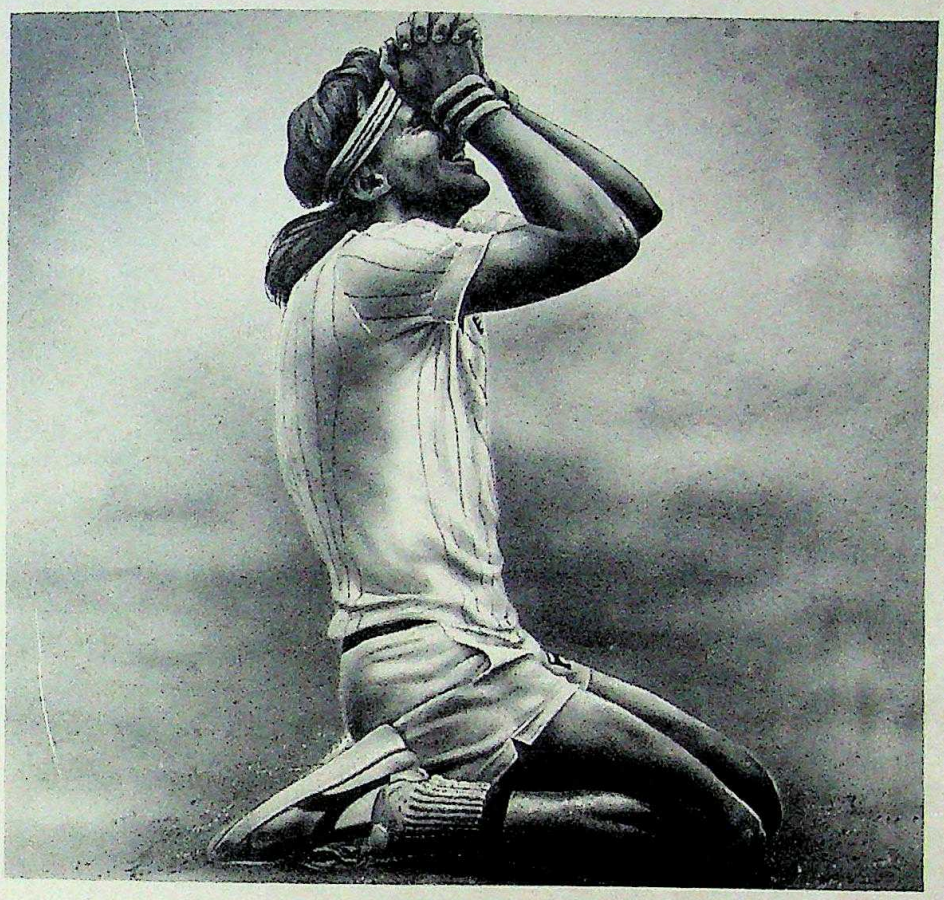
What an Apple Computer Education student feels like on graduation day.



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didn't ask since he hadn't come on a social visit. As for being recorded, I don't remember him coming with a bag. But on both occasions he was wearing a jacket. He should have straight-away asked me. I have nothing to hide. I don't deny that I signed for Kamlesh. I maintain that till I am working here I will continue to help Kamlesh. I don't care what people say.

Q. *You've embarrassed your father.*

A. The very fact that I'm sitting here is because I know the Shahs won't approach my father for a favour.

Q. *The Opposition is demanding his resignation.*

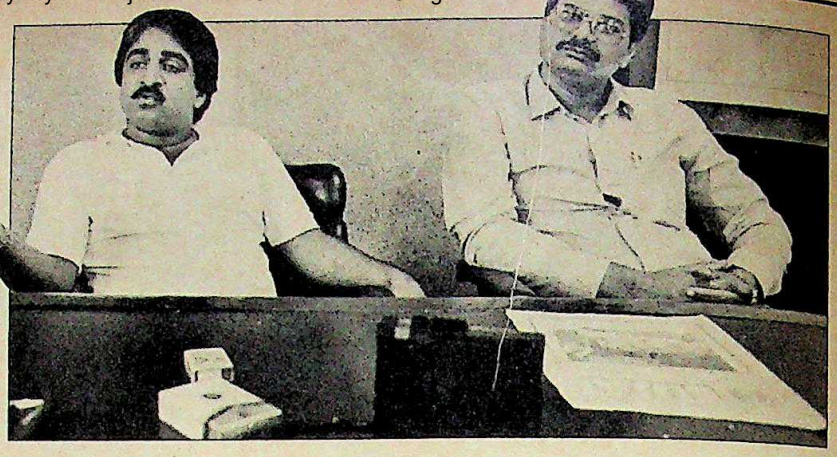
A. The Opposition has been after him ever since V.P. Singh was thrown out of the Cabinet. Does it mean I shouldn't do any business? V.P. Singh says he doesn't ask his son about his business. So why should my father be asked?

Q. *But your father may not get his third extension now.*

A. There are many rumours. From the beginning my dad has been saying that he isn't interested in extensions. The *Express* has been writing against him since 1987. Extensions are not based on press reports. The Government has its system of verifying facts. By accepting his report, the Government has shown its confidence in him.

Q. *What was your father's reaction to the expose?*

A. I spoke to him from Cologne. Initially he was perturbed, but I couldn't comment as I hadn't read the articles. Any father would have reacted similarly. Later he realised it was a damn trap. He advised me not to sign any more letters. But then Kamlesh has signed as director for me; he also attends meetings with my buyers.



Umesh with Shah: fending charges

I have no financial interests in any of Kamlesh's companies. My signing as director does not make me the owner of Saras.

I am paying Kamlesh a monthly lease of Rs 11,000 for the use of the car. In my trade I need the Mercedes.

Q. *How could you afford to buy a Mercedes Benz?*

A. I don't own the Mercedes. I have a Maruti which I purchased in 1987. The Mercedes I have been using was bought from STC. Kamlesh and I both filled in tenders, and his was higher. I'm paying Kamlesh a monthly lease of Rs 11,000 for the car. In the fashion trade, I need to use the Mercedes.

Q. *How much money do you earn from Spice Island?*

A. I started only in March. It's too premature to talk of profits. Don't ask for figures. I have two contracts from Germany, one from UK and I am negotiating one in Cologne.

Q. *It is alleged that the CBI director protects the Ambanis.*

A. The best person to ask this question is my father. This matter is *sub judice.*

Q. *It is believed that your house has been furnished by the Ambanis.*

A. Totally untrue. I did ask my father-in-law, who was working for Aramco in Saudi Arabia, to bring me a few items. I have re-paid him over the years. My furniture was brought from Mafatlal Mysore Plywood at a discount because I was an employee.

Q. *Are you planning action against Davar?*

A. I have written to him, saying he did not verify facts either with me directly or with my father. He's still to get back to us for the demand draft. His money is with Kamlesh. We are putting together the data and will take suitable action.

Umesh with wife: flashy life-style

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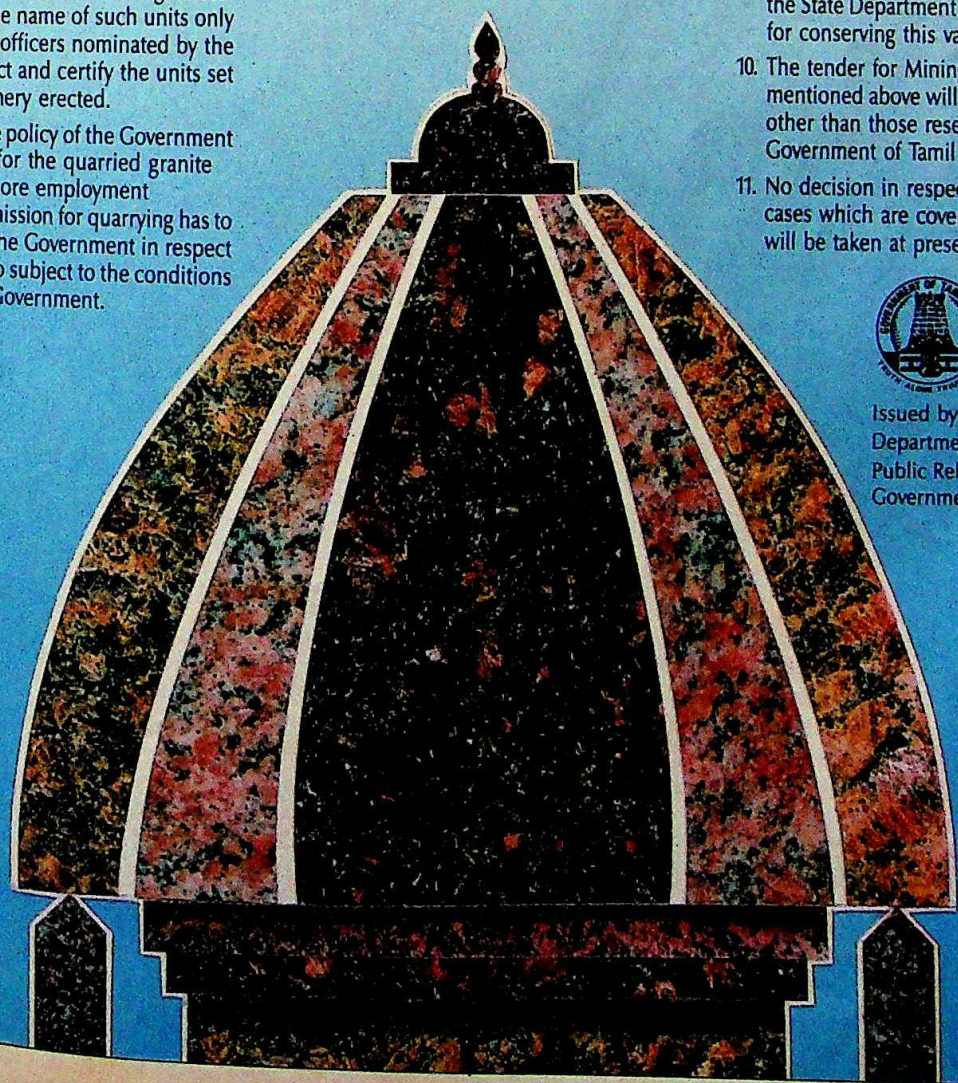
SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT BY GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU ON GRANITE MINING LEASES

1. The liberalised policy initiated during the President's Rule in 1988 in respect of granite Mining Leases will be continued, to promote further development of granite-based industry in this State.
2. Grant of quarry leases in poromboke lands will be restricted to existing cutting and polishing units and to those applicants who give a definite and time-bound programme of putting up cutting and polishing units within a period of two years.
3. Letters of Commitment will be issued to the successful tenderers having an Industrial programme either with Letters of Indent issued by the Government of India or Small Scale Industries Registration Certificates issued by the Directorate of Industries. Mining leases will be issued in the name of such units only after the technical officers nominated by the Government inspect and certify the units set up and the machinery erected.
4. In pursuance of the policy of the Government on value addition for the quarried granite besides creating more employment opportunities, permission for quarrying has to be obtained from the Government in respect of "Patta" lands also subject to the conditions laid down by the Government.
5. Granite quarries will henceforth be leased to granite cutting and polishing industries on the basis of sealed tenders where there are more than one application. Where there is only one application, the case will be processed through a committee constituted by the Government.
6. Unit holders/individuals with a definite granite industrial programme will be permitted to take on lease only such extents as are required for full production as per their industrial license.
7. The tender will be only for the right to exploit the reserves in the specified granite quarries. The tender amount will be collected in one lump-sum on the date of opening of the tender. In addition, seigniorage, Local Cess and Local Cess Surcharge will be payable at rates fixed from time to time, on each cubic metre of granite quarried.
8. A tender once confirmed, the Mining Lease will be for a period of 10 years and can be renewed for a further period of ten years only without further tenders, on payment of an amount equal to 150% of the bid amount at the initial tender before the end of the tenth year. The continuance of the mining lease and its renewal will be subject to the unit continuing the granite processing industry as such mining lease grantees will not have the right to export rough blocks of granite.
9. The lessees will be insisted upon to do scientific mining as advised by the officers of the State Department of Geology and Mining for conserving this valuable mineral.
10. The tender for Mining Leases of granite mentioned above will apply only to the areas other than those reserved for TAMIN, a Government of Tamil Nadu undertaking.
11. No decision in respect of areas and cases which are covered under Court Stay will be taken at present.



Issued by
Department of Information and Public Relations,
Government of Tamil Nadu.

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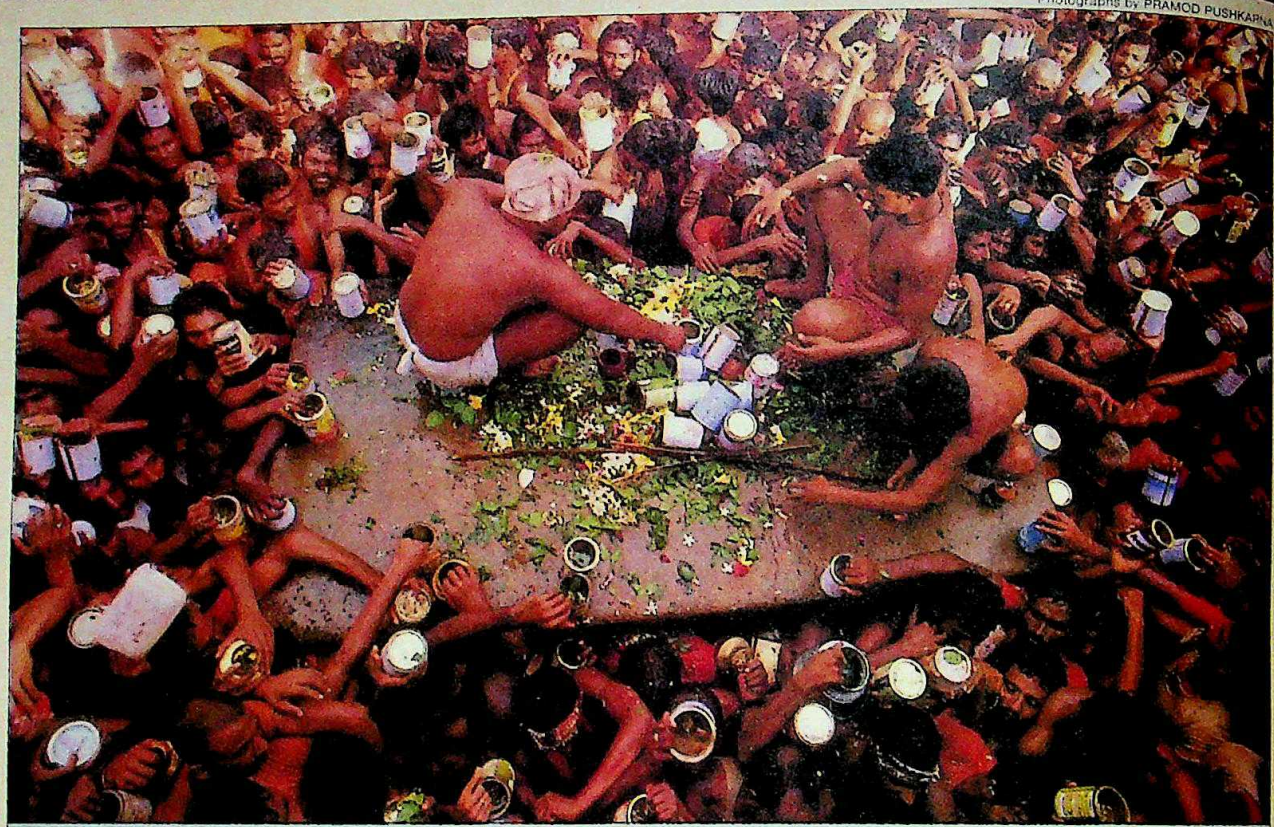
Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



■ Crowds at the temple: Shiva's army

DEOGHAR TEMPLE

The Long March

Lakhs undertake the arduous pilgrimage

FROM afar, it resembles a sea of saffron stretching into the horizon. Up close, it is transformed into a mass of surging humanity, borne aloft on a tidal wave of faith and fervour. They are Shiva's army—men, women, and children, the old and the infirm, the rich and the poor, marching together in an awesome display of religious obeisance.

Each year, in the month of Shravana (July-August), thousands of Shiva worshippers gather together for a long and punishing 102-km trek to Deoghar in Bihar. They come from all over the country—and from neighbouring nations like Nepal and Bhutan—in a collective act of faith that is as remarkable for its intensity as for the back-breaking nature of the pilgrimage. Says Narinder Pal Singh, joint secretary in the Union Ministry of Industries, who was among this year's pilgrims: "This trek is a great leveller".

Plump and prosperous housewives jostle with government officials, politicians rub elbows with paupers and ancient crones hobbling along on canes obstruct little children as they converge at Sultanganj in Bhagalpur district, all dressed in saffron robes.

This is where the holy Ganges takes an abrupt turn towards the north and where the actual pilgrimage begins. A dip in the Ganges is followed by prayers and collection of water from the river in small pitchers. Then begins the arduous trek to Deoghar, where the presiding deity is Shiva, the Hindu god of both destruction and fertility.

Barring a few hours in the night, the stream of saffron never stops moving during the entire month. Officials estimate that this year, an average of 1 lakh pilgrims reached Deoghar every day, many having walked the distance without a single stop.

The distance is daunting enough. But the conditions are even more so. Braving the heat and humidity, pilgrims walk barefoot over rocky hills and through jungles, often wading through rivers and streams swollen with monsoon rains. On their shoulders, each one carries a few litres of water slung from a staff which is adorned with bells and joss sticks. Toilets are non-existent and accommodation inadequate. Most pilgrims rest by the roadside or under canvas shelters provided by the Government. Walking over 30 km a day, the entire distance is usually covered by the pilgrims in around three days. Women and the elderly take longer, while the more energetic attempt to traverse the route virtually non-stop.

The non-stop walkers are called 'Dak Kanwarias'. Policemen log their time of departure and hand over a slip of paper which is produced before the magistrate once they reach the Deoghar temple. There, the time of arrival is logged again and the exhausted devotees given priority in entering the temple.

Hem Chandra Jha, the temple magistrate, says that 15,000 devotees attempted to cover the distance non-stop this year. Less than 4,000 succeeded in doing so. "Those who walk non-stop usually collapse on arrival and have to be revived. For hours they are barely able to stand, let alone walk," says Jha. Even so, the feat, fuelled as it is by fervour, is an incredible one.

As Dr A.K. Pandey, the deputy commissioner at Deoghar, says: "Take the

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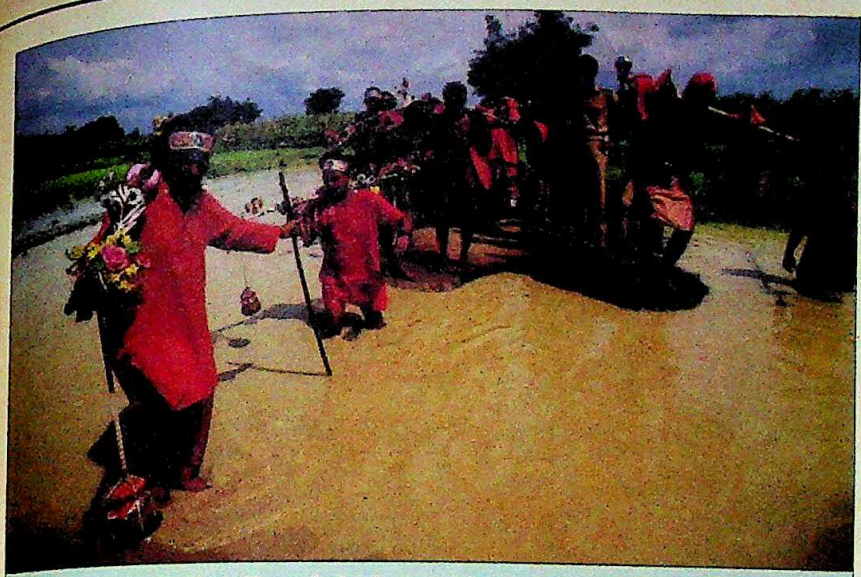
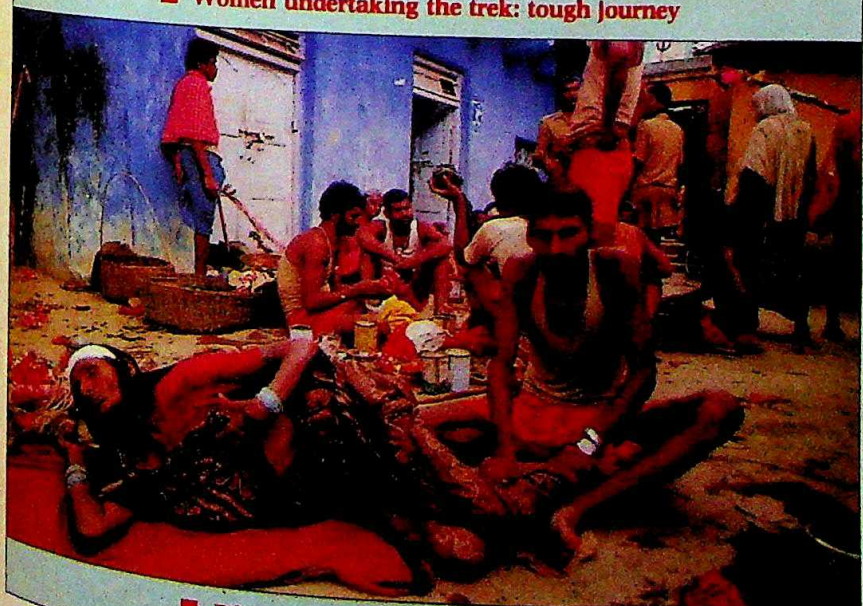


■ Saffron-clad pilgrims: absolute devotion

■ Women undertaking the trek: tough journey



■ Pilgrims resting en route: poor facilities

veneer of religion off and you can see this as a great sporting event that deserves a place in the *Guiness Book of Records*." Concurs N.P. Singh, who along with wife Krishna, also an IAS officer, took part in this year's pilgrimage: "Those who hunt for athletic talent in this country should come here and see the amazing feat of these people."

KRISHNA Kumari, in her late twenties and working as a teacher in Muzaffarpur, has already become a part of Deoghar's folklore. She walks from Sultanganj to Deoghar once every week during the month. Each time she walks non-stop and covers the 102 km in around 13 hours. Last year, the district administration at Deoghar took the extraordinary step of honouring her at a public function.

Equally remarkable is eight-year-old Pankaj Kumar, who walked the distance this year in just 16 hours. Pankaj was separated from his parents and tagged along with a group of 'Dak Kanwarias'. His distraught parents reached the Deoghar temple three days later to find him already there.

The motivation, however, is not athletic acclaim but religious fervour. The devotees have absolute faith that Shiva will grant their wishes. Ambika Ram from Aurangabad, was participating for the fourth time. Says he: "The first year I came because I had no job and I prayed for one. The lord heard my prayer and I got a job within a few months." Kameshwar Razak, a washerman, believes that the pilgrimage cured his asthma, just as Ganesh Sah says he escaped unhurt from a bus accident in which many died, simply because he had undertaken the walk.

Many barren couples undertake the punishing journey in the hope of getting a child. If they do indeed have a child, the toddler is taken along on the trek to invoke Shiva's blessings.

Like other temple towns, Deoghar is completely sustained by the pilgrims. Publishers churn out books on the temple and cassettes of bhajans sell like hot cakes. The various stalls in the town have an estimated turnover of around Rs 6 crore during this one month alone while incense and joss sticks worth around a crore of rupees are burnt over the same period.

That, ultimately is what mars such religious gatherings. The sight of such faith and devotion is awe-inspiring. But each year, it gets more and more diluted by the growing commercialisation. At the end of the long march, Shiva's people are greeted with the bhajans—adapted from Hindi pop songs.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA in Deoghar.

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26 shades in blue alone. Surf Blue, Pigeon Blue, Manor Blue, Blue Bell, Blue Chip, Sapphire, Starry Night, Holiday Sky, Sky Way, Porcelain Cloud ... and 15 more.

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And all the shades are ready-to-paint. So, there's no need to mix 'n' match colours. The shade in your mind will be the shade on your walls. Anytime you want, too. The shades are readily available.

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DOORDARSHAN

Patriotic Plugs

New serials whip up nationalistic fervour

PATRIOTISM is now the zing thing. The pride-in-the-country feeling being whipped up on Doordarshan by a deluge of patriotic ads is being more than matched by TV serials extolling the virtues of India's past and present. Inevitably, the drum-beating is being viewed in the context of the coming elections.

It's all very subtle. Once the idea of "the joyous feeling" (as admen call it) about India is sold, you are that much closer to finding an image to peg that feeling on—be it the Congress(I) or its leaders who're shown as the real inheritors of the freedom struggle's legacy.

"They are playing the epic quality of the freedom struggle to the hilt," says TV producer, Ramesh Sharma. "And the country now equals the Congress."

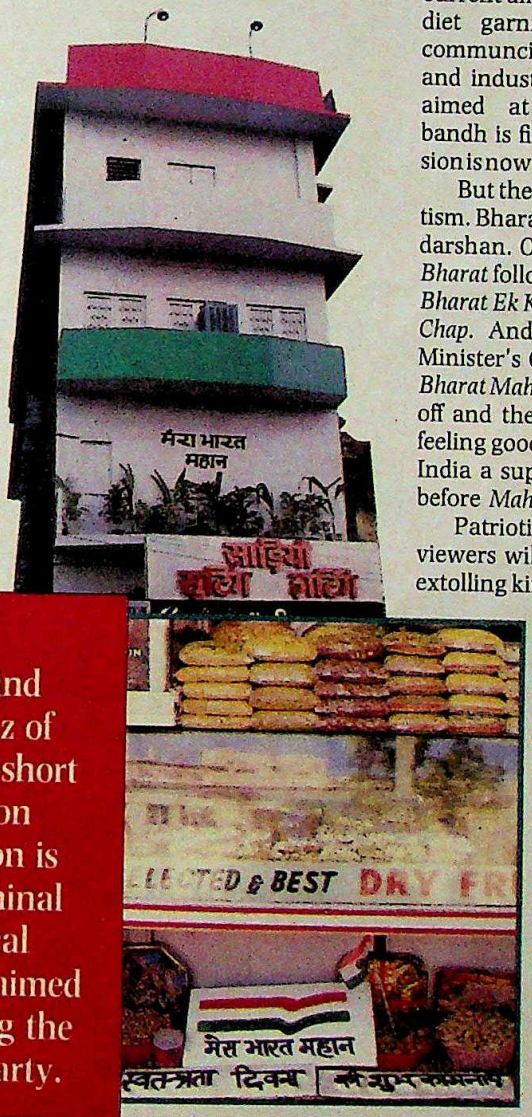
The political message is subtly subliminal. The ruling party's efforts to wrap itself round the tricolour conveniently allows for the fact that its flag is a clone of the national flag. And the refrain in the *Mera Bharat Mahan* shots, "*Zara haath tum badhao*" (Give a hand), can be seen to allude to the Congress(I) symbol.

Says an angry TV producer: "The presumption is that those who don't support the Congress(I) are not patriotic." Adds Sashi Kumar, executive producer of PTI Television: "The worst thing you can do is to advertise citizenship."

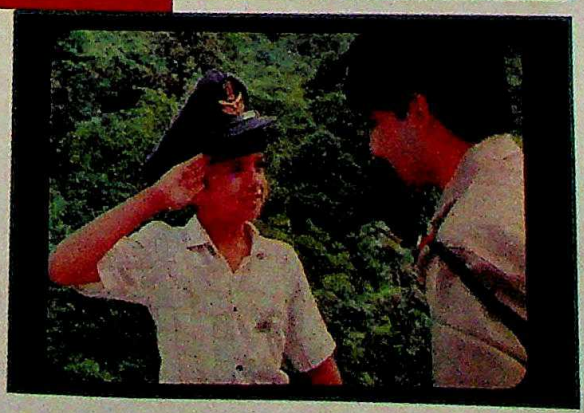
But the creators of these films do not see them as propaganda. "We only seek to create a joyous feeling which can momentarily make you feel good about your country," says Suresh Mulick, creative director of OBM who conceived the moving *Mile sur mera tumhara* and Freedom torch films. For Syeda Imam of Contract, creating the *Mera Bharat Mahan* series was an effort to "do something about the penumbra of bleakness in the country".

Apart from programmes like *India Emerges*, which has India-born foreign experts praise the country's endeavours, there are countless films being made on India's great leap forward.

The selling of Bharat is on a war footing with the result that budgets for programming are going haywire. Says a disappointed producer: "My project was not cleared because allocations for tele-films have been shifted to communication plan films—a euphemism for poll propaganda—for Jawahar Rozgar and Panchayti Raj, Nehru and all the agro-pop films." Mandarins of the I&B Ministry have a ready explanation: "We are going through difficult times. Even the army says that morale is low due to the loss of soldiers in Sri Lanka and Siachen."



Behind the blitz of patriotic short films on television is a subliminal political message aimed at helping the ruling party.



The propaganda machine, say some, is now really getting into top gear. Till recently there were two weekly slots for current affairs: *Focus* and *Aaj Kal*. Now, current affairs are a staple Doordarshan diet garnished with films extolling communciations, technology missions and industrial progress. The blitzkrieg aimed at the opposition-sponsored bandh is final confirmation that television is now part of the electoral armoury.

But the overall disguise is still patriotism. Bharat has literally hijacked Doordarshan. On Sunday for instance *Mera Bharat* follows *Mahabharat*. Then comes *Bharat Ek Khoj*. There was also *Bharat ki Chap*. And not long back the Prime Minister's Office ordered that the *Mera Bharat Mahan* film with the rocket taking off and the remark of the young man feeling good as *Time* magazine considers India a superpower, should be telecast before *Mahabharat*.

Patriotism is also going pop. Soon viewers will be able to boogie to songs extolling kin and country. Doordarshan plans to telecast a weekly 40-minute programme on Indian pop music produced by Remo Fernandez, Usha Uthup, Sharon Prabhakar, Gurdas Singh Mann and Louis Banks. The theme songs will be national integration, communal harmony and being and buying Indian.

How have people reacted to Doordarshan's patriotic binge? Interestingly, while the older generation sees it as an election gimmick, the average youth seems to react positively. Says Urvashi Narayan, 20, from Delhi School of Economics: "These ads are reassuring. We need such things."

The question still remains: will an overdose of jingoism on the tube help sell the Government in power or will it backfire? But for the present, the medium has got the message. —MADHU JAIN

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Highlighted by Arya Samaj Kanya Maha Vidyalaya Chowk, Lucknow

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ASSAM

BISWANATH CHARALI: Uday Shankar Stores
☐ **SILCHER:** Hospital Road, Ravi Prakash Anand & Co.

BIHAR

PATNA: Muradpur, M/s Steel Corner, Opp. Bankipur Post Office.

KERALA

ALWAYE: Catholic Centre, Wireless Metro

MAHARASHTRA

BOMBAY: Dadar, Dhiraj Sales Corporation, 33, Padhye Wadi, Bhavani Shankar Road • Jacob Circle, Ramanlal Jayantilal & Co. Opp. Church • Malad, Bharat Appliances, 19C, Natraj Market, S.V. Road • Thane, Gokhale Road, Mahavir, Hem Shopping Centre, Naupada

ORISSA

CUTTACK: Mahatab Road, Indian Industries, Near Sangam Cinema

PUNJAB

AMRITSAR: Hall Bazar, M/s Harbans Crockery Store • Pratap Bazar, M/s Puri Battery Store

RAJASTHAN

BHARATPUR: Neem Da gate, Kishori Shyam Brijesh Kumar

TAMIL NADU

MADRAS: Nyniyappa Naicken St., S. Santosha Nadar Sons, No. 88 ☐ **MADURAI:** Kamarajar Salai, S. Chelliah Nadar & Sons, No. 267

UTTAR PRADESH

KANPUR: Harsh Nagar, M/s M K Agencies, 111/2, 1st floor, Opp. Bank of India

WEST BENGAL

CALCUTTA: Chandni Chowk St., Crockery Centre, 4/B, Chandni Chowk St. ☐ **DURGAPUR:** Benachity, Jyoti
KHARAGPUR: Gol Bazar, Hindustan Stores, Railway Market
☐ **RANAGHAT:** Bhangrapara, Chakrabarty Distributors, Kalimoy Ghatak Lane

DELHI

DELHI: Chandani Chowk, Bhagwan Dass Jagannath, 633, Opp. Kucha Narwan • Connaught Place, M/s Jankidas & Company, 23/F, Connaught Place • Gandhi Nagar, M/s Des Raj Ram Prakash, 513/26, Main Road • Kamala Nagar, M/s Crockery Emporium, Shop No. 11-F • Karol Bagh, M/s Vishal Bartan Bhandar, 2568, Ajmal Khan Road • Lajpat Nagar, M/s National Bartan Bhandar, 34, Central Market • Sarojini Nagar, M/s Vandana, 93, Sarojini Nagar Market • Shahdara, M/s Agarwal Bartan Store, 1/6966, Shivaji Park • Tota Ram Bazar, M/s Jain Electronics, 1532, Tri Nagar

ANDHRA PRADESH

GUNTUR: Main Road, Mattupalli Sambamurthy, Arundelpet ☐ **HYDERABAD:** 4, 5, 118/119, Sultan Bazar, Baliram Khiyaram ☐ **JAGTIAL:** Ram Bazar, Padmaja Enterprises ☐ **KAKINADA:** 13.1.62, Suryaraopet, Gupta Emporium ☐ **KURNOOL:** 40-20 Park Road, Andhra Kitchenwares ☐ **NELLORE:** China Bazar, Kumar Agency ☐ **NIZAMABAD:** Municipal Complex, Varsha Enterprises ☐ **VIJAYAWADA:** Governor Pet, Jyoti Metals, Prakasam Road ☐ **VISHAKAPATNAM:** Main Road, Bombay Gas Light House

ASSAM

BARPETA: B.B. Road, Dipali Stores ☐ **BONGAIGAON:** Main Road, Ravi Prakash Anand & Co. ☐ **DHUBRI:** D.D. Road, G.C. Roy & Sons ☐ **DIBRUGARH:** H.S. Road, Verma Crockery Stores ☐ **DIGBOI:** I.O.C. Market, Nath Brothers ☐ **GOAL PARA:** Chawk Bazar, Bijoy Stores ☐ **GOLAGHAT:** Kalpana Enterprises ☐ **GUWAHATI:** Paltan Bazar, Ravi Prakash Anand & Co ☐ **JORHAT:** Gurdi, Roy & Co ☐ **KARIMGANJ:** Station Road, Stationery Stores ☐ **LUMDING:** Kalibari Road, S. Dutta & Sons ☐ **NALBARI:** N.T. Road, Maruti Electronics ☐ **NORTH LAKHIMPUR:** N.T. Road, Dutta Brothers **NOWGONG:** Marwari Patty, S.P. Banerjee & Sons, A.T. Road ☐ **SIBSAGAR:** Temple Road, Chimanlal Agarwalla ☐ **TEZPUR:** Main Road, Sajawat ☐ **TINSUKIA:** G.N. Bardolai Road, Ravi Prakash Anand & Co

BIHAR

BEGUSARAI: Main Road, M/s Deo Brothers ☐ **BETTIAH:** Lal Bazar, M/s Sagar ☐ **BHAGALPUR:** D.N. Singh Road, M./s Mela Stores ☐ **CHAS:** Bye Pass Road, M/s Femina ☐ **DEHRI-ON-SONE:** Cinema Road, M/s Glassina ☐ **DEOGARH:** Shyamganj Road, M/s Baidyanath Electric Stores ☐ **FORBESGANJ:** S.K. Road, M/s Dalmia Distributors ☐ **GAYA:** G.B. Road, Pappu Trading Company, Gole Pathar ☐ **GIRIDIH:** Chowk Bazar, M/s Shankar Traders ☐ **KATIHAR:** Mangal Bazar, Bhowmick Stores ☐ **LAHERIASARAI:** Baker Ganj, Dayal Crockery House ☐ **MOTIHARI:** Main Road, Steel House ☐ **MUNGER:** Town Hall Road, M/s Jalan Traders ☐ **MUZAFFARPUR:** Moti Jhil, M/s New Stainless Emporium • Saryaganj, Bharat Glass Co ☐ **PATNA:** Boring Road, M/s H.C. Enterprises, Nepali Kothi • New Market, M/s Crockenico ☐ **PURNEA:** Bhatta Bazar, M/s Lakhanlal & Co. ☐ **RANCHI:** Main Road, M/s Udayan ☐ **RAXAUL:** Bank Road, M/s Pawan Stores ☐ **SAMASTIPUR:** Magardahi Road, M/s Raja Steel ☐ **SASARAM:** Nawratan Bazar, M/s Ashoka Stores ☐ **SIWAN:** Darbar Cinema Compound, M/s Saran Electric Works

GOA

MADGAON: Behind Municipality, T.D. Parodkar & Co, P.O. Box No. 65 ☐ **PONDA:** Shanta Electric Stores ☐ **VASCO DA GAMA:** Daurado Bldg, Barkat Ali Traders

GUJARAT

AHMEDABAD: Three Gates, Bombay Novelty Stores, 1839/1, Near Three Gates ☐ **RAJKOT:** Sangamwar Chowk, Apsara Agencies ☐ **SURAT:** Bundelwad Bhagal, Shah Thakordas Jivanram, Kururaj ☐ **VADODARA:** Kansara Bazar, Popatlal Krishanlal Kansara, Mahatma Gandhi Road

HARYANA

AMBALA CANTONMENT: Sodagar Bazar, M/s Jagat Singh & Sons **AMBALA CITY:** Jain Bazar, M/s Janta Crockery & Gen Stores ☐ **JAGADHARI:** Railway Road, M/s O.P. Metal Industries

HIMACHAL PRADESH

KULU: Akhara Bazar, M/s Vigsons (General Stores) ☐ **MANDI:** Gandhi Chowk, M/s Roop Chand Dalip Chand ☐ **NAGROTA BHAGWAN:** Nichal Bazar, M/s Dharam Paul & Sons ☐ **SHIMLA:** 3, The Mall, M/s Jankidas & Company ☐ **SOLAN:** Upper Bazar, M/s Sahni Brothers Departmental Stores

JAMMU & KASHMIR

SRINAGAR: Tenkey Pura, M/s Ahuja Agencies, Opp. D.C. Courts ☐ **JAMMU:** Raghunath Bazar, M/s Ladhumal Des Raj Jain, New Market

KARNATAKA

BANGALORE: 11, Brigade Road, Pots And Pans, Curzon Complex, • Chickpet, Raja Trading Co., Shop No. 80 D • Jayanagar, Sarathy Metal Mart, 16, 19th Main 3rd Block • Richard Square Adams & Co, Shop No. 19 ☐ **BELGAUM:** Maruti Galli, Revankar Agencies, Ramprasad Building ☐ **CHIKMANGALUR:** Ratnagiri Road, Multi Agencies, P.B. No. 8 ☐ **HASSAN:** Subhash Square, Novelty House ☐ **MANGALORE:** K.S. Rao Road, Super Suppliers, Gokul Market ☐ **MYSORE:** Ashoka Road, Sudha Metal Stores ☐ **SHIMOGA:** Nehru Road, Sadhana Trading Co ☐ **UDIPI:** Opp. City Bus Stand, Ganesh Traders

KERALA

CALICUT: Muthalakulam, Bright Metals ☐ **CANNANORE:** Camp Bazar, Stainless Steel Centre ☐ **CHALAKUDY:** Pellicherry Bldg., Sinni Vessels ☐ **ERNAKULAM:** Broadway, Anthony Francis & Son ☐ **KOTTAYAM:** K.K. Road, Kems Agencies, M.D. Commerce Centre ☐ **MUVATTUPUZHA:** New Bazaar, Mini Stores ☐ **PALGHAT:** G.B. Road, Steel Palace, 13/108 ☐ **PARAKKAL:** 567/B1, Main Road, Karma Enterprises ☐ **PATHANAMTHITTA:** Private Bus Stand, Lekha Traders ☐ **TELLICHERRY:** Logans Road, Sreenivas Electronic Co ☐ **THODUPUZHA:** Market Road, J and P Metals ☐ **TIRUR:** Overbridge Road, Sagar Agencies, XX/544 ☐ **TRICHUR:** Round South, Kerala Leather Co. ☐ **TRIPUNITHURA:** East Fort Gate, Maria Steel House ☐ **TRIVANDRUM:** Chalai Bazaar, S. Ibrahim & Co, Ibrahim Buildings

MADHYA PRADESH

BALAGHAT: Main Road, M/s Metal House ☐ **BETUL:** Kothi Bazar, M/s Goodwill Stores ☐ **BHOPAL:** Hamidia Road, M/s Radio Palace ☐ **BILASPUR:** Sadar Bazar, M/s Vijay Stores ☐ **CHHATARPUR:** Mahal Road, M/s Agrasen Emporium ☐ **CHHINDWARA:** Station Road, M/s Mayur, Char Phatak ☐ **GWALIOR:** Sarafa Bazar, M/s Dhomraj Hazarilal Kosera • Topi Bazar, M/s Pahooram Pesuram Lokwani ☐ **INDORE:** Pipli Bazar Chauraha, M/s Cooker House, 370, Jawahar Marg ☐ **JABALPUR:** 18, Ashirwad Market, M/s Ashirwad Steel Emporium • 31, Naya Bazar, M/s Peekay Traders ☐ **KHANDWA:** 462, Bombay Bazar, M/s Khandwa Plastic Centre, M.G. Road ☐ **KORBA:** Main Road, M/s Shri Ramgopal Radheyshyam Agarwal ☐ **MANDSAUR:** Station Road, Janata Radios ☐ **MANENDRAGARH:** Main Road, M/s Supreme Electricals ☐ **NARSINGHPUR:** Kandeli, M/s Navin Bartan Bhandar, Gandhi Chowk ☐ **REWA:** Prakash Chowk, M/s Prakash Agencies ☐ **SEONI:** Budhwari Bazar, M/s Vishal Steel Centre ☐ **SHAHDOL:** Main Road, M/s Ashok Traders ☐ **SHAJAPUR:** 106, New Road, M/s A.G. Takatwala ☐ **UJJAIN:** Patni Bazar, M/s Mahalaxmi Patra Bhandar, 125, Jawahar Marg

MANIPUR

IMPHAL: 9, Paona Bazar, Pasa Enterprises

MAHARASHTRA

AHMEDNAGAR: 2554, New Cloth Market, Kashinath Trimbak Rasane, M.G. Road ☐ **AMRAVATI:** S.K. Market, Monica Novelty ☐ **AURANGABAD:** Supari Hanuman Road, Krishna Corporation ☐ **BOMBAY:** Andheri, Hemco Steel Centre, Arasa Shopping Centre, 212 S.V. Road • Borivli, Oswal Steel Centre, 18 Goyal Shopping Centre, Lokmanya Tilak Road • Chembur, Natraj Emporium, Natraj Cinema Bldg., Station Road • Fort, Apna Bazar, Noble Chambers, Ghoga Street • Ghatkopar, Deepak Traders, 24, Laxmi Nivas, M.G. Road • Grant Road, Variety General Stores, 295/97 Lamington Road • Lohar Chawl, Asiatic Electric Trading Co., 46-48 Jay Mahal Bldg. • Mahim, Hawkins Cookers Ltd., Udyog Mandir No, 2, 7 C Pitamber Lane • Mulund, Sha Mishrimal M. Kakriya, 2, Ramkripa ☐ **CHANDRAPUR:** Opp. Netaji Nagar, Gruh Srinagar ☐ **DHULIA:** Agra Road, Silver Shop ☐ **DOMBIVLI:** Opp. Nagar Palika, Pankaj Steel And Novelty, Patkar Building ☐ **GONDIA:** Bazar Chowk, Laxminarayan Bartan Bhandar ☐ **ICHALKARANJI:** 10/152, Near Venkatrao High Shool, Heramb Trade Group ☐ **JALGAON:** 21, Fule Market, Varieties ☐ **KALYAN:** Opp. Chaya Cinema, Ashok Bhandi Bhandar, Murbad Road ☐ **KOLHAPUR:** Shivaji Road, Shetkari Sahakari Sangh Ltd., Shop No. 1 ☐ **MALEGAON:** Gyaneshwar Bldg., N. Joshi Pvt. Ltd., Camp Road ☐ **NAGPUR:** Near Variety Square, M.S. Pande And Sons, Sitabuldi ☐ **NASIK:** Shalimar Building, Vijay Trading Co., Shivaji Road ☐ **PANDHARPUR:** Pachimdwar, Ganjewar Traders, 2894, Pushpanjali ☐ **PUNE:** 635, Raviwar Peth, Jain Metal Corporation • 894, Raviwar Peth, Rajendra And Co., Daruwala Bridge ☐ **RATNAGIRI:** Near Vithal Mandir, Prakash Vastu Bhandar, Main Road ☐ **SANGLI:** Main Road, Shree Ameya Steel Centre, Karmarkar Building ☐ **SATARA CITY:** Moti Chowk, Grahraj Stainless Steel Centre ☐ **SHOLAPUR:** Navi Peth, Sholapur Stainless Steel House, Shop No. 4, Paras Estate ☐ **THANE:** Wagle Estate, Hawkins Cookers Ltd., C-21-22, U Road ☐ **VASHI NEW BOMBAY:** Apna Bazar, Sector 17

MEGHALAYA

SHILLONG: Dhan Kheti, V.K. Ghai & Co., Bawri Mansion

MIZORAM

AIZAWAL: Bara Bazar, B.C. Dey & Sons • Bara Bazar, Eastern Trading Agencies

NAGALAND

MOKOKCHUNG: A.M. ROAD, Hills Enterprises, Nagaland

ORISSA

ANGUL: Medical Road, Agarwalla Enterprisers, Sanjibani Market ☐ **ASKA:** Near Bus Stand, Asoka Enterprises, Main Road ☐ **BALASORE:** Cinema Bazar, Fairdeal Corporation ☐ **BARGARH:** Main Road, Roop Sringar Agencies ☐ **BARIPADA:** Sebasangha Hall, Aero Voice ☐ **BERHAMPUR:** One Way Traffic Road, J K Enterprisers • Bhapur Bazar, Silla Gopalam & Sons ☐ **BHADRAK:** Naya Bazar, Neel Chakra ☐ **BHANJANAGAR:** Main Road, Gopal Agency ☐ **BHAWANIPATNA:** Main Road, Maheswari General Store ☐ **BHUBANESWAR:** Bapuji Nagar, Premier Enterprisers, Choudhury Market ☐ **BURLA:** Main Road, Burla Electricals ☐ **CUTTACK:** Tinkonia Bagicha, Shankar General Stores ☐ **DHENKANAL:** Kanchan Bazar, Beauty House ☐ **JAJPUR ROAD:** Station Road, Sarala Glass House ☐ **JATNI:** Railway Market, Popular Store ☐ **JEYPORE:** M.G. Road, Viswanath Steel Centre ☐ **JHARSUGUDA:** Main Road, Jharsuguda Metal Stores ☐ **KEONJHAR:** New Market, Asha Ladies Corner ☐ **RAJGANGPUR:** Main Road, Pradeep Stores ☐ **ROURKELA:** Sector-5 Market, Selection Centre ☐ **SAMBALPUR:** Gole Bazar, Bharat Steel Centre ☐ **TALCHER:** Hata Tota, Usha Agencies

PUNJAB

BHATINDA: Dhobi Bazar, M/s Bombay Steel & Crockery House, Dr, Radha Krishan Marg ☐ **GURDASPUR:** Hanuman Chowk, M/s Kidarnath & Sons ☐ **HOSHIARPUR:** Phagwara Road, M/s Hawkins Cookers Ltd ☐ **JALANDHAR:** Bazar Sheikhan, M/s Romesh Chander Mitter Paul • G.T. Road, M/s J. Om Prakash & Sons, Opp., Civil Hospital ☐ **LUDHIANA:** Chaura Bazar, M/s Jainsons ☐ **PATIALA:** Arya Samaj Road, M/s Malhotra Stores ☐ **PHAGWARA:** Loha Mandi Road, M/s A.K. Traders

CHANDIGARH

CHANDIGARH: Jagat Singh & Sons, SCO 32, Sector 17-E

RAJASTHAN

AJMER: Kesar Ganj, Goyal Brothers, Station Road ☐ **BANSWARA:** Azad Chowk, M/s Kansara Shambhulal Manaklal, Sadar Bazar ☐ **BHILWARA:** 43, Balaji Market, Talesara Electric Store ☐ **CHITTORGARH:** Meena Nagar, M/s Aap Ki Dookan, Collectory Chauraha ☐ **JAIPUR:** Nehru Bazar, Ashoka (Departmental Store), Near Mayur Cinema • 372/1, Raja Park, Long Life Departmental Store • Tripolia Bazar, M/s Mahaveer General Store, Shop No. 215 ☐ **JODHPUR:** Station Road, Saluja Agencies ☐ **KOTA:** Rampura Bazar, M/s Bafumal & Co., P.B. No. 202 ☐ **SIKAR:** Variety Stores ☐ **UDAIPUR:** Near Zeenipat Chowk, M/s Narendra Trading Co., 132, Bhamashah Marg

TAMIL NADU

COIMBATORE: R.S. Puram, Ideal Gift House, No. 8, East Bashyagarulu Road ☐ **DINDIGUL:** Big Bazaar St., S.M.B. Manickam Nadar, No. 162-163 ☐ **ERODE:** Madhava Krishna St., Universal Traders, No. 32 ☐ **MADRAS:** T. Nagar, Sabhari Distributors, No. 17, Ramnathan St. ☐ **MADURAI:** Amman Sannathi, S.S. Kandasamy Pandian & Sons, No. 3 ☐ **SALEM:** Vasavi Mahal Building, Lavanya Metal Mart, No. 36, I Agraharam ☐ **TRICHY:** N.S.B. Road, Sri Manicka Vinayagar Metal Mart, No. 42-A ☐ **TUTICORIN:** W.G.C. Road, A.G. Durai Agencies, No. 372 ☐ **VELLORE:** Main Bazaar, Anand Agencies, No. 478 ☐ **PONDICHERRY:** Jawaharlal Nehru St., Kandan & Company, No. 22

TRIPURA

AGARTALA: Mantribari Road, TECHNO Corporation

UTTAR PRADESH

AGRA: Johri Bazar, Dada Glass & Crockeries ☐ **ALIGARH:** Mahavirganj, M/s Leela Dhar Babu Lal Kasera ☐ **ALLAHABAD:** Jain Bhavan Chowk, M/s Gur Prasad Hira Lal • Near Power House, M/s Novelty House, 6-C, Kamla Nehru Road ☐ **ANPARA:** Apara Bazar, M/s Moti Radio Centre, Mirzapur Dist. ☐ **AZAMGARH:** Chowk, M/s Jalan Electricals, Azamgarh ☐ **BAHRAICH:** Chowk, M/s Shyam Lal & Sons, Bahraich ☐ **BALIA:** Station Malgodown Road, M/s Vijay Gun House, Balia ☐ **BAREILLY:** Opp. Mission Hospital, M/s Duggals, Civil Lines ☐ **DEHRADUN:** Paltan Bazar, M/s Sushil & Co., 95 ☐ **DEORIA:** Motilal Road, M/s Om Stores, Deoria ☐ **GONDA:** Utraula Road, M/s Paras Steel Emporium, Gonda ☐ **GORAKHPUR:** Townhall Market, M/s Vijay Agencies, 16-17 ☐ **HALDWANI:** Bareilly Road, M/s Sardar Crockery House, Haldwani ☐ **HAPUR:** Railway Road, M/s Crockery Centre, Gandhi Bhavan ☐ **JAUNPUR:** Court Road, M/s Anand Stores, Jaunpur ☐ **JHANSI CITY:** Jawahar Chowk, M/s Saran Brothers, Manik Chowk ☐ **KANPUR:** Amar Market, Gumti No. 5, M/s ISH Electricals, 118/2, Kaushal Puri, opp. Jaihind Cinema • Birhana Road, M/s Supreme Radio & Electric Corpn., Kanpur • Govind Nagar, M/s Universal Sales Corporation, 2/6, Vidyarthi Market ☐ **LAKHIMPUR KHERI:** Main Bazar, Alok Agencies, Champa Bhawan ☐ **LUCKNOW:** Aminabad, M/s Ram Saran & Co., Lucknow • Nazirabad, M/s Kanhaiya Lal Prag Das, 7 ☐ **MEERUT CANTT:** Sadar Bazar, M/s Krishna Crockery House, Meerut Cantt. ☐ **MIRZAPUR:** Sardar Bhagat Singh Road, M/s Krishna Electrical Agency, Weselley Gunj ☐ **MORADABAD:** Opp. Kotwali, M/s Crockery Emporium ☐ **MUGHALSARAI:** M/s Krishna Bandhu, G.T. Road ☐ **MUZAFFARNAGAR:** Kutchery Road, Goel Agencies ☐ **NAUTANWA:** P.O. & Rly Station, M/s Laxmi Bisata Bhandar ☐ **RISHIKESH:** Chetra Road, M/s Moti Ram Rama Kant ☐ **ROORKEE:** Civil Lines, M/s Moradabad House ☐ **SAHARANPUR:** Nehru Market, M/s Nihal Chand Harbans Lal, 14 ☐ **SULTANPUR:** Lala Surajlal Market, M/s S.R. Steel Emporium, Shah Gunj Chowk ☐ **UNNAD:** Sabaganj, M/s New Harishchandra Gupta, 72/73 ☐ **VARANASI:** Bans Phatak, M/s Girdhar Das & Sons • C26/10B, Lahurabir, M/s U.P. Glass Stores

WEST BENGAL

ALIPURDUAR: Purenbazar, Banerjee & Co. ☐ **ASANSOL:** Saha Steel House, B.B. Road, Prabhat Radio & Electricals, G.T. Road ☐ **BALURGHAT:** Chowringhee, Hemanta Stores ☐ **BANKURA:** Lal Bazar, Radio Centre, 306, Lal Bazar Crossing ☐ **BASIRHAT:** Suralipi, New Market ☐ **BERHAMPUR:** B.B. Sen Road, Aajkal, Shop No. 53 ☐ **BOLPUR:** Ananda Stores, Sri Niketan Road ☐ **BURDWAN:** Dholdighi, Hindustan Aluminium, G.T. Road ☐ **CALCUTTA:** Behala, Rana, 350/1, D.H. Road • Old China Bazar, Satcowrie Dass & Co., 196, Old China Bazar Street • Old China Bazar Street, Amarnath Kundu & Sons, 14/3 • Bagree Market, Sham Brothers, C-23, Bagree Market • Bhawanipur, Amita Stores, 144/A, A.T. Mukherjee Road • Hathibagan, Ashok Trading Corporation, 82/2E, Bidhan Sarani • Elliot Road, Medicos Agencies, Shop No. 92 ☐ **CHAKDAH:** Netaji Subhas Road, Steel Varities ☐ **CHANDANNAGAR:** Lakshmiganj Bazar, Western Trading Co., G.T. Road ☐ **COOCHBEHAR:** N.N. Road, Tolaram Dalimchand ☐ **DARJEELING:** Chowk Bazar, Hind Stores, Chowk Bazar ☐ **DINHATA:** Chowrarat, Baidyanath Saha & Bros ☐ **DOMJUR:** Post Office, Aloghar, Main Road ☐ **DURGAPUR:** Mamra Bazar, Sansar, Chatterjee Market ☐ **HABRA:** Jessore Road, Makali Bhandar ☐ **HALDIA:** Durga Chowk, Pratik ☐ **HOWRAH:** Shibpur Bazar, Sriguru Basanalaya, 34/2, Shibpur Road. ☐ **JALPAIGURI:** Dinbazar, Prashadiram Prabhudayal ☐ **KALNA:** Bhaduripara, Show Sarkar & Co. ☐ **KHAGRA:** Ghosh & Co., 226, Manindra Road ☐ **KRISHNANAGAR:** Gowari Sonapatty, Sailen Kumar Dutta & Bros, B.K. Chatterjee Lane ☐ **MALDA:** N.S. Road, Radiosign, ☐ **MIDNAPUR:** Barabazar, Ram Narayan Harikisan • Contai Main Road, Sabitri Bhandar ☐ **PURULIA:** Chawk Bazar, Dutta Brothers ☐ **RAMPURHAT:** Deshbandhu Road, Dutta Stainless Steel House ☐ **RANIGANJ:** Bara Bazar, Seth Brothers, M.G. Road ☐ **SINGUR:** Steelco ☐ **SILIGURI:** Bidhan Market, Stainless House, A 93 Bidhan Market ☐ **SODEPUR:** Bidya Sagar Corner, Prayojini, Station Road ☐ **SERAMPUR:** Near Manasi Cinema, East End Traders, 39, Netaji Subhas Avenue ☐ **SURI:** S.P. More Market, Tarun Udyog, Stall No. 13 ☐ **TARAKESWAR:** B.P.R. Gate, Supersonic Radio

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TRAWLING

Plundering the Sea

Curbs on trawling to conserve marine resources

It is the classic confrontation. Tradition versus mechanisation. Small against big, the poor taking on the rich and powerful. For years, it has been simmering below the surface of Kerala's marine-rich coastal waters.

But now, it is taking on the scale of a real-life sea battle as angry fishermen in their catamarans challenge large mechanised trawlers in a desperate bid to stop the plunder of the sea bed—and their dwindling livelihood. Last fortnight, traditional fishermen from Vizhinjam, a fishing village near Trivandrum surrounded three trawlers and set them on fire in mid-sea.

About 1.35 lakh traditional fishermen in the state have been demanding that trawling—mechanised boats which drag trawl nets along the floor of the sea hauling in huge catches—be banned at least from June to August, the breeding season when catch is high.

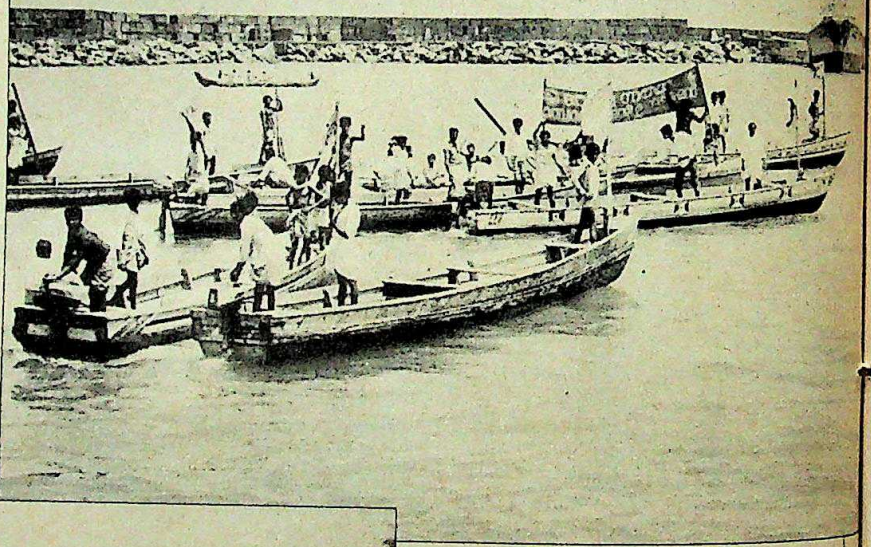
Two months ago, the fishermen registered a major victory when the state Government banned trawling from July 11 to August 31 accepting the argument of environmentalists and traditional fishermen that the trawl nets not only scooped tonnes of fish from the floor of the sea, but also destroyed fish eggs.

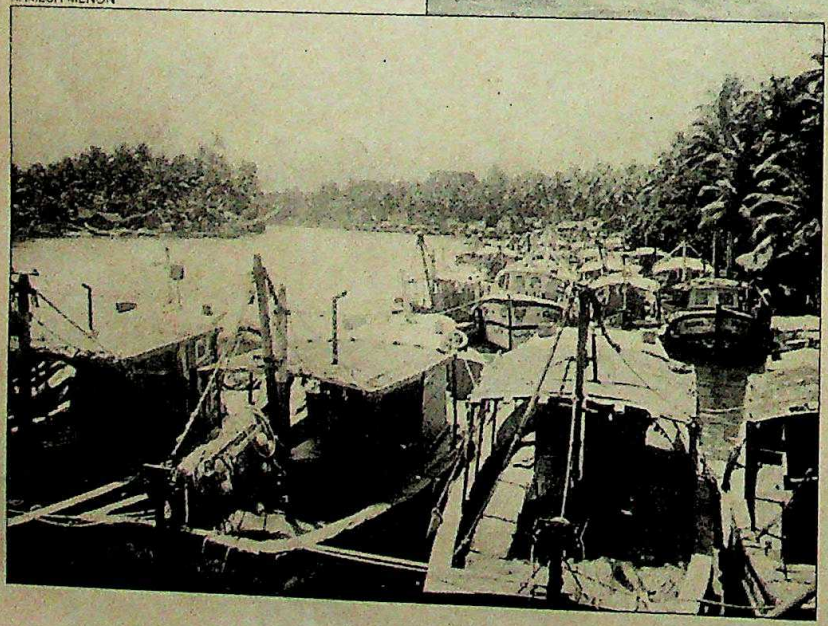
That the fishermen have cause for complaint is undeniable. The Kerala coast which yielded 4.8 lakh tonnes of fish including 85,751 tonnes of prawns in 1973 produced only 3.4 lakh tonnes including 26,000 tonnes of prawns in 1988. When trawling was first introduced in Kerala in the early '50s as part of an Indo-Norwegian project, it was hailed as the supernal process that would flood the state with fish. Trawling indeed helped net huge foreign exchange, and the annual fish export of the state topped Rs 200 crore.

But the damage it can cause has been worrying the Government for sometime. Apart from depleting fish resources, trawling also damages the sea bed where various rare flora and aquatic life thrive. Prawns are found at the bottom so trawlers virtually sweep the floor with their huge nets. Aquatic terrain once destroyed takes very long to recoup. But the influential lobby of rich fishermen who use mechanised boats has been blocking any action against trawling till now. "The realisation has now dawned that the sea cannot be plundered indiscriminately and only conservation measures can save the situation," says social activist V. Vivekanandan who has been organising traditional fishermen. Remembers S. Robert, a fisherman from Vizhinjam: "There were days 10 years ago when we had to cut our nets to let out trapped fish as we could not have carried 5,000 kg of mackerel. Now we are lucky if we get 300 kg."

Trawler operators argue that they are contributing to precious foreign exchange and the ban has resulted in loss of export earning worth over Rs 100 crore. Said Marshall Frank, vice-president of the State Federation of Mechanised Boat Owners: "The ban has nothing to do with environment protection. It is a calculated political move with elections in view. The traditional fishermen who are also using destructive methods of fishing are favoured as they constitute a large vote bank." Few

The confrontation between traditional fishermen and trawlers is fast becoming a political hot potato.





Fishermen stage blockade and (below) trawlers docked by the ban: sea battle

RAMESH MENON

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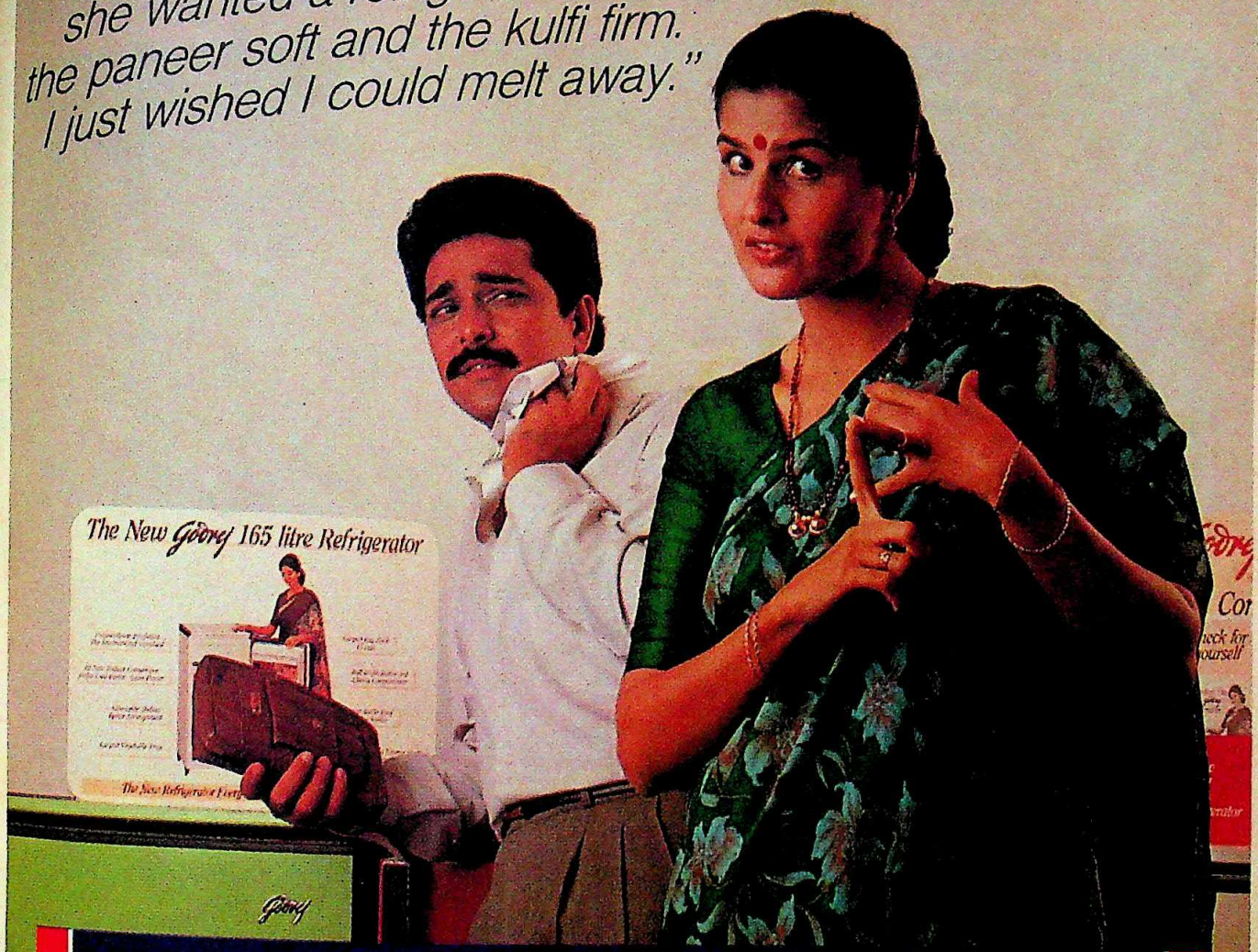

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trawler operators disagree.

Fisheries Minister T.K. Ramakrishnan (CPI-M) however maintains that the ban had nothing to do with electoral considerations and was ordered in view of the rapidly deteriorating marine resources. Chief Minister E.K. Nayanar said that the Government was just implementing the recommendations made by an expert committee.

The simmering tension between traditional fishermen and trawler owners recently erupted into a clash in Shaktikulangara in Quilon district, resulting in the death of two and injury to over 300 in police firing. Apart from such clashes which are bound to continue, the issue of banning trawlers also brought to the fore serious differences of opinion within the Left Front Government. The Irrigation Minister Baby John (RSP), a senior minister who also has a thriving fish-export business is naturally against the ban and reacted strongly against the police action.

The Kerala confrontation, however, is spreading outwards. The dangers posed by trawling are now becoming a national issue. Fishermen all over the country are taking the cue from their counterparts in Kerala and getting organised to fight against trawling. And, judging from the increasingly militant stand on both sides, the sea battle promises to turn into a Waterloo for one or the other.

—RAMESH MENON

PISCICULTURE

Floating Farm

MANKAPUR, a sleepy little town of the backward Gonda district of Uttar Pradesh, is about to stake its claim in pioneering history. It will soon boast of the first floating fish farm in the country. The concept brings fish farming—a big investment business—within the reach of small and marginal farmers.

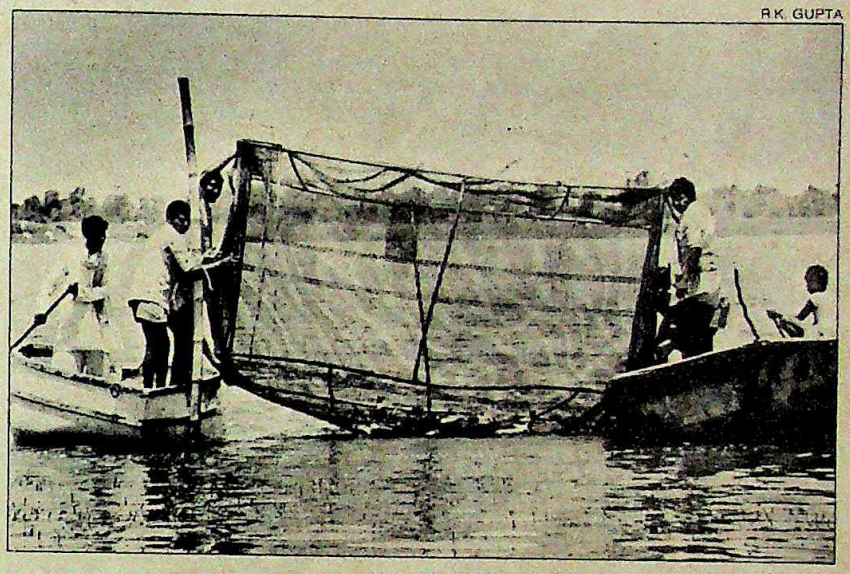
The enterprise involves growing fish, usually Grass Carp which feed only on hydrilla grass found in plenty, inside specially made cages which are then left floating near the shore of lakes. A 1,000-acre pond or lake can house 3,000 fish cages belonging to different farmers. Each farmer need pay rent for only the small portion where he floats his cages.

The concept is all set to revolutionise fish farming because each cage requires only a room of 250 sq ft at the shore of a lake or pond. The top portion of each cage is above the water while the bottom remains suspended about one metre above the floor of the lake or pond.

Anand Singh, 54, MP, and the erstwhile Raja of Mankapur—who singlehandedly worked for the success of the project—had to overcome many failures and the cynical attitude of the Fisheries Department of the Uttar Pradesh Government before he could prove the viability of the project. The state Government had written off the concept after two earlier experiments by the department did not yield acceptable results when the cages got damaged.

The Raghvendra Rural Development and Research Organisation (RRDRO), set up by Anand Singh, and supported by the Ford Foundation which gave a grant of Rs 5 lakh, set about the task with determination.

R.K. GUPTA



A fish cage being lifted out of water

The concept of using cages to rear fish is all set to revolutionise fish farming

In the second phase launched in January 1986, the cages were reinforced with PVC pipes and nelton (plastic) netting replacing the earlier steel or wooden frames with wire meshing. The size of the cages was also reduced. In the third phase, the RRDRO, helped by technical experts relocated the cages near the shore. They also verified the number and growth of fish.

Besides better growth, lower mortality—of the 1,117 fish in three cages only 21 died as compared to 40 to 60 per cent in pond culture—and easy recovery of the harvest, cage-farming offers the facility to monitor and sell the fish at any given time. The fish which are growing comparatively slowly can be kept in a separate cage where they can get enough food to grow properly. Says Anand Singh who heads the project: "I tried this and the results were very good."

The Mankapur experiment also dispels the initial doubts that cage-farming is a costly affair. According to RRDRO's project report, a cage costs Rs 2,500 and has a life span of five years, which means an affordable investment of Rs 500 per year. The net investment on cage-farming per cage is around Rs 6,000 a year which includes Rs 2,200—the cost of 1,100 fingerlings of the Grass Carp—labour and medicine. Given that 100 fingerlings will die in the course of one year, the net harvest would fetch Rs 15,000—a profit of about Rs 9,000 per cage per year.

With the prospect of high returns on low investment that the floating farm offers, the hopes of local fish farmers are sky-high. Uttar Pradesh sends 63,000 tonnes of its annual 90,000 tonnes production of fish to West Bengal. And with the technology involved being simple, there is every reason for the cage-farm project to remain buoyantly afloat.

—DILIP AWASTHI

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BIHAR

Monuments to Anarchy

Scores of foundation stones, but no buildings

IN Bihar, they are strewn all over the state. Stark symbols of the narcissism that seizes men and eloquent monuments to political anarchy.

Consider these. In 1972, Mrs Gandhi laid the foundation of a bridge at Chittouni in West Champaran district. Now, 17 years later, work is yet to begin. And to reach the other side, travellers still have to take a detour of 100 km through Nepal.

In 1979 then chief minister Ram Sundar Das laid the foundation-stone of a residential complex at Patna for the Harijan employees of Patna Municipal Corporation. Ten years later the stone remains the only evidence of the envisaged complex; children use it as a makeshift stool and housewives use it to dry clothes.

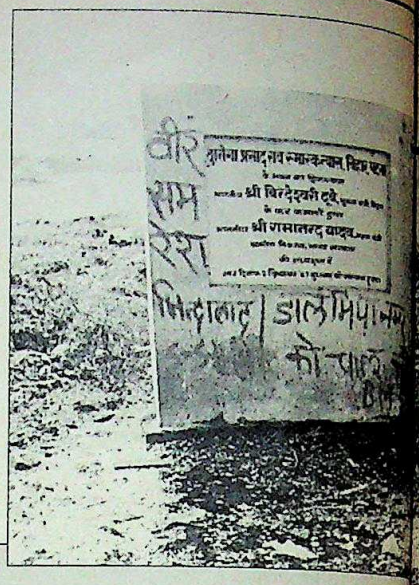
But even that, perhaps, is insignificant archaeology. Just last year Rajiv Gandhi laid the foundation-stone of a memorial to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad at Ranchi. Scarcely had Rajiv's visit concluded when the marble plaque disappeared. Seemingly, the authorities whisked it away for safe keeping, and in the process forgot there was a memorial to be constructed.

Camouflaged by garbage and weeds, by grazing cattle and scavenging pigs, these commemorative stones dot Bihar's landscape. Patna itself is cluttered with inscribed slabs, once unveiled with fanfare, now weathering sun and rain with not a brick added since the dignitaries departed. Most of these stones were laid without any fund allocation or sanction, and very often the sole purpose was to grab a piece of real estate.

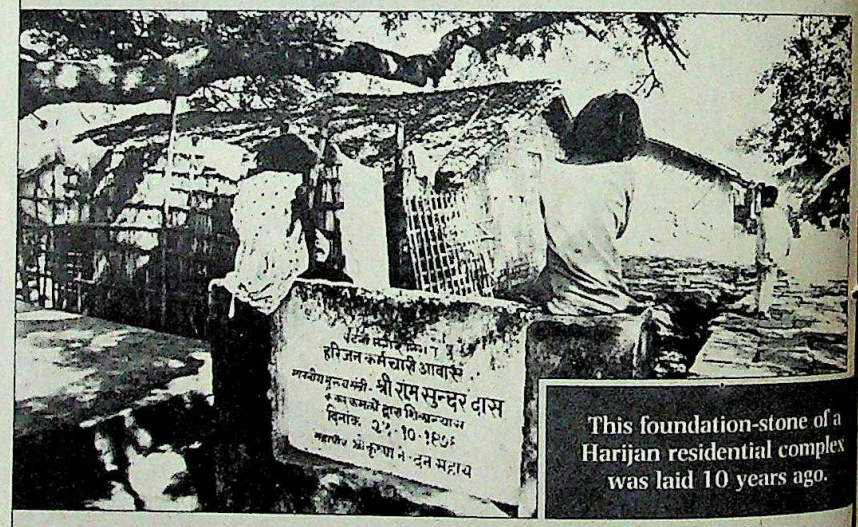
Serpentine Road in Patna is a fit example. Not long ago it presented the bizarre spectacle of half a dozen foundation-stones in a row. The prime government land had been given to various organisations as blatant political patronage. But not one of the organisations has constructed the buildings or memorials for which the stones were laid. Some have put up makeshift sheds. The fact is most of them do not have the resources to build anything and the stones were laid simply to legitimise their right over the plots.

But it is the missing bridge at Chittouni that evokes the most anger. The issue rocked the Bihar Assembly in July, with Janata Dal's Nitish Kumar declaring that though Rajiv had announced a package of Rs 5,000 crore for the state recently, the stone laid by his mother 17 years ago had been ignored. Actually no money was ever allocated. Even annual railway budgets have ignored it.

Though financial stringency is often cited as an excuse, the fact is that the laying of foundation-stones is seldom more than a ploy used by subordinate functionaries to please their political bosses. The residential complex for Harijans is a pointer. Ram Sundar Das be-



Commemorative stones dot the state's landscape, monuments to the hunger of politicians to etch their names on stone. Usually, not a brick is added to the stone slabs.



This foundation-stone of a Harijan residential complex was laid 10 years ago.

The Ranchi bypass foundation laid by Chief Minister Chandra Shekhar Singh five years ago.

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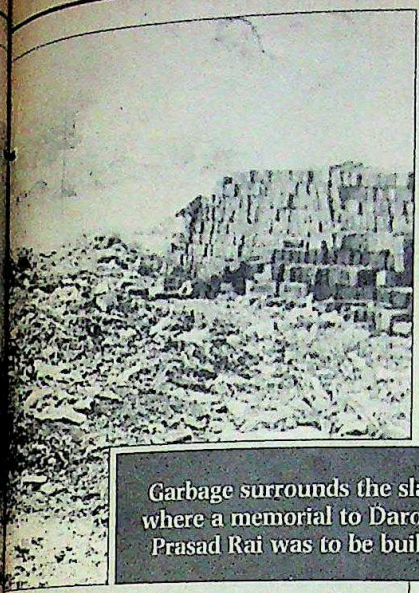


Garbage surrounds the slab where a memorial to Daroga Prasad Rai was to be built.

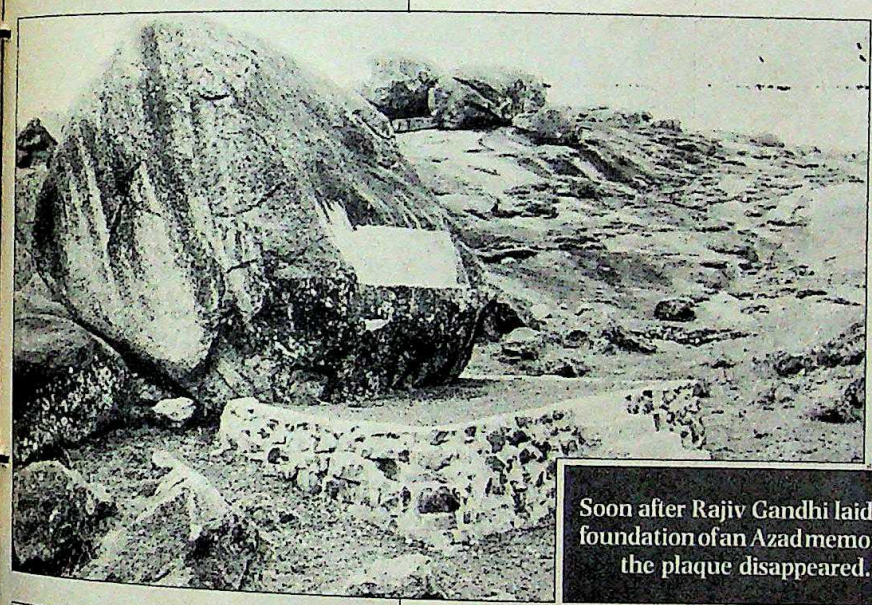
longed to Scheduled Caste, and fawning officials saw merit in getting him to lay a foundation-stone. The Janata government headed by Das fell the same year and that put paid to the project.

THE hunger of the state's politicians to etch their names on stone is virtually insatiable. One former chief minister unable to lay the stone of a community latrine—another politician had already earned the honour—went and presided over its inauguration and obliging minions dutifully unveiled one more slab.

But there are cases that are even more bizarre. The foundation-stone of the bridge on the river Shankh on the Bihar-Madhya Pradesh border was laid by three successive chief ministers in the '70s. Similarly, the foundation-stone of a dam on the river Kamla Balan was first laid by Lal Bahadur Shastri, then a Union minister and an encore was performed by Pandit Binodanand Jha, then chief minister. A community hall at Saharsa got equal attention. It had three stones laid: by Lalit Narayan Mishra, by his younger brother Jagannath Mishra, and by Ramesh Jha, then minister for urban development.

Ram Sewak Sharma, an IAS officer who's now deputy commissioner at Dhanbad, recalls another bizarre episode. "I was serving as district magistrate in Purnea when, after a long tiring day on the road with the chief minister, we were having a late dinner at the house of a ruling party legislator. Suddenly we were told the chief minister would be laying the foundation-stone of a bridge that night. I knew nothing about this and made inquiries, only to be assured by the MLA that all would be organised." So in the dead of the night, in the glow of petromax lamps, with an audience of a few hundred, Bindeshwari Dubey laid the stone. Needless to say, the bridge did not have the Government's sanction and is yet to come up.

These overnight foundation-stones are often laid in the belief that they morally bind the chief minister to get money released. The plan often goes awry due to the high turnover of chief ministers in Bihar: three in four years since March 1985. The one unchanging upshot is: thousands of rupees are spent on the ceremony, often government engineers draw money from contingency funds—usually 3 per cent of the project's cost—and contractors try and wheedle themselves onto the bandwagon.



Soon after Rajiv Gandhi laid the foundation of an Azad memorial, the plaque disappeared.

But not all these stone slabs of egocentrism are ridiculous; some bear a poignant ring. At Patna's sprawling Kankapbagh colony lies a stone slab in an obscure corner. Small puddles of water surround it. To decipher the engraving on it, one has to look closely. It is a foundation-stone laid by the then President, N. Sanjeeva Reddy. It announces the building of a hospital-cum-medical research complex to be named after Jaya Prakash Narayan (JP).

Both JP's and Reddy's names count for little. A sad apology of a hospital functions at the place in a pappack-like structure. At another corner of the state capital the scenario is different. There the Government has spent crores to construct a modern hospital complex. This one is named after Mrs Gandhi. The irony of foundation-stones is like the irony of leaders: those whose legacy is ignored become peripheral and ignored themselves. Bihar is a graveyard of stones without legacy. —UTTAM SENGUPTA

A foundation-stone laid by Sanjeeva Reddy for a JP medical research complex.

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A Shocking Surrender

THE apology tendered by the *Illustrated Weekly of India* was as shocking as the heading of the original report of 1986, which had said: "Shocking! The strange escapades of J.B. Patnaik, Orissa's chief minister."

Some three years later and after many court battles, an out-of-court settlement of the Rs 1-crore libel suit slapped by the chief minister produced the following apology:

"We, Bennett, Coleman and Company Ltd, Pritish Nandy, editor of the *Illustrated Weekly* and S.N.M. Abdi, special correspondent of the *Illustrated Weekly*, had published two articles under the captions 'The strange escapades of J.B. Patnaik' and 'Why is J.B. Patnaik being allowed to gag the press' in the issues dated 18-24 May 1986 and 3-9 August 1986 respectively, based on information available to us. Subsequently, we found that the information, on the basis of which these articles were written, was not true and was politically motivated. We regret the damage done to Mr Patnaik's reputation and offer our apologies to him."

Seldom has an apology by a major Indian publication been as demeaning, particularly in acknowledging a political motivation in writing the original report. Every journalist felt diminished by the nature of the apology.

Apart from the hurt caused to journalists' self-esteem, this landmark apology raises portentous issues of press freedom, of the future of investigative journalism in India and of the limits of exposing a public man's private life.

India is a country in transition, and as political developments remind us every day, arbitrariness of government and pure lawlessness have become a recurring feature in parts of the country. If a journalist cannot pursue his avocation without fear of reprisal, in the form of harassing law suits and physical intimidation, he becomes constrained in performing his legitimate functions.

This is so in Orissa, as it is in Bihar. And only recently we witnessed the spectacle of followers of the CPI(M) in the Marxist stronghold of Calcutta venting their spleen on journalists.

Journalists are very much part of the society they live in and must share the travails of their fellow citizens in the peculiar mix of politics and criminality that is the curtain-raiser to elections and will survive them. But the premise of a free press assumes that journalists are accorded certain privileges.

There are journalists who have paid with their lives for their brave reporting, in India as elsewhere in the world. But intimidation by authority often serves to make journalists more timid, with a consequent loss to the ultimate arbiter of a free press, the reader.

By the same token, the power the press possesses in demolishing reputations presupposes that an offending publication must be punished. It was after the dark era of the Emergency that the Indian press really flowered into investigative journalism. Till then, the tendency all too often had been to indulge in armchair reporting.

Inevitably, investigative journalism led to excesses. The desire to make a splash, without spending the time to cross-check a story, led to many one-sided reports. Editors often did not insist that in making exposes, the victim must be given a fair chance to answer the charges before a story gets into print.

Such reports often work against persons who do not have the money or the political clout to fight long and expensive legal battles. The infamous Defamation Bill sought to be enacted by the Rajiv Gandhi Government, and later withdrawn in the face of unanimous opposition from the press, was bad because it would have served to limit the freedom of the press. The proposed Jammu and Kashmir Press Bill is even worse in the restrictions it would impose on journalists and publications.

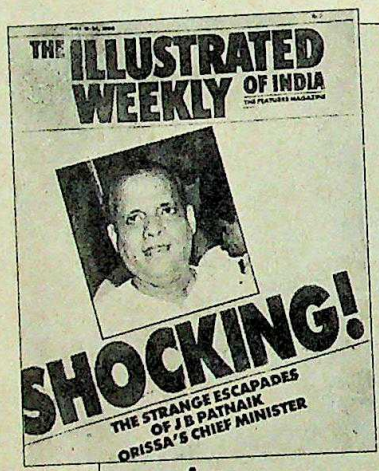
A code of conduct is a double-edged weapon because it boils down to the question of who would police it. No journalist worth his salt would want to give the Government the authority to decide whether the code has been contravened by a publication. In practice, the code really is the judgement of peers and works more by unwritten but well-understood rules.

The editor of the *Illustrated Weekly* has received less than enthusiastic support from his peers because the view held by many is that he had transgressed the limits of the permissible for a publication that lays claims to responsibility.

Here we get into a difficult area. The question of morality is often subjective and is determined by the prevailing mores in a given milieu. What is pornographic in India is permissible in the West. Pornography for one society is freedom of expression for another.

It is legitimate for a publication to try to enlarge the limits of freedom. But it must take the rap if it obviously offends against good taste. Above all, it must have a fool-proof dossier before launching a major attack on a leading politician, or a humbler soul. The generally accepted criterion is that a public man's private life becomes public if it impinges upon his public duties.

Nandy and his fellow journalists are sadder and wiser men.


THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA
THE FEATURES MAGAZINE
SHOCKING!
THE STRANGE ESCAPADES OF J B PATNAIK ORISSA'S CHIEF MINISTER

Weekly's Patnaik issue and (inset) editor Nandy

A publication must have a fool-proof dossier before launching a major attack. A public man's private life becomes public only if it impinges upon his public duties.

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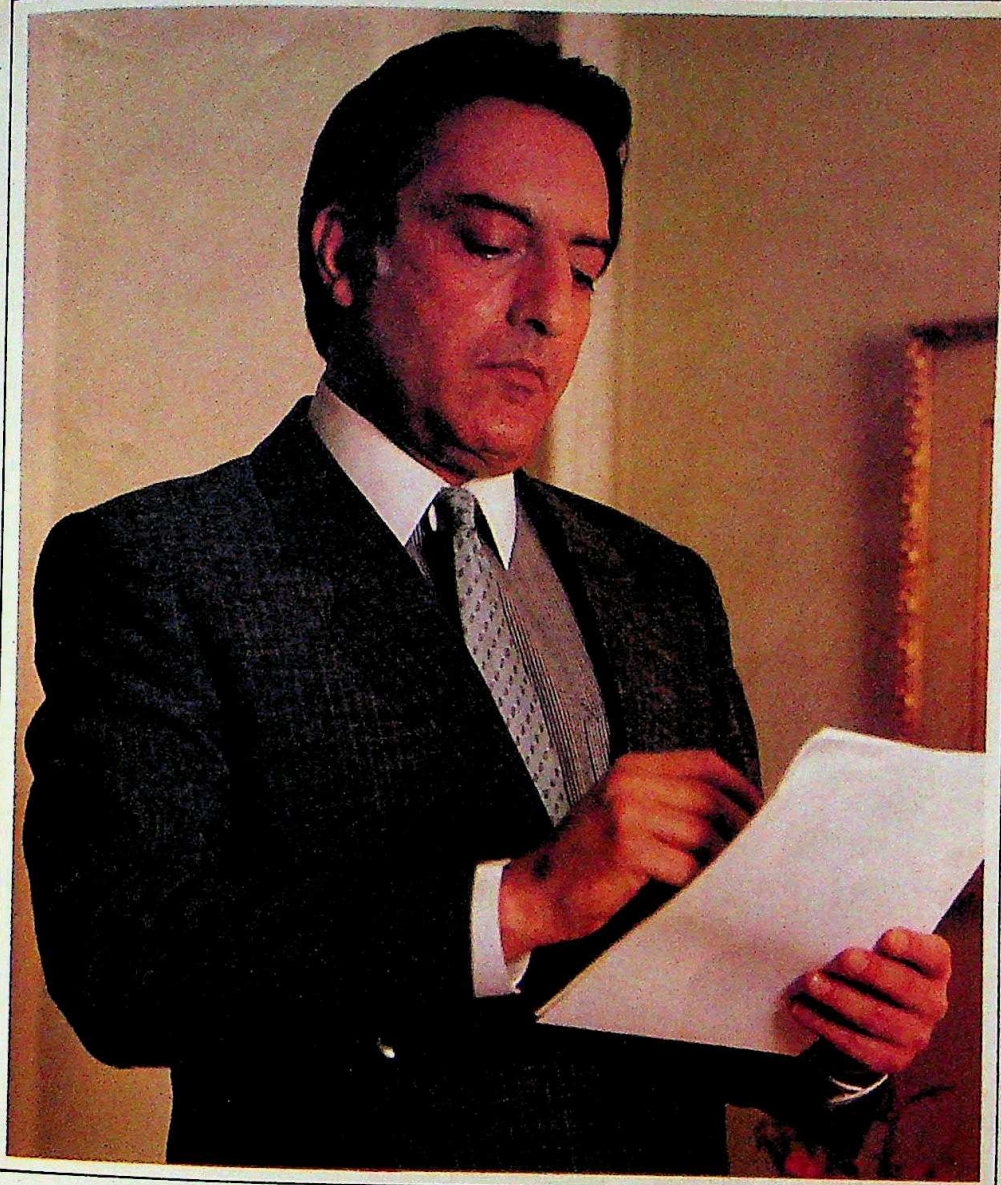

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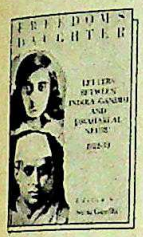
Moving Mail

Letters reveal another Indira

FREEDOM'S DAUGHTER:
Letters Between Indira Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru 1922-39
Edited by SONIA GANDHI
Hodder and Stoughton
Price: Rs 650; Pages: 483



"LETTERS are conversation on paper—but more revealing," Sonia Gandhi writes in her introduction to the correspondence between Indira Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. And so they are—especially about her mother-in-law, whose "shyness and sense of privacy made her express herself more freely on paper than in person".

The Indira who emerges from these letters, particularly the spritely and almost cheeky teenager in Europe, is so different from the various portraits which spring from her mostly sycophantic biographies.

> *"Everybody is not going to pay attention to us, and we are sure to feel miserable in afterlife if you expect too much attention from others. We become like a beautiful China plate—fragile and delicate and easily cracked."*
>
> Nehru to Indira

Reams have been written about the close, at times claustrophobically so, relationship between father and daughter. In this first, slickly produced volume which covers the letters from 1922 to 1939, the terms of endearment are as common as the commas: the letters begin with darling, darlingest when affection is at a peak, and end with "hills" or "mountains of love".

And, occasionally, Nehru calls his daughter "Indu-boy"—a form of address she rather likes as she often signs off thus as a child. Separated as the father and daughter were by prison walls and oceans these appellations are touching indications of how basically lonely Nehru and Indira were.

But the letters also reveal sharp differences between the two. In the beginning there is more than distance which separates father from daughter. Until her mother Kamala Nehru's death in February 1936, there is aloofness in Indira's letters. Often, she does not reply immediately; or, she keeps forgetting to post the letters.

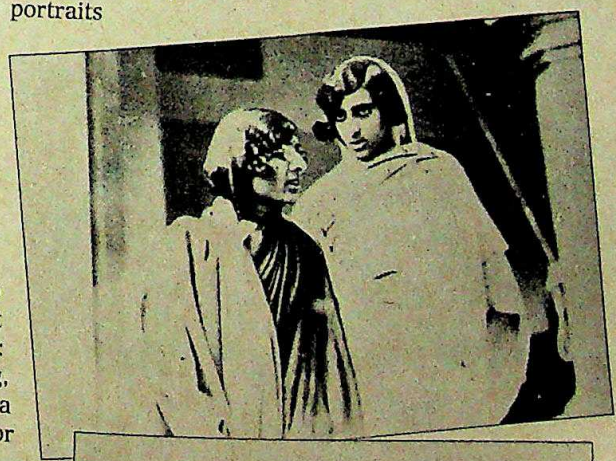
It is a slightly peeved father who complains about the absence in her of the "qualities of a Sherlock Holmes in regard to the non-receipt of my letters..." Even Nehru's letters from jail are fretful and he expresses his deep disappointment at not getting his daughter's letters on time.

On the other hand, her references to "mums" as she refers to her mother are laden with tenderness. "Everybody is astonished that such a young person like Mummie should have a big daughter like me. People think we are sisters. She does really look so young and sweet."

The ice really breaks after her mother's death in Switzerland. Although, as she once told a trusted aide, she did not talk to her father for days after her mother died. Interestingly enough, in the letters soon after the tragic event, she seldom mentions her mother.

Clearly, the one big influence on Indira as a child is Mahatama Gandhi—Nehru seems to be taken for granted in her early years. Gandhi, in fact, strengthens the bond between mother and daughter. Her letters from her school in Pune are full of references to Bapu and his various fasts while in Yervada jail. Her life appears to revolve round him.

Indira with Nehru; and (below) with Kamala Nehru at Anand Bhawan: a special bond



> *"Everybody is astonished that such a young person like Mummie should have a big daughter like me. People think we are sisters. She does really look so young and sweet."*
>
> Indira to Nehru

> *"Yesterday afternoon I went and had my hair cut and partly because my jura became untied about ten times a day and it was a nuisance making it. Besides it did not go at all well with European clothes.*
>
> Indira to Nehru

The other giant in her life is Rabindranath Tagore, under whose spell she comes while a student at Santiniketan. "His spirit seemed to roam and hover over one and follow one with a loving deep watchfulness. And this spirit, I feel, has greatly influenced my life and thought..."

Nehru's attachment to his daughter is overwhelming. He writes as if he is father, mother and nanny rolled into one—advising his daughter on boric powder eyewashes, gargles, exercise, diet to giving amazingly detailed instructions on her various curriculums and academic choices. The spirit of George Bernard Shaw obviously hovers over him: letters become the real art of expression, of letting oneself go.

It is clear that he handles his child with kid gloves and recognises her need for attention: "Everybody in the world is not going to pay attention to us, and we

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are sure to feel miserable in afterlife if you expect too much attention from others. We become like a beautiful China plate—fragile and delicate and easily cracked."

Most poignant, however, are his expressions of longing for his only child, especially when he is caught in the hurly-burly of political life. It is almost as if Nehru were more at peace with himself within the four walls of his prison cell.

In September 1937, Nehru writes from Anand Bhavan: "I sit here in my room and the door connecting it to your room is usually open. And at night, and sometimes in the daytime too, I go to your room and have a look round and say goodnight to it."

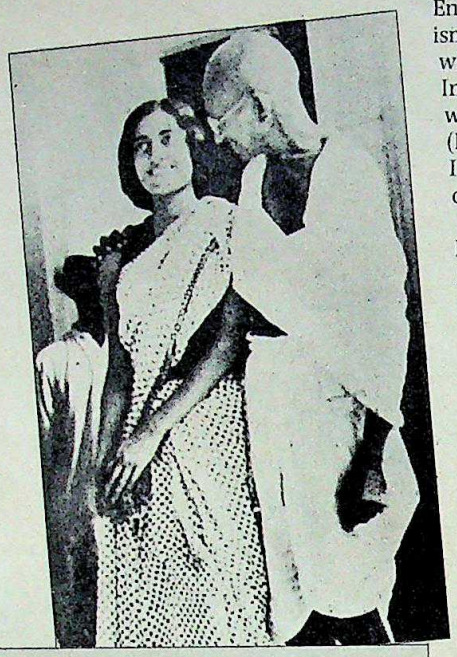
The real differences between father and daughter emerge over their perceptions of Europe. Indira's two years at Oxford University serve as a crucible for her political sensibilites which veered towards the Left.

While Nehru has a larger, more romantic and liberal view of Europe and the British, his daughter, who appears to see things more in black and white, has sharper reflexes. For example, when Nehru plans to stay with his old friend the Marquis of Lothian in London, Indira reacts angrily, and unequivocally.

Writes Indira to her father: "Lothian is not just another Conservative...He is a very prominent member of the Cliveden Set...commonly known as 'Hitler's friends in Britain'. He is a thorough Fascist and doesn't make any bones about it...Your staying with him would amount to the same as if you spent a weekend with Hitler himself or with Mussolini...I am afraid I feel very strongly on the point and even if you do go—Lord Lothian will have to excuse me."

Nehru and Indira shared a deep concern for a Spain ravaged by civil war—both are ready to jump into battle on the side of the Republicans. She writes to her father from Bombay about her plans to go to Spain in 1938: "I am surprised that you should grow soft over the idea. I am thick-skinned and hard-headed enough...There was an equal or greater risk in the streets of Allahabad some days ago when I might conceivably have been stabbed during the days of communal trouble." Indira does go to Spain. And her concerns are mainly for the children of war.

Indira with Gandhi: major influence



"Up till now I had thought Bapu a great man, no doubt, but I had somehow never thought him capable of this. So this fast has made a great impression on me and taught me a great lesson. These last seven days have been terrible... now I am perfectly assured that Bapu can do the most imaginary things."

Indira to Nehru

Indira with two friends in Santiniketan

"At Santiniketan we all seem to be having festivals.... The Hindi Samaj (did you know we had one here?) has invited all the big guns in Hindi literature to be present on that date, as at that time they will have a good opportunity to see the place & have a good talk with the Poet."

Indira to Nehru

Delightful about the letters is the language Indira Gandhi uses—from the Enid Blyton prose to little Americanisms—she really lets go. For example when she learns that she will be going to India from Oxford, she writes: "And whoopee! Am I looking forward to it! (Excuse this American language—But I find it so much more expressive when one is feeling like I am.)"

From school in Bex, Switzerland, Indira describes her teacher who puts her to bed as "like the crocodile in Peter Pan. One hears her singing a mile off". Again, from Somervile, while describing her tutors, she describes her Latin tutor "as ancient as a sphinx and terribly deaf. But explains things quite well, inspite of his false teeth". Miss Darbyshire, on the othe hand looks like a "tea-cosy".

Imagination is surprisingly not in short supply. At 15, she writes: "while watching the clouds at night...there was a black, black cloud in the shape of a face. There were two round holes for eyes and one oblongish one for the mouth and the moon was peeping through one of the eye holes. It looked just as if Kali Devi was looking at the world from Heaven."

Among the more interesting revelations is the touch of coquette in the extremely independent young Indira sailing to Germany with her mother for the latter's treatment. She stays on alone at Hotel Adlon, the "most expensive hotel" in town as her father later writes to her in surprise. She has stayed on because she wanted new clothes.

While the earlier letters are petulant—the daughter clearly calls the shots with the father—the later ones are full of feeling and concern for her father. By 1939, she is already a source of comfort to a confused Nehru who is beginning to find politics a bit distasteful.

She writes to her father: "It would not be too bad if I did not keep seeing your face—so sad, with something more than just sadness. Darling, don't be so defeatist—no one can defeat you except yourself. You are so much above all the pettiness that is invading Indian politics. It is distressing to watch it take hold—but you mustn't let it make any difference. These happen the world over. And they always pass."

The roles are almost reversed.

—MADHU JAIN

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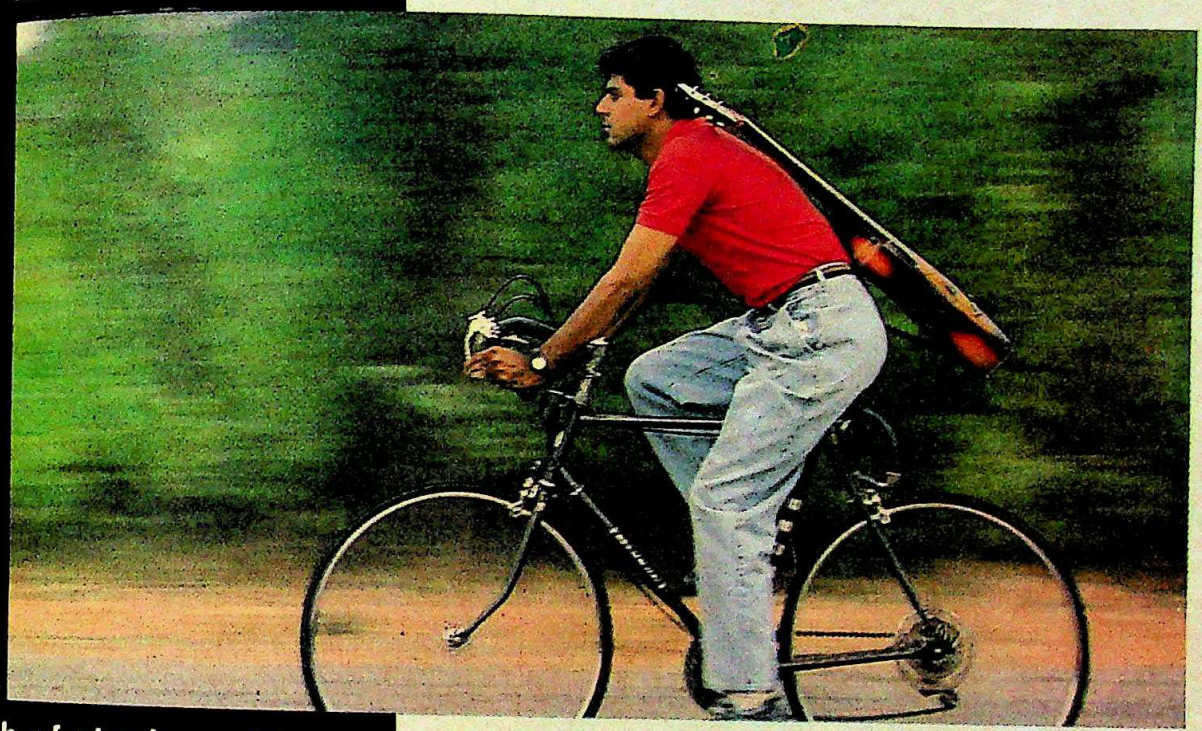
of morning coffee.
Cricket scores.
Cryptic crosswords.
Ten minutes
of soulful music.
And twin blade pleasure.



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NAMAS BHOJANI

Aneeta: picture perfect

◆ What's the magic word? Nehru. Right first time. So Doordarshan has opened its portals to yet another Nehru proposal. But this time it's not Jawaharlal, but wife Kamala who is the subject of interest.

G.P. Sippy is producing a tele-film based on columnist Promilla Kalhan's book, *Kamala Nehru, An Intimate Biography*, with **Aneeta Kanwar** playing the lead. Considerable chaos has marked the project, and money squabbles continue.

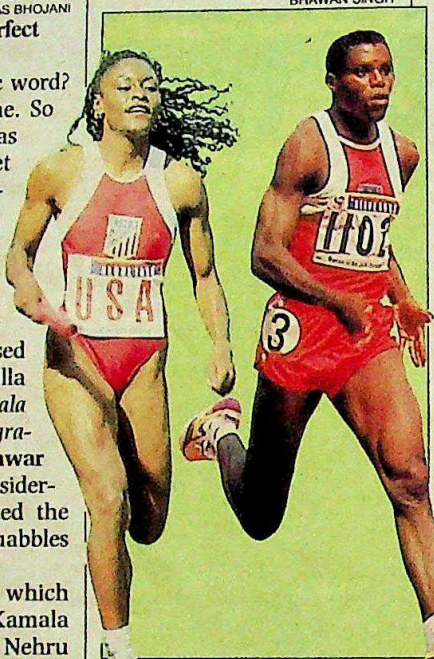
Hope the film, which shows what a misfit Kamala was in the westernised Nehru household, turns out to be as interesting. For though Kalhan says, "Aneeta Kanwar's perfect. She has that intensity in her face which Kamala had. The strong, inner resilience," one wonders whether the viewers have the same: to imbibe another Nehru serial.

◆ Fight them not only on the land, the sea, and the beaches, but even the silver screen. That seems to be the resolve of the Congress(I). And if they come clad in the robes of religion, unleash some divinity of your own.

So N.T. Rama Rao in his avatar of Vishwamitra is facing competition from another Vishwamitra. Well-known Telugu director Dasari Narayana Rao has been commissioned to make 15 episodes for Doordarshan. And Rao's taking no chances: he's going in for the epic stuff.

From the ornate sets of *Mahabharat*, he's picked up Rahi Masoom Raza to write the script, and the venerable patriarch Bhishma, alias **Mukesh Khanna**, to play the lead. Insists Rao: "I am going by Hindu mythology and not political interpretations." In pre-election jostling that sounds like the stuff of myth.

BHAWAN SINGH



Kersee, Lewis: India bound

◆ So what if you can't produce world class athletes, you can always invite some. So our sports administrators seem to have decided. And at least here they aren't settling for second-best.

When **Carl Lewis** and **Jackie Joyner Kersee** explode off the starting blocks at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, they will register themselves as the topmost athletes to have ever contested on Indian soil. Lewis and Kersee have apparently confirmed their participation for the Nehru Centenary athletic meet to be held in New Delhi on September 19 and 20.

Organiser Suresh Kalmadi claims he's paying them nothing. Says he: "We'll take them to see the Taj Mahal." That ought to provide some humble moments to the track legend: being face to face with a perfection that is timeless.

M.R. BHARTI

Shamili, Shalini: star sisters

◆ At the ripe age of nine, **Shalini** can easily hang up her little shoes and retire. To those who would protest, sample her achievements. She's starred in 84 films, and is geared to touch 100 next year. That's not all: the films span a gamut of five languages, all of which she speaks fluently. Add to this the state awards she has won for best child artiste from the Andhra Pradesh and Kerala governments.

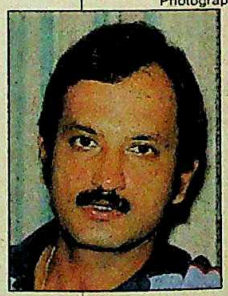
But Shalini's okay, it's sister **Shamili** who needs to draw the line. Barely out of her crib, the two-year-old Shamili is being launched in a Tamil film *Rajanadai*. Child's play?

◆ What today's lot can't do smoothly, yesterday's can attempt. With Vengsarkar and Co having come a cropper on their American jaunt, it's **Ashok Mankad** and **Ajit Wadekar's** chance to show them how one does it.

The duo, backed by an impressive battery, including Ghavri, Solkar, and Bedi, is leaving for a month-long tour of the US and Canada. The tour organised by Cricket Consultancy Service—Mankad's company—is steering clear of the Cricket Control Board's wrath. Says Mankad: "We are going to generate good relations. The tour has the board's sanction."

Wadekar talks cricket: "I'm excited. We aren't that old you know." Well with Mankad, 43, and Wadekar, 48, it's about time they started making such assertions.

Photographs by PRADEEP MANDANI



Wadekar (left) and Mankad

S.N. KAUSHIK

Khanna (left) as Vishwamitra

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

THERE has been unusual cause for celebration at INDIA TODAY *this year. In March, the magazine won three awards, including Asian Magazine of the Year, at the Asian World Publishing Congress in Bangkok. Then, last fortnight, Senior Editor* PRABHU CHAWLA *and Senior Correspondent* PANKAJ PACHAURI, *won prestigious awards. Chawla, 43, was given the G.K. Reddy Memorial award "in recognition of his proficiency in writing about national and international events". Pachauri, 26, received the first prize in the annual Statesman Award for Rural Reporting.*

Prabhu Chawla receiving the award

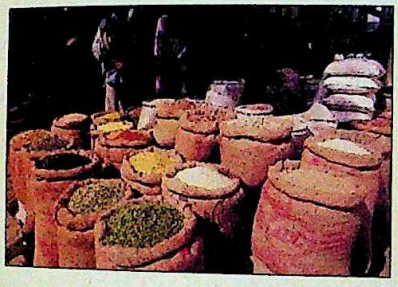
Pankaj Pachauri

The dual honour is a tribute to the broad spectrum of editorial coverage the magazine has always emphasised. The Statesman award has been won by INDIA TODAY *for the second time, and is an indication of the magazine's concern for rural India where the country's majority lives. Pachauri's story—"A Murderous Tradition" (October 31, 1988)—was on the practice of female infanticide in the far-flung villages of Jaisalmer district of Rajasthan.*

The G.K. Reddy award won by Chawla is an acknowledgement of the range and depth of INDIA TODAY*'s political reporting. Chawla has since 1978 spearheaded the magazine's political reportage and is considered among the best informed journalists on the political beat with several exclusives to his credit.*

These awards, coupled with those won at Bangkok, mark 1989 out as an exceptional year for the magazine in terms of recognition.

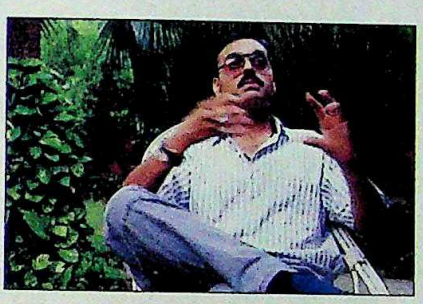
IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT



Crisis on Prices

Rising prices have become the major plank of the Opposition's electoral campaign. Official figures claim inflation is under control, but most Indians find their real incomes eroding faster than before. The sudden increase in sugar prices has added grist to the anti-government campaign.

COVER STORY 26



Throwing the Gauntlet

The public declaration of his assets by V.P. Singh's son, Ajeya, took the Government totally by surprise. And the attempt by George McLean, managing director of the defunct St Kitts bank, to refute Ajeya's statement fuelled speculation that he was being prompted by someone in India.

SPECIAL REPORTS 40

Heading for Collapse

The Vayudoot crash on September 23 is an indication that almost a year after the two crashes that killed 167 people last October 19, the deadly combination of factors that caused those disasters persists. An investigation into the problems, plus an exclusive report on what caused last year's twin crashes.

INVESTIGATION 142

Changing Sexuality

The Indian woman is becoming a multiple choice woman, increasingly demanding equality in marriage, good sex from her husband, not merely lust in fast forward, and even seeking extra-marital relationships. An analysis of the sexual revolution in urban middle class women.

SPECIAL FEATURE 154

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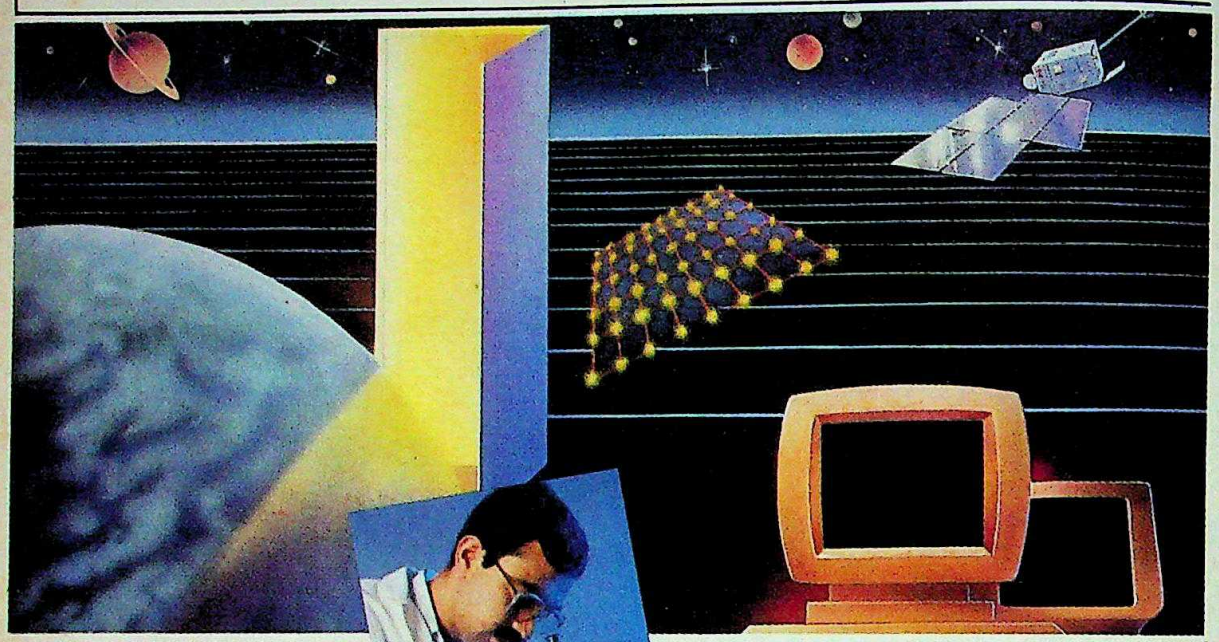
Men merely dream.
Great men create a future.



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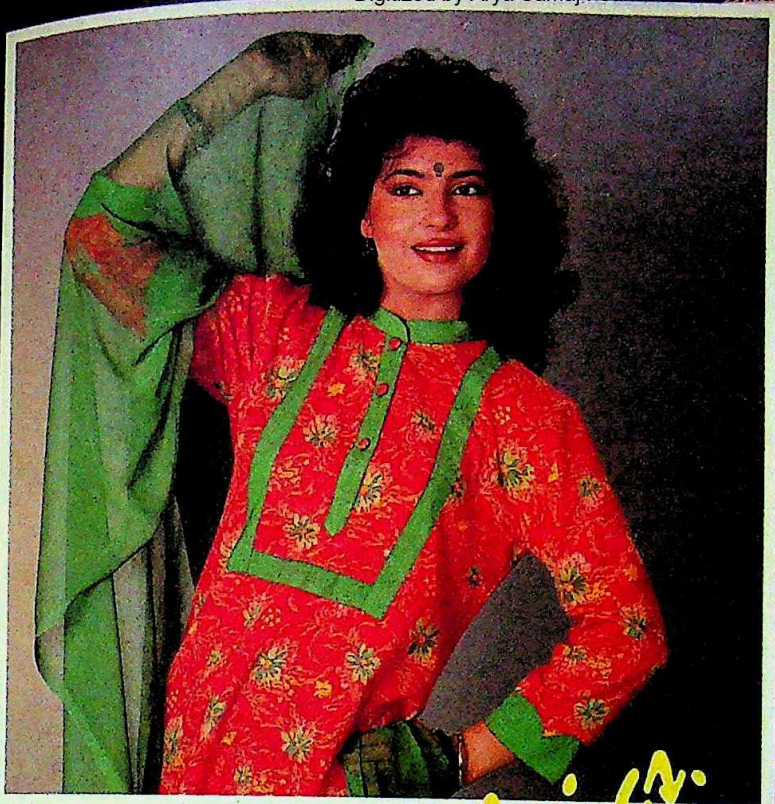

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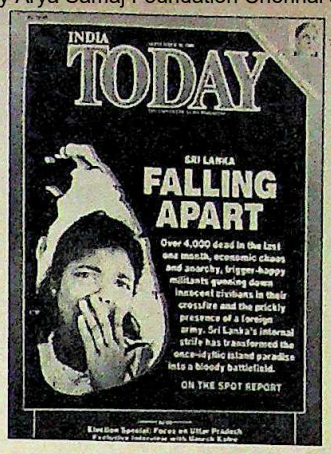

CONFLICT AND CHAOS

The election of President R. Premadasa had generated some hope that peace would get a chance in Sri Lanka ("Falling Apart", September 30). But he has failed to resolve the ethnic conflict and the country is on the brink of disaster.

New Delhi H.P. SINGH

LETHAL SALVO

Your cover story ("Getting Away", September 15) is more explosive than the gun. Whom is the prime minister defending? What is he afraid of? Why doesn't he catch the culprits?

New Delhi ANIL SATWIK

■ Why did Bofors pay bribes when our government had warned that no middlemen should be involved? Why is the prime minister reluctant to find out the names of the payoff recipients? Why did he, on several occasions, insist no middlemen were involved? The hush-up and drift at the highest level give the impression that something fishy is going on. Bofors returning Rs 64 crore will surely not settle the dust.

Sonepat RAVI SANDHU

READERS' RESPONSE

The readers' response to General Sundarji's interview has been overwhelming. At the time of going to press, 128 letters had been received. More are pouring in—even from such mofussil places as Jagdalpur in Madhya Pradesh, Dhingi in Punjab, and Sikar in Rajasthan. Of those received so far, 99 have applauded the general's disclosures, while the rest, though not questioning his patriotism, have felt he should have spoken out earlier.

■ The revelations by General Sundarji have nailed the lie consistently uttered by Rajiv Gandhi that cancelling the gun contract with Bofors would jeopardise national security.

Coimbatore S.A. SRINIVASA SARMA

■ General Sundarji's lethal salvo, though belated, has further confirmed that the Rajiv Gandhi Government is hell-bent on shielding the recipients of the payoffs. However, not all is lost in the people's crusade against corruption. There are still some upright people who retain moral values despite mounting pressure.

Madras LT-COLONEL (RETD) VIJAYA RAGHAVAN

■ Why did General Sundarji continue in his post after he was asked by the Government to modify his opinion on the cancellation of the Bofors contract?

Belgaum ARCHANA JOGLEKAR

■ The cover story has unveiled an important aspect of the Bofors gun deal. It has now made it clear that Rajiv Gandhi is protecting whoever got the Rs 64-crore paid in commissions by Bofors.

Gurgaon HARMINDER SINGH YADAV

■ It seems the prime minister will not resign even if the recipient of commissions admits to having benefited from the deal.

Chandigarh SHANEEL RANA

■ It is unfortunate that a large section of the electorate is illiterate and does not understand the functioning of the Government. Otherwise, Rajiv Gandhi and the politicians around him would have had no room in Indian politics.

Gorakhpur S.K. SINHA

■ The question is not of the payoffs or who received them. It is that our whole defence system is an open book for foreigners and a closely-guarded secret for us.

Patna ABHAY K. CHOUDHARY

■ General Sundarji overstepped his brief by advising the Government on the action to be taken to extract the names of kickback recipients in the Bofors deal.

Madras D. SABARATHNAM

■ May the number of people like General Sundarji, Lt-General H. Kaul and T.N. Chaturvedi, the comptroller and auditor general of India (CAG), increase. Probably all is not lost for democracy in India.

New Delhi B. DUTTA

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■ After General Sundarji's revelations, the JPC report on the Bofors deal has become a strong contender for the Sahitya Akademi Award for fiction.
Amritsar — R.C. KHANNA

■ I have a suggestion for the Opposition. Why not choose the 155-mm gun as a common symbol for a sure-fire victory in the coming general elections?
Secunderabad — B.K. SUDHAKAR REDDY

■ The truth lies with the Congress(I).
Ranchi — AMITABH PRAKASH

■ General Sundarji's forthright interview and the CAG's report on the Bofors gun deal have salvaged our pride as Indians, which had been under savage assault by Rajiv Gandhi and his ilk.
Allahabad — RAJEEV PANT

■ The least the people of this nation can do is quickly boot out Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress(I) from power.
Hyderabad — G. CHANDRASEKHAR YADAV

■ After General Sundarji's revelations, the Congress(I) will certainly meet its Waterloo in the coming elections.
Bhopal — RAKESH AWASTHI

■ One wonders why General Sundarji chose to remain silent for so long after his retirement in April last year. Was there no media available to him earlier or was he scared of the consequences?
Panipat — TARUN KUMAR

■ It seems General Sundarji was inspired by the CAG to speak out.
Bangalore — SHREEDHARA DAMALE

■ I believe in the CAG and General Sundarji and not in Rajivji.
Gaya — ANDALIB AKHTER

■ If General Sundarji was so concerned about national honour, why didn't he follow in the footsteps of Arun Singh?
Pune — D.B.N. MURTHY

■ In his interview, General Sundarji says he thinks commissions are a regular feature of arms deals and they fill the political parties' coffers, but he doesn't know how it is done. This only adds to the existing confusion. It is high time men who have held responsible positions speak out specifically.
Bangalore — A. SUNDAR

CREDIBILITY CRUNCH

The credibility of the CBI has been waning rapidly because of its misuse of authority ("Playing Politics", September 15). It is regrettable that the Congress(I) is bringing a bill in Parliament which will empower the CBI to investigate any case without permission from the state Government. This will hamper the functioning of our democratic system.
Bangalore — VISHWESHWAR BHAT

■ CBI chief Mohan Katre will find it difficult to investigate the Nusli Wadia murder plot impartially considering the revelation of his son's business links with the Ambanis' Reliance Industries.
Kanpur — KUMUD MEHROTRA

PRESERVING TRADITION

The term 'Driglam Namza' ("Between Two Worlds", September 15) does not mean a revival of Bhutanese tradition and culture as mentioned in your article but in fact means traditional etiquettes. And this is not a new concept introduced to make life hard for any Bhutanese. It existed long before modernisation and is as old as Bhutan. Also, the rule that our people wear the traditional Bhutanese dress, kho and kira, has not been opposed by anybody in Bhutan. This rule was made not because of sentimental reasons or any orthodox views, but because we want to maintain our distinct national identity and be recognised by the rest of the world as Bhutanese.
Thimphu — TASHI WANGCHUK
Ministry of Social Services, Bhutan

■ It is nice to know that the inhabitants of the land of hidden treasures are striving to preserve their cultural heritage. This should serve as an example for those who are influenced by western culture, but who fail to recognise the golden culture that lies around them.
New Delhi — JITENDRA N. MISHRA

TAKEN TO TASK

All the 13 students involved in the ragging incident ("Horror Story", September 15) at Government College, Nattakam, have been permanently expelled from the college hostel. Eight have been dismissed from the college and two others have been suspended for a year. Three students who were witnesses to the incident but did nothing to prevent it were also suspended from the college for a month. The punishment is stiff, but it should serve as an example for all institutions in the country.
Kottayam — K.J. ALPHONSE
District Collector and District Magistrate

■ College authorities everywhere should take stern measures to stop students from indulging in ragging. Their tribe should be nipped in the bud.
Hyderabad — S. BHASKER

MURKY CONNECTIONS

It is unfortunate that corporate giants are used for political benefits ("Crime, Money and Politics", August 31). Your analysis shows political backing is more important than professionalism for the growth of any industrial house.
Bangalore — H.G. NAYAK

IDENTITY CRISIS

"American Born Confused Desis" (August 31), served to accentuate the identity crisis faced by the progeny of Indians settled in the US. However, one must acknowledge that the responsibility for it lies with the parents. They have embraced the material affluence of the US with mercenary zeal but their double standards preclude their coming to terms with the concomitant decadence intrinsic to American culture. This hypocritical "dollars-o.k.; dating-out" attitude has given rise to the present generation of US-Indians who are victims of the cross-currents of two vastly dissimilar cultures. And they find themselves confined to a disparate existence not unlike that of the proverbial *dhobi ka gadha—na ghar ka, na ghat ka.* It is to the credit of these youngsters that many of them have succeeded in transcending social pressures and joining the ranks of the US professional elite. Incidentally, as a concluding anecdote, I would like to point out the latest 'desi' acronym pertaining to perhaps the single largest segment of the ABCDs settled here: the "ABCDEFG—American born-confused desi, emigrated from Gujarat"! Howzat!!
Florida — ARINDAM DE

■ The erosion of family life among Americans is of concern but even Indian families here are not without problems. The protectionism of Indian parents results in a coddled youth. One should accept the fact that being Indo-American is a unique experience that only a small percentage of society can have.
Texas — SUBIR MUKERJEE

■ The glamour of a foreign country attracted many Indians to the US in the '60s. Their offsprings should aspire to develop a balanced cultural influence of both the East and the West.
New Delhi — LALIMA ANEJA

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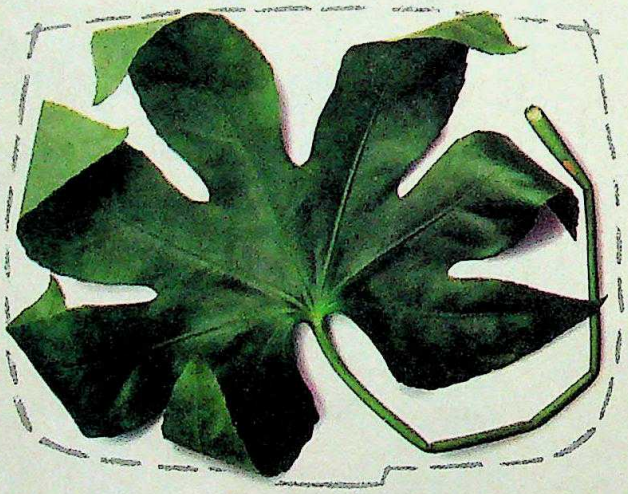

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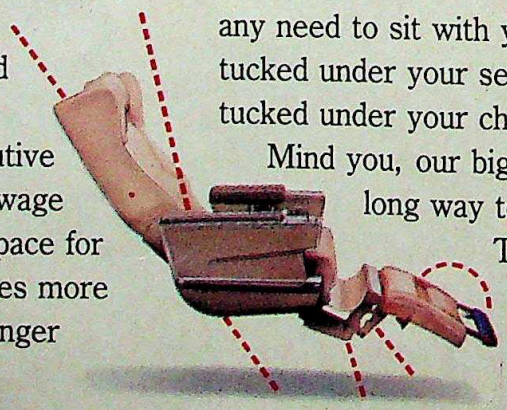

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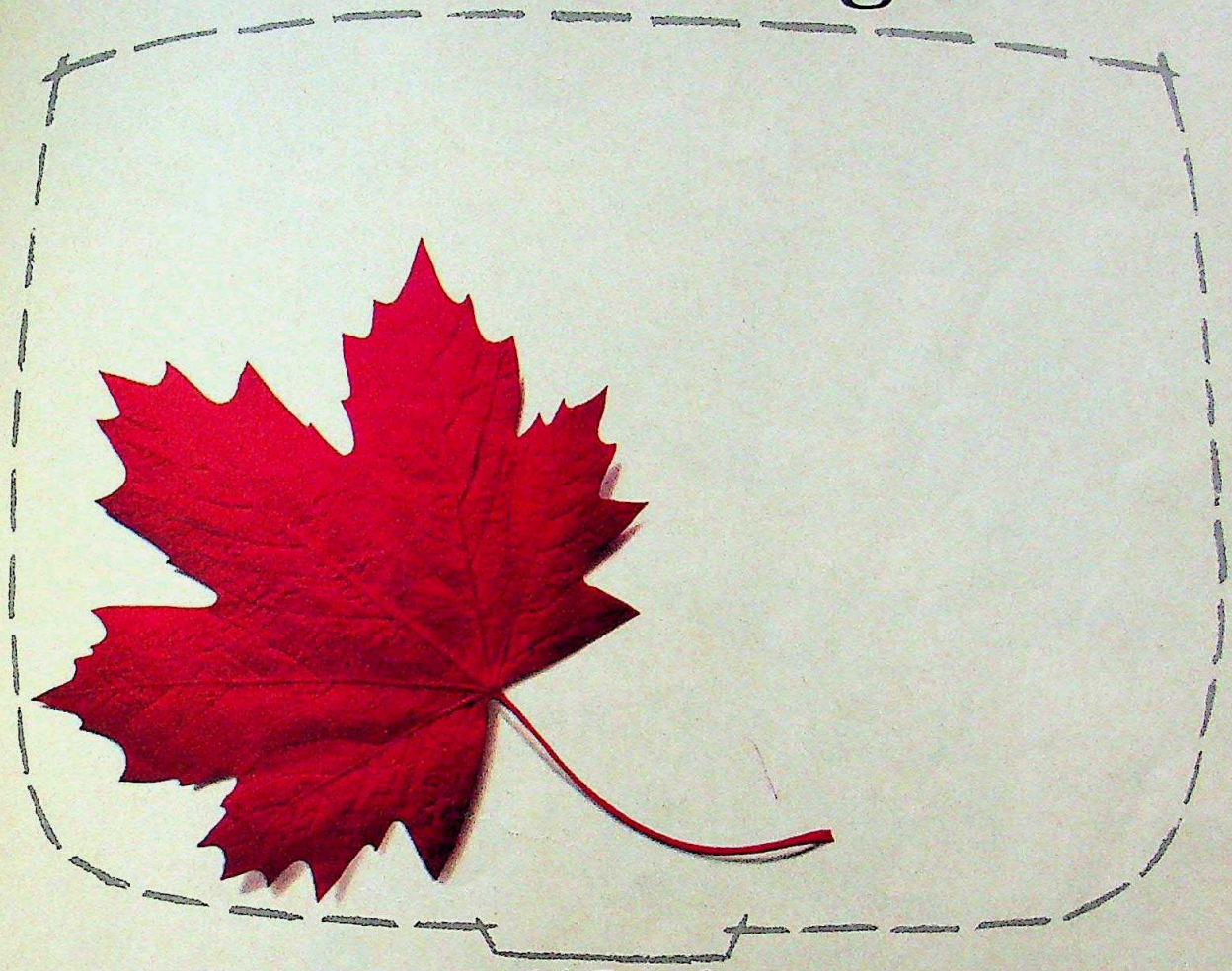

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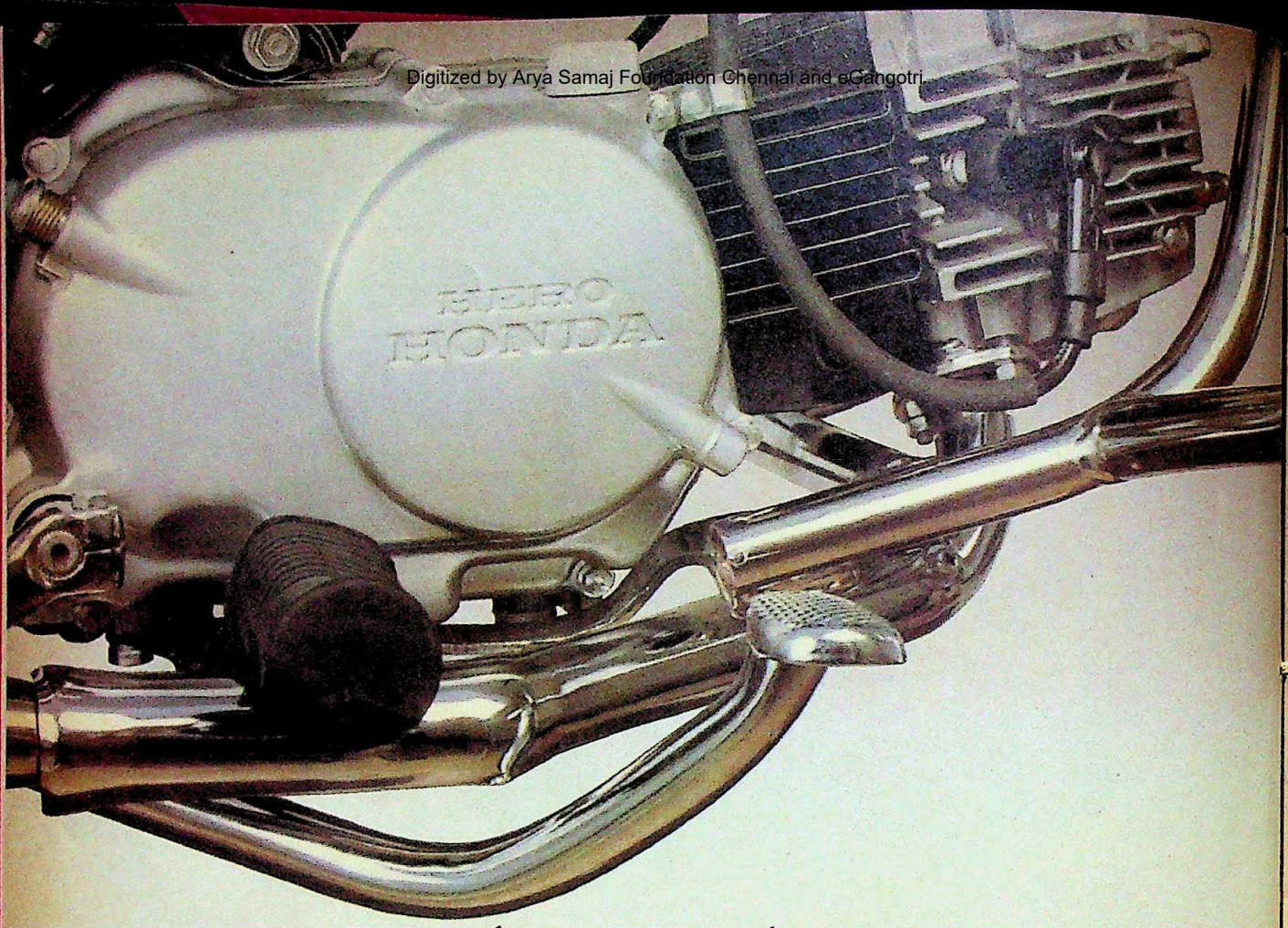

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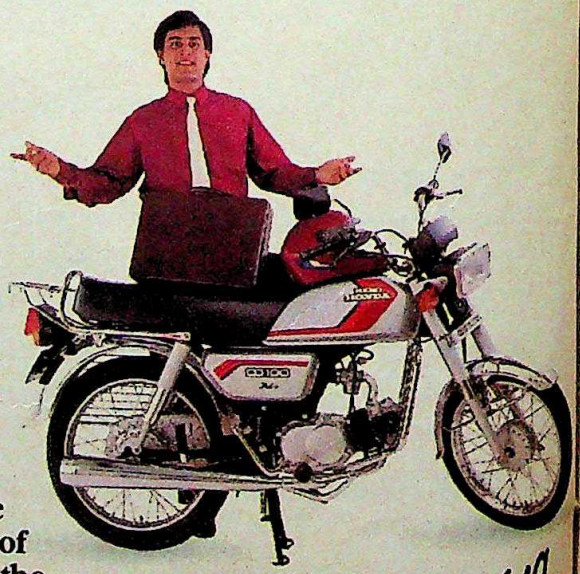

Our favourite performance figure, though, is the lakhs of happy owners. Who make the Hero Honda CD 100 India's largest-selling bike.

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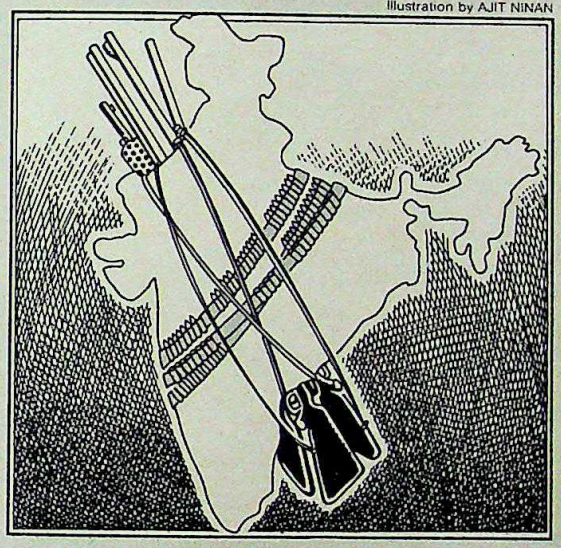
March of the Gun

WITH every passing day, the nation watches in stupefied horror the bloodthirst overtaking this land. It is a steadily creeping madness. A psychosis of evil now afflicting what until yesteryear were considered to be impregnable and near-idyllic islands of sanity and serenity. Its symbol is the gun. Its victims: Muslims, Hindus, Harijans, Brahmins, women, children. We The People.

Never in the nation's history has it been held to ransom by the power of the gun as it is today. Punjab used to be an aberration. It was "out there" somewhere. About two years ago, as the murder and mayhem grew more sanguinary, the rest of the country, it seems, happily banished Punjab from the forefront of its collective consciousness and dumped it into some deep recess of institutional memory. An aberration in which terrorists firing at innocent bystanders and the police killing "dreaded terrorists" became a natural state of affairs.

Illustration by AJIT NINAN



Punjab's Kalashnikov culture, after all was, well, its own albatross. And that piteously troubled limb of India ceased to figure as an area in need of aggressive and tenacious initiative on the Government's agenda of problem-solving.

And this is the pity of it all. For the creeping Kalashnikovism soon wound its way into Kashmir's placid vale where city streets now ring out with the sound of burstfire, where a few hundred terrorists can paralyse hundreds of thousands with fear. It seems only yesterday that these descriptions were used for Afghanistan and Pakistan's north-west frontier. Today it could be India. The country is passing through one of the more violent periods in its history. But what has begun to compound it is the presence of the gun. The message seems to have gone out from Punjab, from Pakistan, and perhaps even from the LTTE which received its guns and training from the Indian Government, that a few thugs, a small gang of political vigilantes, religious zealots, city lumpens, can hold governments and the citizenry to ransom. They have learnt of the multiplier effect of the gun. Even kisan leader Mahendra Singh Tikait, who can command lakhs of peasants at the drop of a turban to surround cities and go on hunger strike for their demands, is now guarded by heavily armed men. Again, the gun as symbol. And doubly ironic because when a peaceful Gandhian tactic like a hunger strike is still being used successfully by Tikait's movement, wherefore should arise the need for the gun?

All this poses not just the danger of increased violence but also of anarchy. In a democracy, people defend their rights or assert themselves in a political cause or against the continuation of a government, with a show of numbers, either through demonstrations or at the ballot-box. But the gun has destroyed the importance of numbers or the political legitimacy of peaceful protests. Gun-toters do not need a following. They do not need to participate in debate or build constituencies—activities so essential to a democracy. And as guns grow in numbers the belief in the efficacy of democracy and the rule of law is bound to diminish even further.

It is not therefore without reason that criminals are being rapidly inducted into political parties of all shades in Uttar Pradesh, in Bihar, in Rajasthan, in Tamil Nadu. In the intimidation game, where is the need to sway the masses to one side or the other through speeches and party platforms and programmes of development when you've got guns? Who needs the ballot when you've got the bullet?

AND the bullets have started flying. The violence once confined to Punjab and Assam has spread to the unlikeliest of places, to Kota in Rajasthan, to Bodinayakanur in Tamil Nadu, to Sasaram in Bihar. The difference: it is not only spreading to areas which had been relatively free of tension before but also that in each case, religious, caste or political differences were subjected to the brutal arbitration of the gun.

In Kota, the violence stemmed from tensions that exploded when the Anant Chaturdashi religious procession passed through a narrow lane which has a concentration of the area's minority community. Processionists were attacked with acid bulbs and firearms. Sixteen dead. Hundreds injured. Who would have imagined even last year that the army would have to stage a flag march in Kota, of all places, to restore peace. In Tamil Nadu where two castes battled each other as well as the police with guns, 21 lost their lives. In Sasaram, Bihar, Jagjivan Ram's constituency: so far free of the state's gang warfare and communal tensions, last month it saw communal war, six killed, scores injured. In West Bengal: smuggling of dynamite sticks in thousands from coal-mines and the Haldia port by political hoodlums.

And the madness shows no sign of abating. Nor are there quick remedies. The country's stringent gun control laws, while they must be aggressively enforced, can only make a small dent in the proliferation of illegal weapons. The remedy lies with the politicians. They must publicly abjure violence and ensure that no one with a criminal record is ever given a gun licence or admitted into established political parties. And opposition-run states must not shield any political worker from the police if he is found to possess or have used an unlicensed weapon. Bringing an end to the gun culture is not a political agenda, it is a national agenda on which depends the survival of democracy. And if, in today's poisoned India, politicians cannot think beyond their political noses, let them act at least in their own long-term interest summed up by the age-old dictum that if you live by the gun, chances are you'll die by it too.

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Old Times Again

● There is almost a sense of *deja vu* about it. Unerringly, things in the Congress(I) tend to come full circle. The return of 'Dumpy' Akbar Ahmed to the parent fold is yet another step towards restoring the *status quo ante* in the party.

The ringing in of the old order began with the rehabilitation of R.K. Dhawan and

Chenna Reddy. And now the one vital piece of the old structure that was still missing—the Sanjay brigade—has also been but back in place. Besides Dumpy, Sanjay's old cronies Kamal Nath and Ghulam Nabi Azad are also riding the highs. Kamal Nath is these days a regular visitor at the Prime Minister's Office, and Azad has regrown his clipped wings and can be heard making brave pronouncements once again. It's almost like old times.

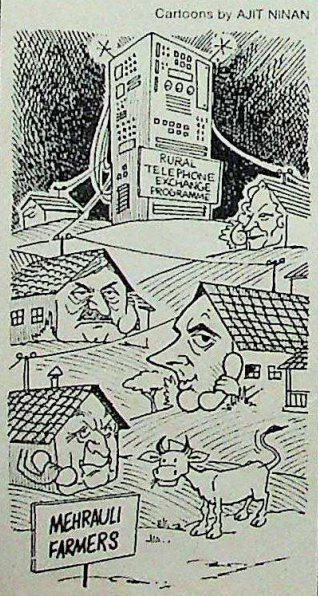
Of course, it isn't nostalgia that has prompted all the recent moves. They are simply another sign that Rajiv is gearing for a no-holds-barred general elections. For Sanjay's men have the reputation of being streetfighters. In fact, Dumpy has been going around saying that in case the Congress(I) loses, Rajiv will need the street-smart skills of people like him—who've been out in the wilderness for long—to survive. And if it wins, they can still be put to good use. Rajiv will use them as counterpoints to offset the influence of the old guard in the party.

Rural Splendour

● Rajiv Gandhi promised that by the end of next year all rural areas will have telephone exchanges. The Government is certainly living up to its promise. In Chhatarpur-Mehrauli, the rural area on the capital's outskirts. But, kisans don't live in this area any more. Here exist the swanky farmhouses of Delhi's elite—of Rajiv Gandhi, Satish Sharma, Martand Singh, Teji Bachchan and Lt-Governor Romesh Bhandari. This playing ground for some 1,000 VIPs is now equipped with a special electronic telephone exchange, courtesy the Mahanagar Telephone Nigam.

The area was earlier fed by the Hauz Khas exchange which also services Nehru Place, one of Delhi's largest commercial centres. Here, residents have been waiting for over four years for phone con-

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



nections and are told they may have to wait another four. South Delhi residents quip they will petition Bhandari to declare the Mehrauli VIP complex a commercial area so they can move their businesses there and get priority connections. It's not wealth they're criticising, it's privilege.

Youth Power

● The consequences of mobilising youth power can sometimes be unnerving, as Congress(I) politicians discovered last fortnight.

About 100 Youth Congress leaders were invited to Delhi for high-level pep talks and organisational meetings in preparation for the polls. The crowning moment of the

confab was a sumptuous breakfast at Rajiv Gandhi's residence, followed by meetings with Congress(I) bigwigs.

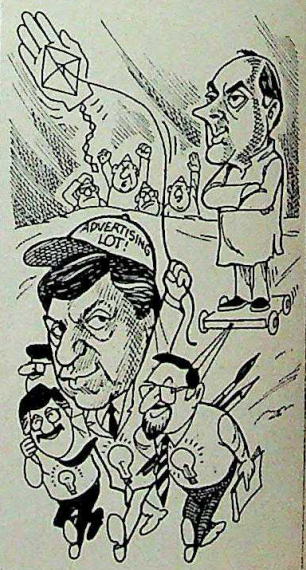
The exercise was aimed at getting senior partymen to brief the youth activists on how to fan out in the countryside and which electoral issues to stress. The briefers included AICC(I) General Secretary V.N. Gadgil, Congress(I) MP, N.K.P. Salve and Defence Minister K.C. Pant.

But, the tables were turned. The heavyweights found themselves at the receiving end. A lively lot, the youth brigade converted the opportunity to ask hard questions—in the manner of journalists—of their official briefers. The interlocutors asked probing questions about why prices were out of control and how they should answer the electorate on this issue as well as about the Government's stand on Sri Lanka. Pant faced some of the toughest questioning on defence kickbacks, including recent developments on the Bofors issue. He reportedly heaved a sigh of relief when it was all over.

Advertising Advice

● You know for sure that the ruling party has begun an election campaign in earnest when advertising executives start travelling with the prime minister for whistlestop rallies. Last fortnight, as Rajiv helicoptered through western Uttar Pradesh, the gaggle of bureaucrats which travels with him—among them G. Parthasarathy and Mani Shankar Aiyar—was accompanied by Arun "Bunny" Nanda, chief of the Bombay-based ad agency, Rediffusion.

Nanda, who has created slogans and designed previous poll campaigns, has been flitting between the offices of Rajiv and Satish Sharma. Besides helping in the campaign design, Nanda is also closely involved in the planning of electoral strategy. But the influence of the ad whiz kids riles politicians no end. A senior



minister has complained that incorrect assessments by the ad boys and Rajiv's supercrats during the West Bengal and Tamil Nadu polls had produced undue optimism with disastrous results. Other ministers feel that as politicians they have a better view of the situation than do ad men.

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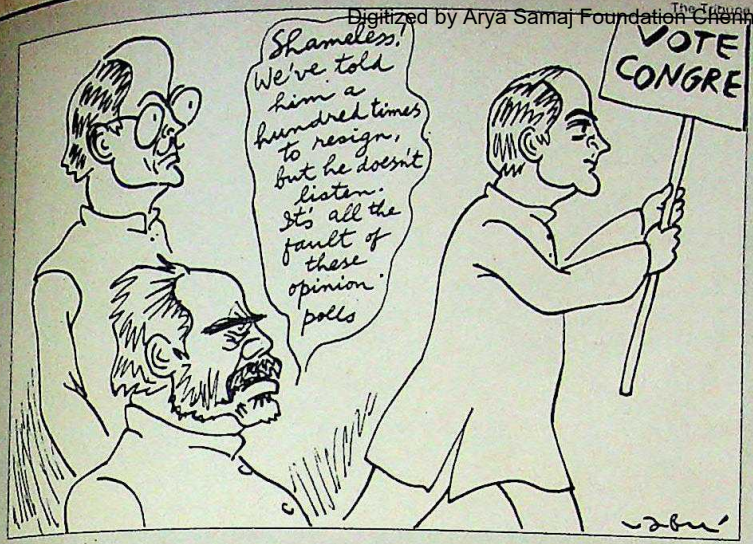

• *The Congress is just like the Ganga. It is pure and can never be dirtied. Sometimes, dead bodies of cows and donkeys also float in the Ganga, like V.P. Singh did for a while. But that does not make the Ganga impure.*

■ KALPNATH RAI, minister of state for power, at a press conference

• *It was not difficult to stop buses. But we refrained because we knew that we had to return to power in another four months, and we did not want to be saddled with broken buses.*

■ V.P. SINGH on the Bharat bandh, addressing a public rally

• *I believe everybody in the Janata Dal has a rainbow range, from ultra-violet to infra-red.*

■ MANEKA GANDHI in *Indian Express*

• *Terrorism will stop once it is not read about. That way nobody will come to know of a bomb blast...*

■ FAROOQ ABDULLAH in *The Times of India*

• *Kashmir is no issue. Kashmir is ours and there is no question about it.*

■ RAJIV GANDHI

• *My peer group has extended from hundreds of sarpanchs to a dozen chief ministers.*

■ MANI SHANKAR AIYAR on Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika bills, in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

• *This type of thing only happens when it is illegal business. One reads about this or sees it in the movies. One really doesn't believe it happens in real life.*

■ NUSLI WADIA, on the plot to kill him, in *Newstrack*

• *We have constantly worked at this strategy: replace foreign operations in the country and the Government is bound to support you.*

■ RAVI KANT RUIA of Essar, in *Bombay*

• *I have always believed that if I am destined to captain India I will. At the same time it would not bother me at all, if I am not made captain.*

■ KRISHNAMACHARI SRIKKANTH in *Sportstar*

• *I have never ever planned any happening in my life. And life has been good to me without planning. So why spoil things now by planning.*

■ AMITABH BACHCHAN in *Sunday*

• *So what if I look like V.P. Singh? To tell you a joke, people say that in pyjama-kurta, I look like Rajiv Gandhi. My face is a big mystery.*

■ ALOK NATH on his role in *Boond-Boond* in *The Sunday Observer*

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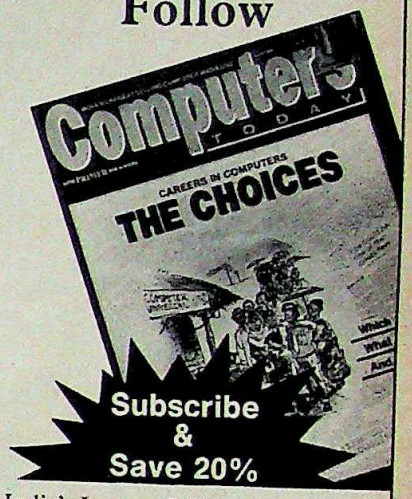

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DIVINE CATCH

■ A regular bidder at the fish market near Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu, Hameed was not too excited about the latest catch. Of late the prices had been a bit steep, and some of the fish smelled stale. But back in his shop, when Hameed started scaling the fish, he got quite a start. One he fervently hoped would tilt the scales of fortune in his favour. On the side of a small *aila* fish Hameed spied a strange Arabic inscription. He promptly consulted the local maulvi who proclaimed that the Arabic message read: There is no God except Allah.

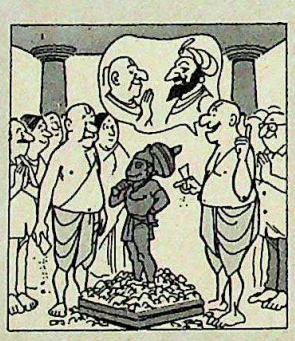
Though the message was clear, but for Hameed the medium is what matters. The prize fish is now displayed in a place of honour in his shop, and draws large crowds of the faithful who come to inspect the 'holy' fish and buy some of the ordinary ones. It transpires that the fish was caught near Man-galore. So what remains the key question is whether the inscription is the work of an ordinary mortal or of God?

BUS BLUES

■ For the adamant clerk of the Rajasthan State Road Transport Corporation it was a question of increment or bust. But when he started a legal battle against the corporation in the court of the Kota judicial magistrate in 1987 for increments that he felt were his due but were not given to him, little did he realise that he would be faced with an altogether different choice: increment or bus.

That's exactly what happened. The case was decided in his favour and the corporation was ordered to compensate him to the tune of Rs 45,000. As often happens in government offices and public sector undertakings, this corporation too ignored the court order. But the magistrate, it turned out, was made of sterner stuff. He ordered one of the corporation's buses parked in a depot in the town to be impounded and handed over to the clerk as compensation. Now the clerk is literally in the driver's seat, but he would still rather have just his money.

CLEANSED APPEAL



■ Till recently there was nothing extraordinary about the Hanuman temple in Miraj, near Sangli in Maharashtra. But now pilgrims from all over the state are making a beeline for the temple. The reason: the idol shed 200 kg weight and revealed its true simian proportions.

Hanuman had not been affected by the latest fitness fad and was not on a diet. But over the years devotees that had thronged the temple had rubbed layers and layers of an oily yellow paste on the idol, which accounted for its mammoth proportions. When this thick coating of *sindoor* was removed, the pujari, whose ancestors were also priests at the same temple, recognised the now clean idol as the one which had been installed by Samarth Ramdas, the guru of Chhatrapati Shivaji, 400 years ago. Hanuman and the association with Shivaji combine have given the temple a strong emotive appeal and since then, the pilgrims have not stopped coming.

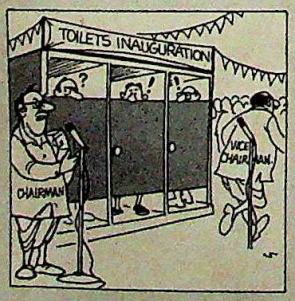
GOD LUCK

■ What chance do ordinary mortals have if they compete with the gods for a lottery prize? Not many, if the results of a lottery for Indira Vikas Patra buyers in Trivandrum are any indication. The much-coveted prize of a trip to Europe for two and a Maruti car went to Lord Krishna, the presiding deity of the famous Guruvayoor temple. The temple had invested in Indira Vikas Patras bought in the name of the Lord.

But problems arose when the deity actually won the prize. Would he want to travel to Europe cramped in economy class with 350 mortals? And who would he take along on the trip-for-two? Or would the temple pujari stand in for the Lord? The temple administration took the easiest way out. It decided to encash the prize. But will it keep the Maruti car or change it for a van? At least then, the temple would have an Omni-present transport.

THE WATER-LOO

■ The citizens of Bhadrak Municipality in Orissa really had a reason to celebrate recently: the public toilets constructed by the municipality were finally being inaugurated. But amid the euphoria some hard feelings persisted. The chairman of the municipality and his deputy wanted to inaugurate the building. The crafty vice-chairman out-manoeuvred his boss: he arrived well before the scheduled inauguration time, and, cheered on by a vociferous group of supporters, threw the toilets open to the public. A little later the chairman arrived with his men, and not to be outdone, went through the motions of yet another inauguration. He too waxed eloquent about the great service he was doing to his constituents. Political oneupmanship of this sort stinks, but the people of Bhadrak are happy that they now don't have to scoot all over the countryside.



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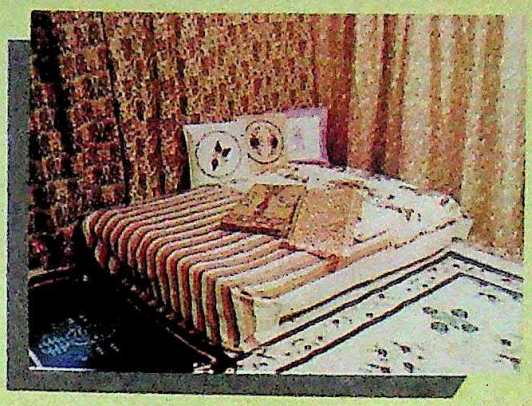
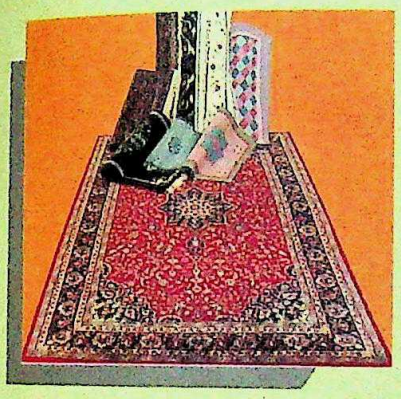
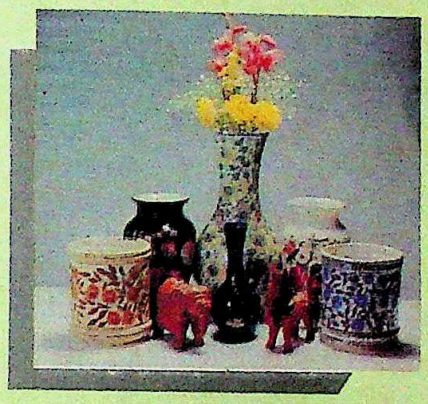

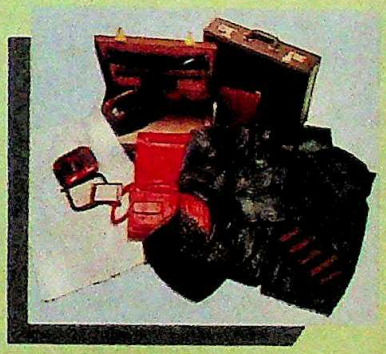
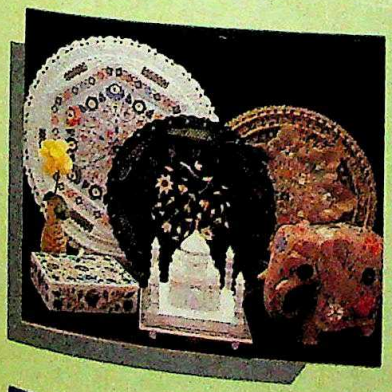
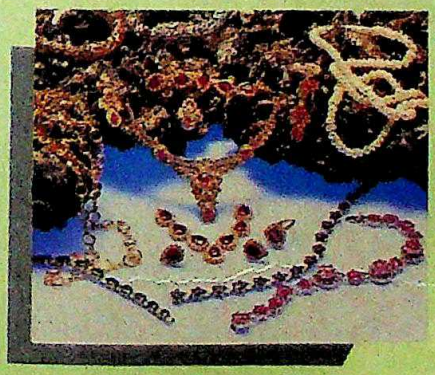

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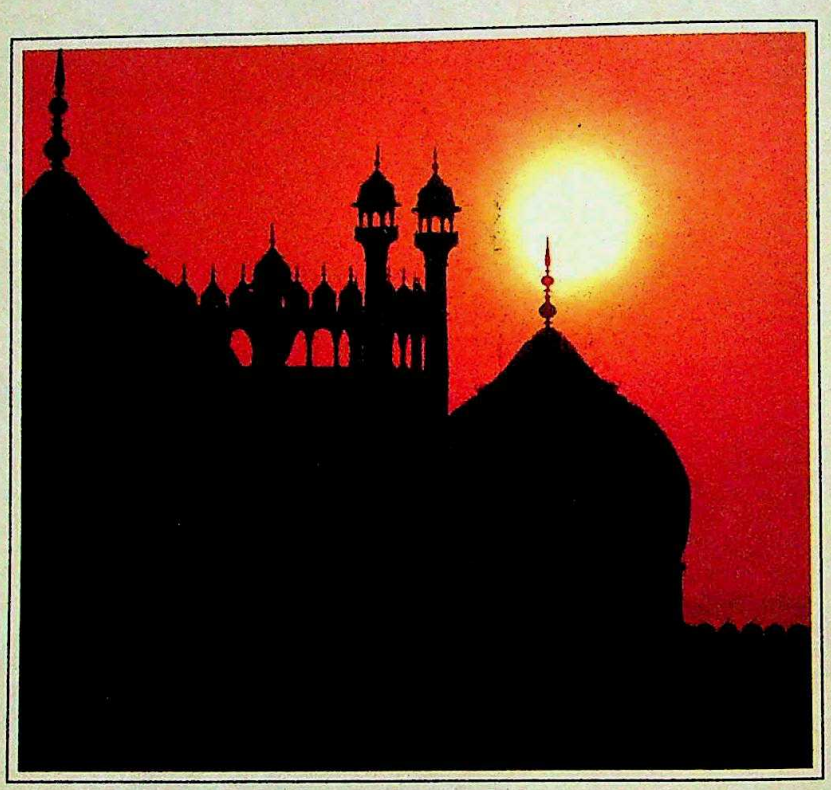
The view left us breathless.



I hailed the jewel in the lotus.

Because that's how the fort's dome looked, against the amber-red glow of the sunset sky.

It was a photographer's dream.

And I clicked away.

As the light shifted, the sun broke into a thousand pieces.

Reflected by the monument's windows and brass-covered minarets.

Oriental music wafted in the air.

Monumental folly

Along with the buzz of flies.

Hovering over piles of rotting food.

In which cows and pigs searched for a meal.

Then, a man—obviously a tourist—walked up to throw more fruit-peel on the mound of garbage.

The pigs surged forward...

Help protect the heritage to which you belong

As you travel, you discover.

India's golden heritage, unparalleled anywhere else in the world.

5,000 years of history in countless

पर्यटन विभाग भारत सरकार

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So did the stench.

forts, monuments and shrines.
And the splendorous diversity of nature.
In myriad hues and colours.
Don't remain silent when someone defaces a monument, shows disrespect to a place of worship or pilgrimage, or in any other way damages or dirties the surroundings.

Persuade him.
Prevent him.
Report him.
Help protect your priceless heritage.
It's the only one you have.

We can & We will
Keep India Beautiful

Department of Tourism Government of India

HTA 6239

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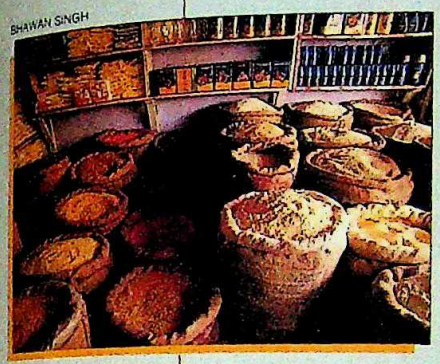
Raising the Stakes

THE symbolism was self-evident in the fortnight that was, a flurry of images that are a tangible testimonial to the times. A sharp and sudden rise in prices of essential commodities; a birthday bash bestowing Devi Lal with a larger-than-life political stature; an air crash that exhumed troubling questions about air safety; and the release of suspected terrorists to save the life of a Punjab policeman's son.

BHAWAN SINGH

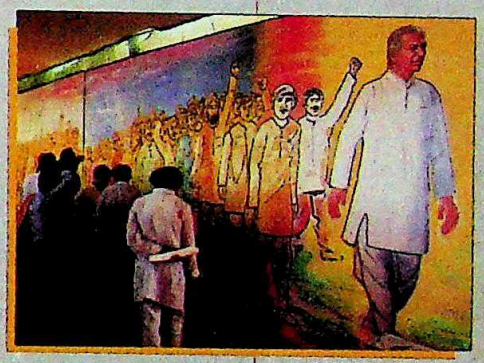


The sharp spurt in prices has become a highly sensitive political issue with grave ramifications for the ruling party.

Collectively, they convey a conclusion that is inescapable; the stakes are now appreciably higher than ever before. By itself, the spurt in prices could have been dismissed as an annual occurrence. But with elections barely three months away, it has become a highly sensitive political issue with grave ramifications for the ruling party.

Till now, the one area the Rajiv Gandhi Government could legitimately label a success was the state of the Indian economy. But by inexplicably allowing prices of essential items to get out of hand, it is the Government's management—or mismanagement—of the economy that has now come into serious question. More vital, it has gifted the Opposition parties with the one electoral weapon they badly lacked—a live and literal gut-issue.

Devi Lal's birthday rally has raised the stakes in the Opposition's leadership crisis.



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

The gathering of opposition eagles at a New Delhi rally may have been to celebrate Devi Lal's 75th birthday, but the speeches contained a new and emotive edge: the price hike and the government's inability to control it. In the Opposition context, however, Devi Lal's birthday bash contained equally worrying signals. The efforts that went into making the rally a success underlined the fact that Devi Lal was projecting himself as the Opposition strongman. Clearly, the opposition leadership stakes have been raised to a new level.

So, undeniably, has the war of nerves between Punjab's terrorist gangs and the state police. The recent strategy adopted by the terrorists—kidnapping children of police officers—has added a dangerous new dimension to the problem. But no less alarming than the official response: the release of suspected terrorists in exchange for a kidnapped child. The classic response to terrorist threats in a hostage situation is not to give in. By violating that code, the Punjab Police may have set a dangerous precedent. Again, the stakes have been raised to new levels.

NAMAS BHOJANI

The Vayudoot crash near Pune has raised questions about the airline's unbridled expansion.

Similarly, the crash of a Vayudoot aircraft near Pune has raised troubling questions about the state of the country's aviation industry and its commitment to safety procedures. The latest disaster is the third in one year and the second for Vayudoot. This time it was not an ageing Avro that crashed but a brand new Dornier. The cause of the crash is still being speculated on. But by its unharnessed expansion, Vayudoot has clearly raised the odds on air safety to unacceptable levels.

The star-studded extravaganza injected a dose of commercialism into the athletic arena.

BHAWAN SINGH

Even the sporting arena witnessed the raising of stakes to new highs. The star-spangled athletic extravaganza in Delhi injected glamour to the otherwise drab sports scene. But by raising the commercial stakes—Carl Lewis and Co. do not run for anything but big money—the organisers raised uncomfortable questions. Could that money have been better spent on Indian track prospects?

The lessons are evident. Upping the ante is all very well. But raising the stakes for others also means raising it for yourself.

—DILIP BOBB

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CRISIS ON PRICES

SUDDENLY there is a new battle-cry shaking the political firmament as the nation lurches towards the elections. It isn't the Bofors gun, it isn't HDW submarines, it isn't Westland helicopters, it isn't even the prime minister's "wayward cronies" or their alleged foreign bank accounts. It's prices.

Normally there would be nothing unusual about inflation becoming an issue before an election. The Opposition tried that with some success in 1967, and Indira Gandhi demonstrated the lethal effect of one solitary slogan in 1980: the rise in onion prices. Now the Opposition has sugar. It also has edible oils, pulses, rice, wheat, tea, clothing, garlic, even salt and pepper. "Sugar is the scandal of the decade, it is bigger than Bofors," gloats Janata Dal Campaign Committee Chairman George Fernandes. Echoes an ebullient Ajit Singh, secretary-general of the party, just back from a four-day trip to Devaria and Gorakhpur: "I hammered on the prices issue everywhere. The crowds responded wonderfully."

That the price rise was quickly becoming the spearhead of the opposition thrust was evident last fortnight in the utterances of its stalwarts. A rare sense of purpose was evident at the massive rally in Delhi on Devi Lal's 75th birthday as one speaker after another took the Government apart on the prices issue—leaving Bofors in the shadow. Even V.P. Singh, whose speeches over the past two years have centred on corruption, switched lanes. "Those who spent all their lives in palaces," he said, jerking his thumb at South Block, "would never know how the poor and middle classes survive today."

At recent BJP rallies the slogan that evoked the most response was "*Rajiv tere shasan mein, kooda bik gaya rashan mein.*" (In your reign Rajiv, garbage is sold in ration shops.) The Janata Dal had already announced a movement to raid sugar godowns, sell the stocks at Rs 6.50 a

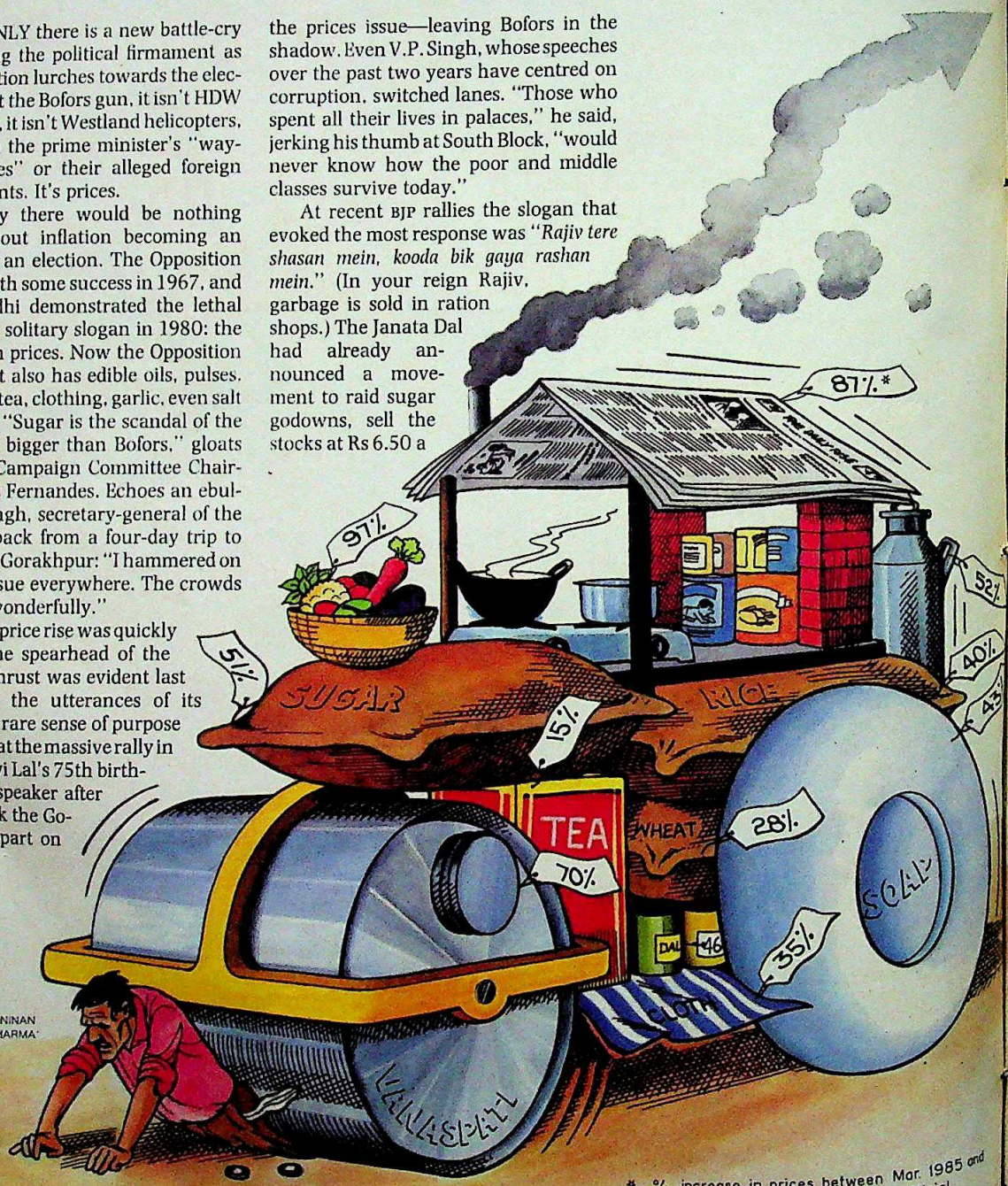

Illustration by AJIT NINAN & ANIL SHARMA

* % increase in prices between Mar. 1985 and May 1989 as measured by the official Wholesale Price Index (1970-71 = 100)

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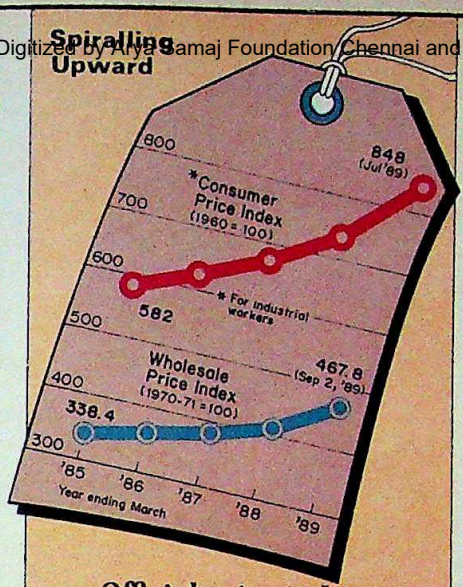
kg (compared to the prevailing open market price of Rs 10-11) and disburse the proceeds among farmers. The national council of the CPI observed a protest week from September 27 against "the intolerable and scandalous situation".

The mood was reflected in the Gujarat Assembly too—which was thrown into confusion last fortnight as opposition MLAs marched in carrying placards with slogans against escalating prices. They even brought along balloons and bottles filled with sugar, groundnut oil and salt, with the 1977 prices—when the Janata Party was in power—written on them, and placed them on the Speaker's table.

The Opposition calculates that while people are cynical about corruption, inflation is something they will automatically blame the Government for. And as public resentment rises as steeply as the prices, this seems to be sound logic. Talk of sugar turning bitter or dal getting thinner appeals to the common man buried under the price spiral. Says Lutf Ali, 41, a tailor in Delhi: "I haven't seen with my own eyes who has taken the Bofors kickback so I don't know who to punish for that. But for these criminal prices I will settle the account at the next polls."



Official price indices don't reflect real inflation because of inadequate weightage for food items.

Charts by B.K. SHARMA

Similar signals come from elsewhere in the country. Says Brij Mohan Srivastava, a Congress(I) leader from Bhopal: "It is bound to be the most vital election issue. We must do something or it will cost the party dearly." For Basant Bisht, 28, a saleswoman and wife of a railway officer in Delhi, the polls will be a time to settle scores with those responsible for punching a hole in her purse. "The Government doesn't seem bothered. But I'll have my say in the elections," she declares.

Unfortunately for the people, and the ruling party, while the overall official price index has not risen that sharply *(see chart)*, the increase has pertained to food, specifically to commodities essential to the eating habits of the major ethnic groups. So if Punjabis have seen the cost of *rajmah* and *mah ki dal* virtually double in two years, the Gujaratis have watched prices of groundnuts and groundnut oil—an integral part of their diet—go through the roof. The south has been hit hard by the sharp jump in the prices of rice and *tuvar* dal; in Kerala, the tab for

THE OPPOSITION

"Each time you mention the issue of inflation the crowds respond wonderfully."
AJIT SINGH
Janata Dal Secretary-General

"Sugar is the scandal of the decade. It is bigger than Bofors."
GEORGE FERNANDES
Janata Dal Campaign Committee Chairman

"Now the Government will try anything to reduce prices but it won't fool people."
INDRAJIT GUPTA
MP, Communist Party of India

THE CONGRESS(I)

"To bring down prices is my biggest challenge in 30 years of public life."
SUKH RAM
Minister of State for Food and Civil Supplies

"Inflation will be a major election issue. But what solutions does the Opposition offer?"
N.K.P. SALVE
MP, Congress(I)

"The prices are a problem but we will be able to bring down the graph quickly."
GHULAM NABI AZAD
AICC(I) General Secretary

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SUGAR

A Tale of Bungling

NOTHING highlights the Government's failure in controlling prices more strikingly than the disaster on the sugar front. It has, indeed, become the most visible target of popular resentment. No wonder then that as the price of sugar sky-rocketed, one ministry blamed another, the Government blamed hoarders and speculators, the industry and trade blamed each other, and both blamed the Government. Still, the hamhanded handling of imports and supplies was also responsible. Even ruling party MPs like N.K.P. Salve concede there's been bungling.

What makes this all the more shocking is that with the sugar industry tightly controlled, monitoring supplies is not difficult. The Government not only determines the proportion to be sold at controlled prices through fair price shops, it also determines the amounts released for open market sales.

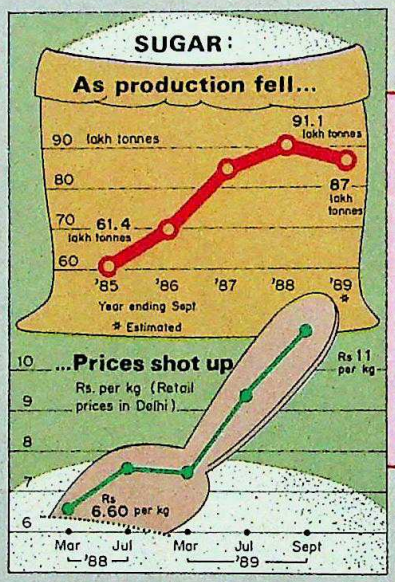
Till April, exports were being talked about when the country should have imported. There was bitter wrangling within the Government about when to import and how. It acted too late. Result: prices shot up from Rs 6.50 a kg to Rs 9 in two months and then zoomed to Rs 12 per kg in the first week of September.

In January-February, sugar production was estimated at 102 lakh tonnes, leaving a 1 lakh tonne surplus for export. But with gur and khandsari prices reigning high—for reasons which continue to baffle the Government—more cane was diverted to this sector. By April, production estimates had been revised to 87 lakh tonnes—short of the demand of 99 lakh tonnes. In early June, the prime minister assured the industry that he would consider imports of up to 5 lakh tonnes.

The decision to import was, however, delayed by differences between ministries. Says Sukh Ram, minister of state for food and civil supplies: "The Commerce Ministry refused to get involved in sugar imports. Even if it's dirty business, someone had to do it. We did it despite our lack of experience." Counters Commerce Minister Dinesh Singh: "Since the Food and Civil Supplies Ministry couldn't decide when and how much sugar to import, we felt it would be better if they import sugar."

When the Government finally decided to import 2 lakh tonnes of sugar late last month, the price had gone up to between $ 518 (Rs 8,550) and $ 521 (Rs 8,600) a tonne, versus $ 350 (Rs 5,775) in June. Even this is higher than the spot price on the London market—$ 430 (Rs 7,098) excluding freight—because the Government wants deliveries by October 20. If imports had been made three months earlier, the country would have saved nearly Rs 60 crore in hard currency.

Worse, the Government even vacillated on how to go about importing. On August 25, three days after the clearance from the Finance Ministry came, offers for imports of 2 lakh tonnes of sugar were invited from companies registered with the State Trading Corporation. Before the contracts could be finalised, however, Sukh Ram overruled a committee headed by his own ministry's Secretary, B.B. Mahajan, and allowed two non-registered parties to bid.



One of these, Wheel International, offered 2 lakh tonnes at a landed price of $ 460 (Rs 7,593) a tonne against over $ 500 (Rs 8,253) a tonne offered by the others. Accordingly, it was given a letter of intent on September 7. But since its credentials were not known, the Finance Ministry imposed conditions. One was that a bid bond (or a bank guarantee) equal to 3 per cent of the contract value would have to be given. Wheel International was given more than four extensions of deadlines, between September 9 and September 25, for giving the bond. It hasn't yet. (Meanwhile, on September 21, the ministry awarded contracts for 2 lakh tonnes sugar imports to the registered suppliers whose offers had earlier been ignored.)

Wheel International, headed by a 31-year-old "academic" A.N. Gopal, is a proprietorship company that has done no business so far. Is Gopal fronting for people close to the ruling party as the Opposition alleges? "Never," he says. Why hasn't he fulfilled the conditions of the contract? "I'm trying. I'm confident I will be given a contract to import at least 50,000 tonnes of sugar."

Sukh Ram claims he is no longer interested in a non-registered party. "Once bitten, twice shy," he told INDIA TODAY. But Secretary Mahajan differs:

> **Sugar exports were considered when the country should have been importing. The decision to import came too late. Prices zoomed.**

"If the firm gives us the bid bond, we can still consider awarding it a contract." Such confusion persists.

And what cannot be denied is that every time Ram talked of imports, the local prices of sugar—instead of coming down in anticipation of higher supplies—went up. As an industry source says: "It was like a strip-tease show. The Government would disclose its import plans in bits and pieces and the industry and trade would clap in joy."

Industry and trade sources say the Government released excessive quantities of sugar in the first half of the year. Also, in late-August, it departed from past practice and announced releases for September and October at one go. And though both Dussehra and Diwali fall in October, the release initially announced for the month was the same as for September. "Why did the Government wait till the third week of September to announce higher releases for October?" queries a trader.

Now, the Government has persuaded the industry to sell to traders at

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How the Government Goofed

Jan-Feb: Industry projects a record 1989-90 sugar output of 100 lakh tonnes and calls for exports.

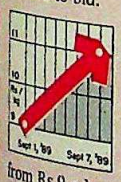
April: The Government permits the Commerce Ministry to export one lakh tonnes. Ironically, the industry is now talking of a deficit, not a surplus. Production figure is scaled down to 87 lakh tonnes.

June 13: Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi gives the sugar industry an assurance that up to five lakh tonnes would be imported if the need is felt. World sugar prices: around Rs 5,775 a tonne.

August 24: Differences crop up between Commerce Minister Dinesh Singh and Minister of State for Food and Civil Supplies Sukh Ram about who should import sugar. The onus falls on the Food Ministry.

August 25: First offers invited from suppliers registered with the State Trading Corporation.

August 28: Ram overrules an official committee's recommendation to award import contracts to registered suppliers and decides to give non-registered parties a chance to bid.



September 1-7: As officialdom dilly-dallies on awarding contracts, speculators rule the roost. Open market prices of sugar shoot up from Rs 9 a kg to Rs 12.

September 21: The Government awards import contracts for two lakh tonnes to registered suppliers, who'd earlier been ignored. World sugar prices have gone up. But India has to pay even more for quick deliveries: over Rs 8,500 a tonne. Result: The Government ends up paying nearly Rs 60 crore more than it would have if imports had been made in June.

The Government has promised to provide sugar at Rs 9 a kg during the festival season but it is not certain.

Rs 775 a quintal (ex-factory)—roughly Rs 9 a kg retail—from September 23 to November 15. But that's hardly creditworthy. For, the ex-factory price was barely Rs 600 a quintal (about Rs 7 retail) earlier this year.

Amazingly, the Government opposed the plans of the Maharashtra Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana Sangh, an association of sugar cooperatives, to sell sugar to the state Government at Re 1 a kg cheaper than the stipulated price of Rs 7.75 (ex-factory), the sangh's Chairman, Shivajirao Patil, alleged in Bombay.

"Is the Government then serious about ensuring that sugar sells at Rs 9 a kg in the festive season? Has it not encouraged the industry to profiteer?" Sukh Ram was asked at a press conference in New Delhi. Exasperated, he exclaimed: "Your minds are set." He then breathed fire against speculators. Clearly, the Government reacted late—laying it open to charges of deliberately delaying decisions. And the air is thick with allegations of pay-offs. Janata Dal leader George Fernandes claims the industry and trade have been allowed to make "illegitimate" profits exceeding Rs 2,000 crore.

A spokesman for the Indian Sugar Mills Association, on the other hand, insists that this year the industry will earn only "normal" profits. The truth probably lies in between. Industry sources say that at least Rs 40 crore has passed to political parties. The figure does not seem far-fetched—in the first week of September alone, the industry and trade earned an additional Rs 30 crore on account of the rise in prices.

What cannot be denied is that this Government has been kind to the sugar industry. For instance, it has reduced the proportion of sugar to be distributed through fair price shops from 65 per cent in 1984-85 to 55 per cent. And after taking into account incentive schemes, the industry sells on an average only 40 per cent of its output at controlled rates.

Opposition leaders like Madhu Dandavate and Ajit Singh say the Government has decided to further reduce this proportion to 30 per cent. When that happens, the nexus between the sugar industry and the powers-that-be will have grown that much stronger.

—PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA

tapioca, the nutritious staple of the poor, has doubled to Rs 2 a kg in just one year. And who isn't hit by the rise in sugar and tea prices?

Households across the land are beginning to cut corners to live with the new realities. There is some truth in the government argument that the peak annual inflation in the last five years came in drought-hit 1987. But before middle class households could recover from that phase, this year's inflation hit them.

The spurt in prices over the past few weeks has altered family budgets. Food now is the biggest single item. But clothing, education and transport are not getting cheaper either. It's not as if middle class earners are eating less. It's just that they are cutting down on frills. The island of prosperity is shrinking. Savings are down too.

SAYS S.B. Kapoor, a well-paid consulting engineer: "There's constant grumbling in the household about prices now. Savings have evaporated." Aruna Sharma, a Delhi schoolteacher who supplements her engineer husband's income also has to cut corners. "With sugar, the trick is to make each kilogram last longer," she says. For Sharada Mathur, a well-to-do housewife in Dehra Dun, higher prices mean unpleasant adjustments like not buying fruit, buying only seasonal vegetables, and cheaper oils in place of cholesterol-free sunflower oil. For Jaya Bhandari, a travel agency executive in the capital, it means cutting down on meats and parties. Savings? "You must be joking," she says.

And in Lucknow, Gopal Tandon, 42, a cloth merchant in Nirala Market, reacts angrily to the suggestion that businessmen like him aren't hit by inflation. "I eat the same dal, oil and vegetables. The prices have made balancing the household budget impossible." Warns Kamla Malhotra, general secretary of the Delhi BJP women's wing: "Rising prices are the major reason for domestic fights. Inflation is breaking up homes."

With the reasonably well-to-do having to watch their budgets, the fate of the lower middle classes is obviously far worse. So if Jaya Bhandari has to cut down on parties, Durgaben, whose husband earns Rs 2,500 a month from his small plywood business in Ahmedabad, rues that she cannot even afford ordinary hospitality. "Recently we refused tea to a carpenter who came to do some work in the house," she says with visible anguish. For those still lower down the income ladder the squeeze is murderous. "Life has become impossible for people like me," says Ayaz Ahmed, an unemployed

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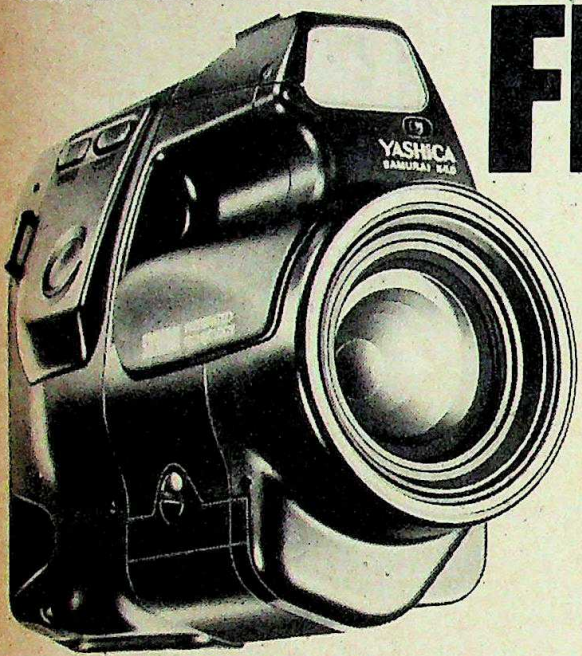

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Lucknow graduate. "Harder than getting a job is managing the train fare to go for an interview or postage expenses to send in applications."

Still, government spokesmen argue that price indices have hardly risen to merit much consternation. They say that the independent Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy projects that the consumer price index will go up by 9 per cent this financial year, against 6.3 per cent in 1988-89 and 10.1 per cent the year before.

RK GUPTA

Ram Dulari, 40, is the wife of Babu Lal, a factory worker in Ghaziabad earning Rs 1,200 a month.

"Forget good education, now I can't even give sweet tea to my children. Dal and sugar are luxuries we can afford only occasionally."

But for the housewife these are mere statistics. The reality is different: sugar prices doubled from Rs 6.50 a kg in July to Rs 13 in early September to later settle near Rs 11; prices of all the dals have risen substantially; prices of edible oils have shot up by more than 25 per cent within the year; that of milk by nearly 13 per cent; all the non-vegetarian foods—meat, poultry, eggs and fish—cost 20 per cent more in the span of a year.

Little wonder then that the Opposition is going for the kill on the prices issue. Even the Congress(I) finds it hard to defend itself. Party MP and Ninth Finance Commission Chairman N.K.P. Salve sounds facile saying an annual inflation of under 10 per cent is "very good indeed compared to China's 27 per cent, Mexico's 70.5 per cent and Peru's 1,722 per cent". But even he concedes that inflation in India could have been less "had the Government observed greater discipline in fiscal management". Rueing the fact that the Government "goofed up on sugar", he admits: "Inflation is certainly going to be a major election issue. I also admit that the common man is in a bad shape. But what solutions does the Opposition offer?"

Articulate defence, but which ruling party wants to be on the defensive on the eve of elections? Particularly when it has all along been claiming that, whatever else it may be faulted on, its record on the economy is remarkable. So when prices climbed inexorably, they questioned the Government's proudest claim. And immediately, the panic in the Government was palpable.

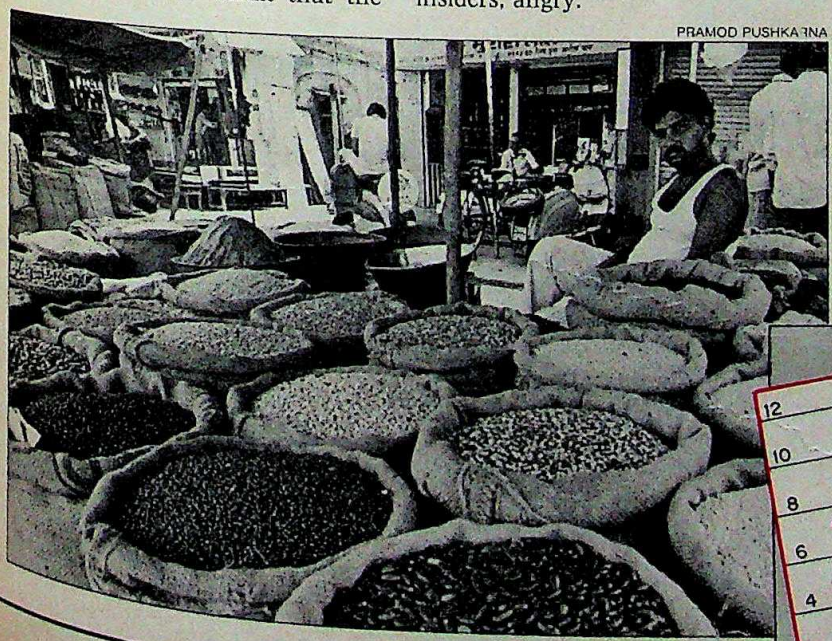
PARTYMEN had, in fact, been warning the Government for some time now about an imminent price crisis. Scores of Congress(I) MPs had written to the high command, complaining of growing disaffection in their constituencies. Key party general secretaries and chief ministers—including Narayan Datt Tiwari in Uttar Pradesh and Sharad Pawar in Maharashtra—had also suggested that rising prices be tackled on a war-footing. The prime minister got worried and, according to insiders, angry.

His indignation was evident at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee for Political Affairs held last fortnight. This was followed by a meeting of senior secretaries led by the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister B.G. Deshmukh and Cabinet Secretary T.N. Seshan. As tempers became frayed, accusations flew back and forth. "Do you want the Government to be toppled?" a top bureaucrat indignantly asked officials of the Food and Civil Supplies Ministry.

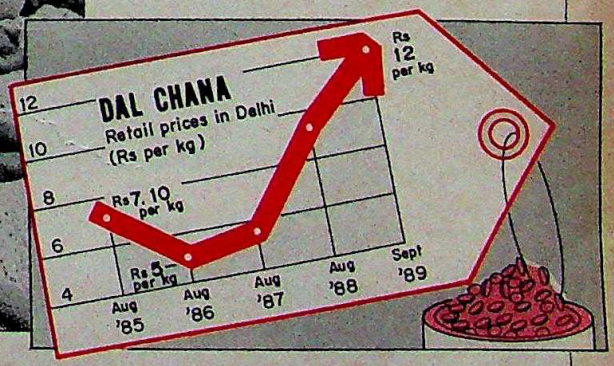
In the eye of the storm, Sukh Ram, minister of state for food and civil supplies was apologetic: "To bring down prices is the biggest challenge I have faced in 30 years of public life. If my party suffers because of prices it will be my biggest failure."

Within the space of three days, seven high-level meetings were held as a panic stricken government thrashed out a fire-fighting strategy. A high-level crisis management group was set up. The group met in Seshan's office every morning to manage the price line of five commodities: sugar, rice tea, edible oils

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Prices of pulses have doubled in two years due to fall in output and bad planning. Vegetarians have had to ration their protein source.



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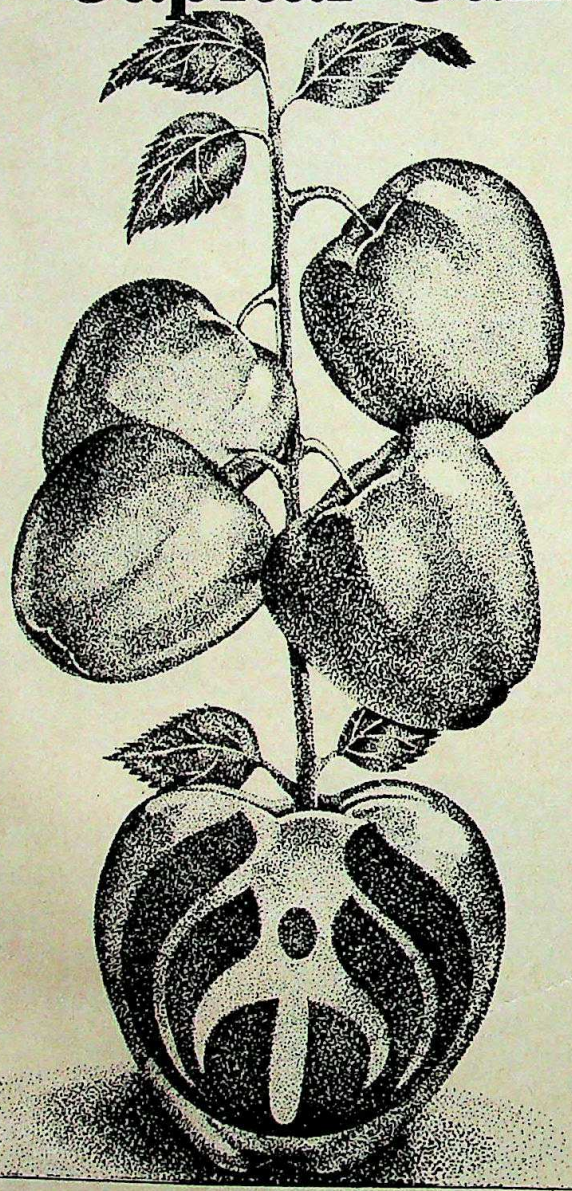
IDBI Capital Bonds An attractive instrument for exemption from Capital Gains Tax.



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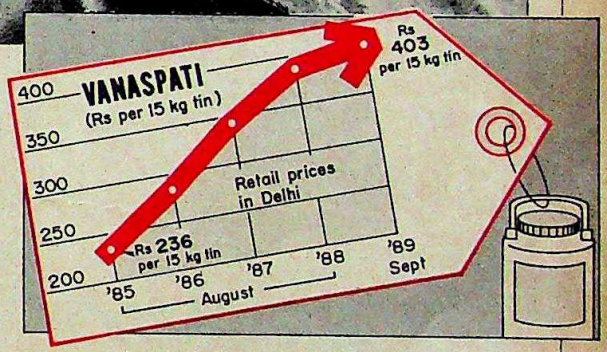
BHAWAN SINGH

and wheat and briefed the prime minister directly. High government officials spoke of "subdued optimism" on the prices front within the "crucial period of the next 60 days". Suddenly, the action on the prices-front hogged prime time on Doordarshan and All India Radio. Broadly, the Government's crisis plan includes the following:

- Import essential commodities and dump them in local markets to bring down prices.
- Cajole (if necessary, arm-twist) industry and trade to offload stocks.
- Aggressively blame hoarders, speculators and smugglers for the price rise, nab some and publicise such raids.

Yet, even as the crisis management machinery worked overtime, many even within the Government asked what had gone wrong so suddenly? That too just when the government experts were painting such a positive picture of the economy. And they were doing so with good reason: the country had just had a second bountiful monsoon in as many years; industrial growth rates were creditable; the corporate mood was obviously buoyant and upbeat.

Vanaspati prices rose as the Government wanted to ensure proper returns to farmers. Now they have gone out of hand.



One possible answer: thanks to mounting budget deficits, too much money had been pumped into the system in recent months. This is how this could have led to inflation. When the Government can't balance its books, it hawks so-called treasury bills to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The bank pays for these bills by printing extra currency notes. In theory, the Government is supposed to buy back these bills at some future date. In practice, it hasn't being doing so for several years. So each time the Government runs up a deficit, the RBI is forced to print notes. The upshot: too much money chasing too few goods.

However, not everyone agrees that deficits push up prices. Economists differ on this. Nor are deficits the only cause of inflation. Even so, the RBI is clearly concerned about the mounting budget deficits and inflation. In its latest annual report, the bank observes

Sarla Saxena, 47, wife of an engineer, can no longer manage on her husband's Rs 4,000 salary.

"You have to find a way. I add potatoes to *rajmah* to increase the quantity and substitute dry peas for *kabli chana*."

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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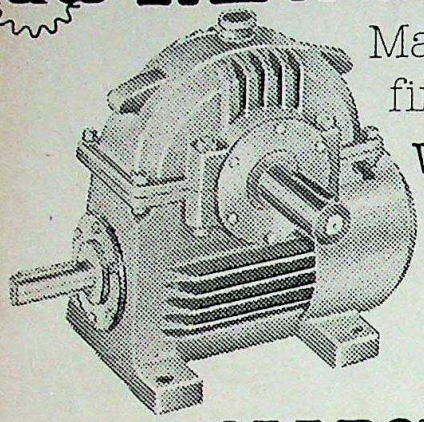

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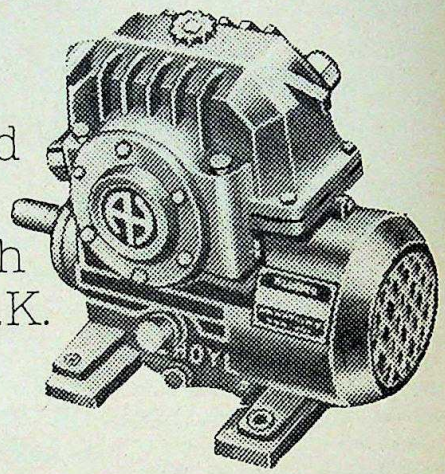

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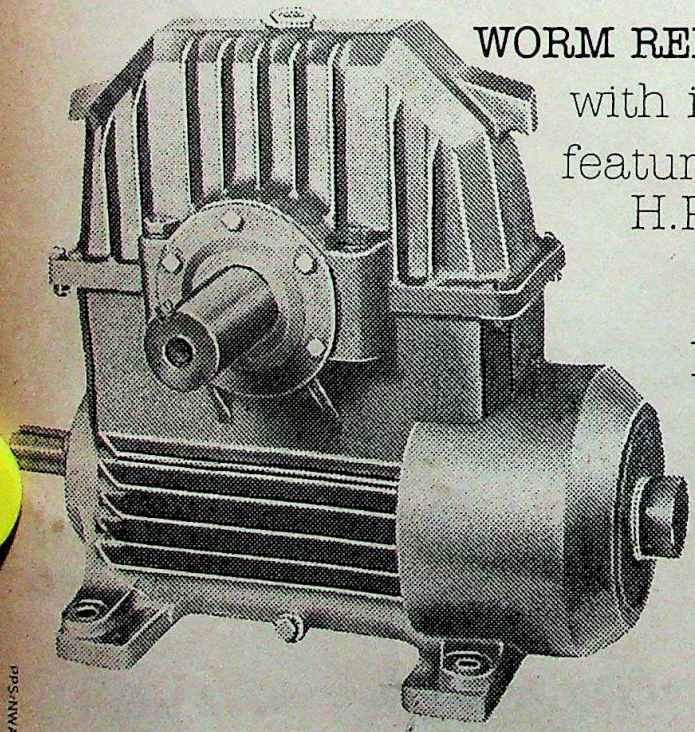

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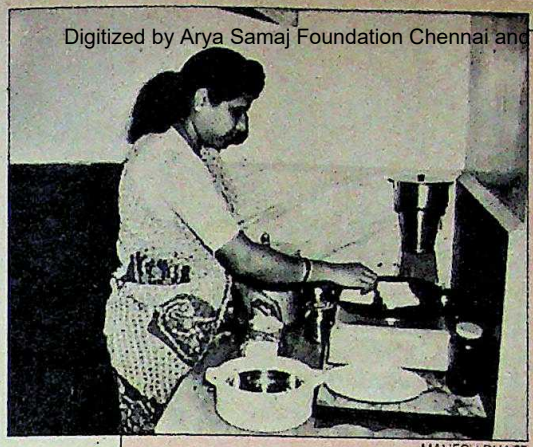
that the notes it had to print nearly doubled, from Rs48,950 crore to Rs 96,867 crore, over the past four years so that the Government could cover its revenue-expenditure gap. "The large growth in liquidity has to be viewed against a little over 5 per cent growth in real income during the period," says the report.

Experts say all this, combined with inept short-term management of the supplies of essential commodities and seasonal factors such as festival-season hoarding and peaking of demand, combined to create a situation where prices went haywire. "This year's price rise is not entirely unexpected," says C.H. Hanumantha Rao, professor, Institute of Economic Growth and former member of the Planning Commission. "The potential for a high rate of inflation has been there given the rise in deficit financing and money supply, the continued depreciation in the international value of the rupee and the growing import-intensity of the manufacturing sector over the last four or five years," he adds.

Surjit S. Bhalla, executive director of the Delhi-based think-tank, The Policy Group, says it is possible to rationalise the paradox of prices going up even when certain sectors have shown record output levels. He argues that the Government understates deficits and that by international yardsticks, the actual deficit has been 8 to 9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) for the last five years in a row—"the highest ever in recent memory". (The official view is that deficit as a proportion of GDP has been varying between 3 and 4 per cent in this period.) Bhalla says that schemes like the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana also indirectly spur inflation "since money is doled out without creating productive assets".



MAHESH BHATT

Shailaja Nagabhushan, 32, from Bangalore: her Rs 700 grocery bill has grown to Rs 1,000 in 8 weeks.

"Last two months have been a nightmare. The prices of rice, groundnut oil, tuvar dal, have all gone up."

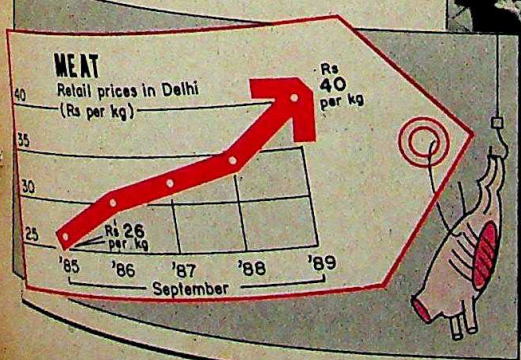
JUST like the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, in an election year other populist measures are taken that deliver freebies to some sections of the population while extracting a price from the economy. There is an inclination on the Government's part to spend more and tax less. Increasing support prices for agricultural products also have the twin effect of raising prices while, at the same time, releasing more money into the economy.

The most glaring instances of short-term management failures relate to sugar and edible oils. In the case of sugar *(see box)*, the Government dilly-dallied on imports for too long, allowing prices to suddenly flare up in early September.

On oilseeds, the Government argues that some of the price rise was deliberate as it was necessary to give more remunerative prices to farmers. But it certainly did not anticipate the extent of the rise in retail rates. It naively believed that a high output of oilseeds would automatically lead to an increase in the domestic production of oils. This has not exactly happened.

Wheat is a different story as its prices are administratively controlled. While farmers all over the country have been demanding higher and higher procurement prices, economists like Rao are of the view that the rise in wheat prices allowed by the Government is not fully justified. More importantly, the wheat procurement effort last year could have been stepped up, particularly since it was clear that there would be a tendency to hoard stocks after the bad crop of 1987. Rao feels that the Government could have procured an extra 2 million tonnes of wheat. (Official figures show that wheat procurement stood at 6.54 million tonnes in 1988-89 against 7.88 million tonnes in 1987-88.) Also, more wheat could have been imported when world prices were lower than what they

Prices of meat, fish and poultry have risen more than 25 per cent within this year forcing many non-vegetarians to cut down on them.



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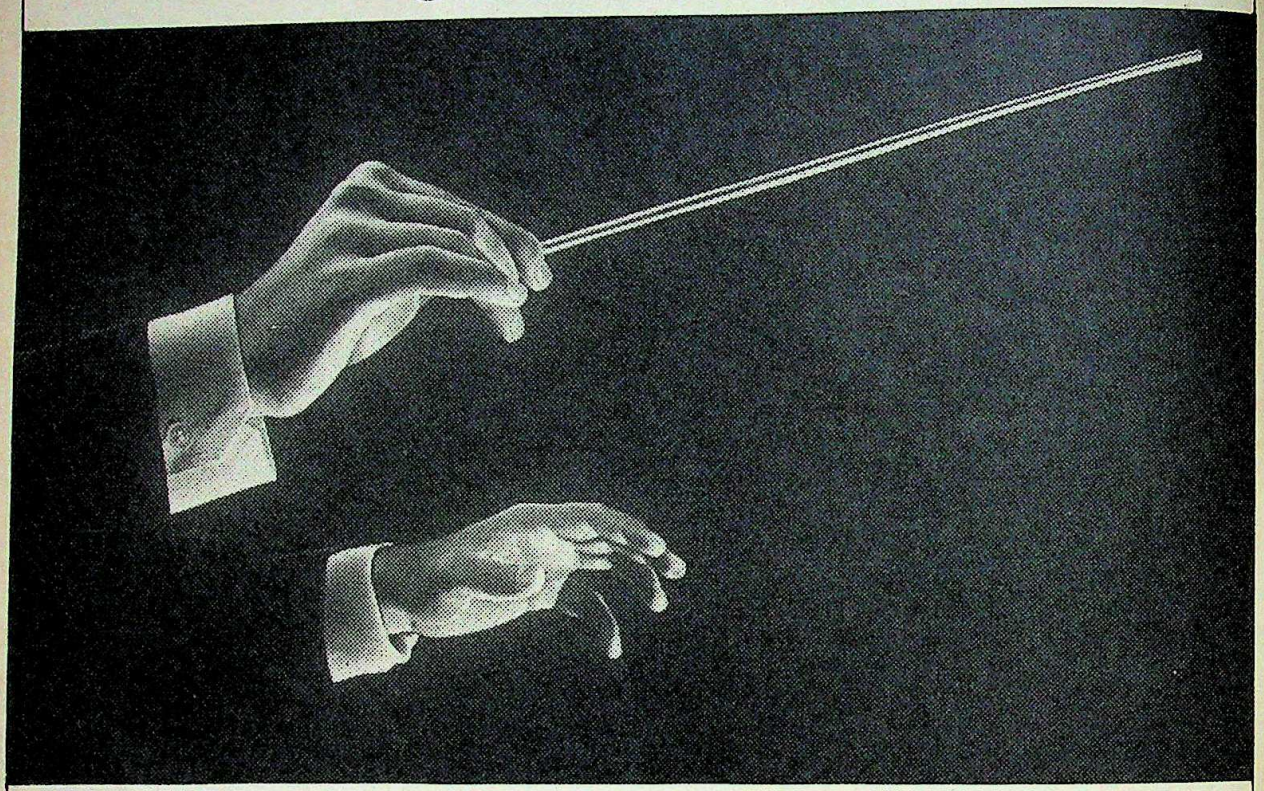

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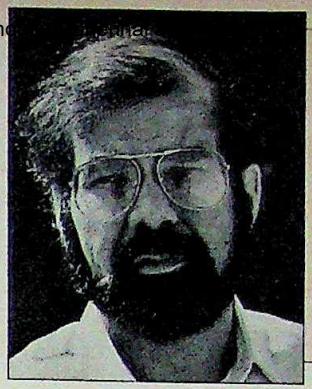
"The potential for high inflation was there given the rise in deficit financing."
C.H. HANUMANTHA RAO
Economist



"Populist schemes spur inflation as money is doled out without creating productive assets."
SURJIT BHALLA
Economist

are now. "This Government has been conservative as far as imports of essential commodities are concerned but liberal as far as the other imports go," says Rao pointing at the paradox at least partly responsible for the Government's predicament.

The rise in tea prices was also to an extent anticipated though it was perhaps a coincidence that it came at this juncture. Over the decades, the country's exportable surplus of tea has been shrinking. There has been an uneasy balance between the pressures of higher domestic demand for tea and the compulsion to export more. This year, a marginally lower output upset the applecart and domestic prices zoomed. This at a time when an extra effort was made to boost exports.

Yet, while many complain of their very existence being threatened by rising prices, sections of society still seem awash with money. The consumer boom is by no means over. The waiting lists for the Maruti are still long. Sales of colour television sets and computers are booming despite new taxes. The same society that talks so bitterly about inflation eating into its savings, will be lapping up the Rs 4,000-crore plus debenture issues to be offered by the corporate world in a little over a month.

An explanation for this anomaly is offered by Arun Ghosh, well-known economist and former chairman of the Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices (BICP). He says the most affluent 15 per cent of Indians (numbering around 12 crore) actually gain from inflation. This is because their incomes and profits rise faster than the cost of living. Just below this section, there is another 10 per cent, constituting the upper rungs of the middle class, on whom the effect of inflation is more or less neutral. Then there is the bottom 15 per cent who do not have the money to buy anything anyway. And in the middle lies the group that inflation hits the hardest, 60 per cent of the population or 48 crore people with relatively static incomes.

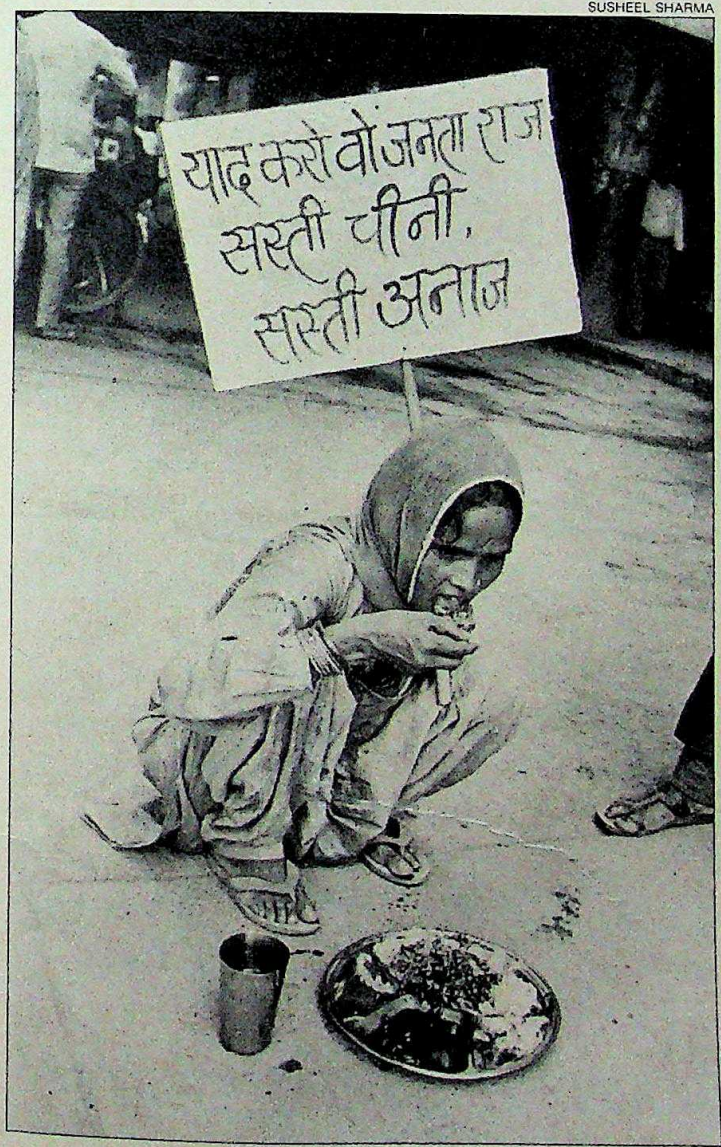
For this lot, all talk of price indices, foreign exchange reserves, balance of payments, foreign debt is all so much economic jargon. But when the forces of economics combine in such a way that a rickshaw puller has to pay Re 1 for his cup of tea instead of 60 paise within three months; when a labourer has to pay Rs 3 instead of Rs 2 for his meagre *thali* of food at a roadside dhaba; when an average housewife has to make a decision as drastic as cutting her children's daily quota of milk; or even when an upper middle class household has to have meat four days a week and not daily; then inflation has hit the common man (read: voter in an election year) in the gut. Precisely what the latest round of inflation has done.

Which also explains the desperation of the Government on the price front. In the coming weeks, as crores of households approach Diwali with their purses strained to the extreme limits, the Government will do its damnest to pull down the price graph. For, whoever may be to blame for this runaway inflation, the last thing that Rajiv Gandhi would want is to pay the price for it in the hardest of hard currencies in politics: the ballot paper.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA with PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA, SHARMILA CHANDRA and bureau reports

Protest against price rise in Chandigarh

SUSHEEL SHARMA



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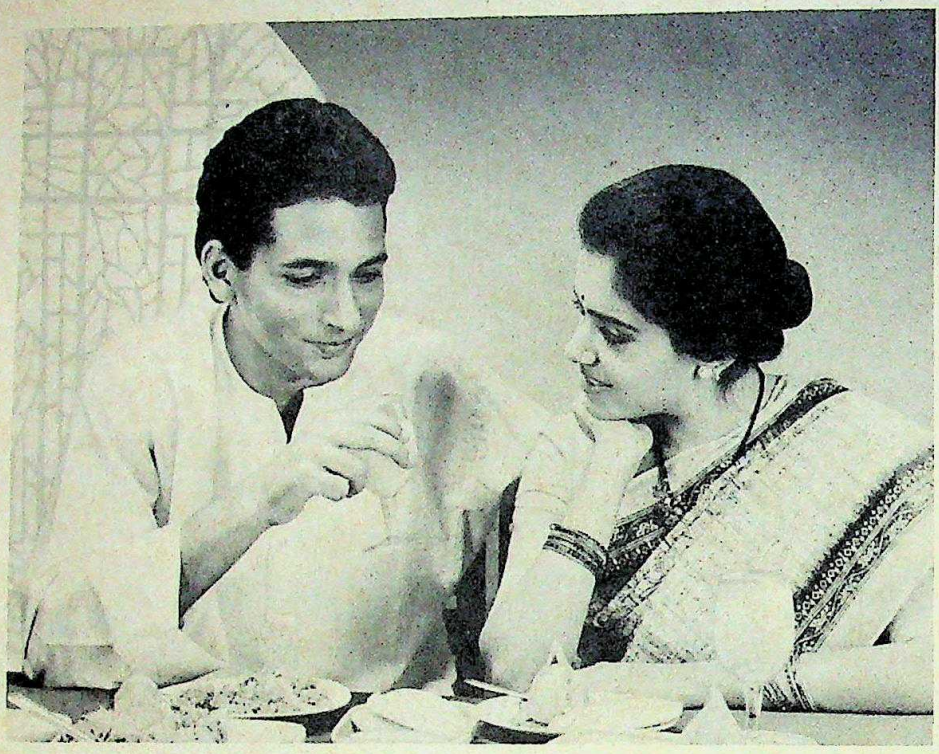

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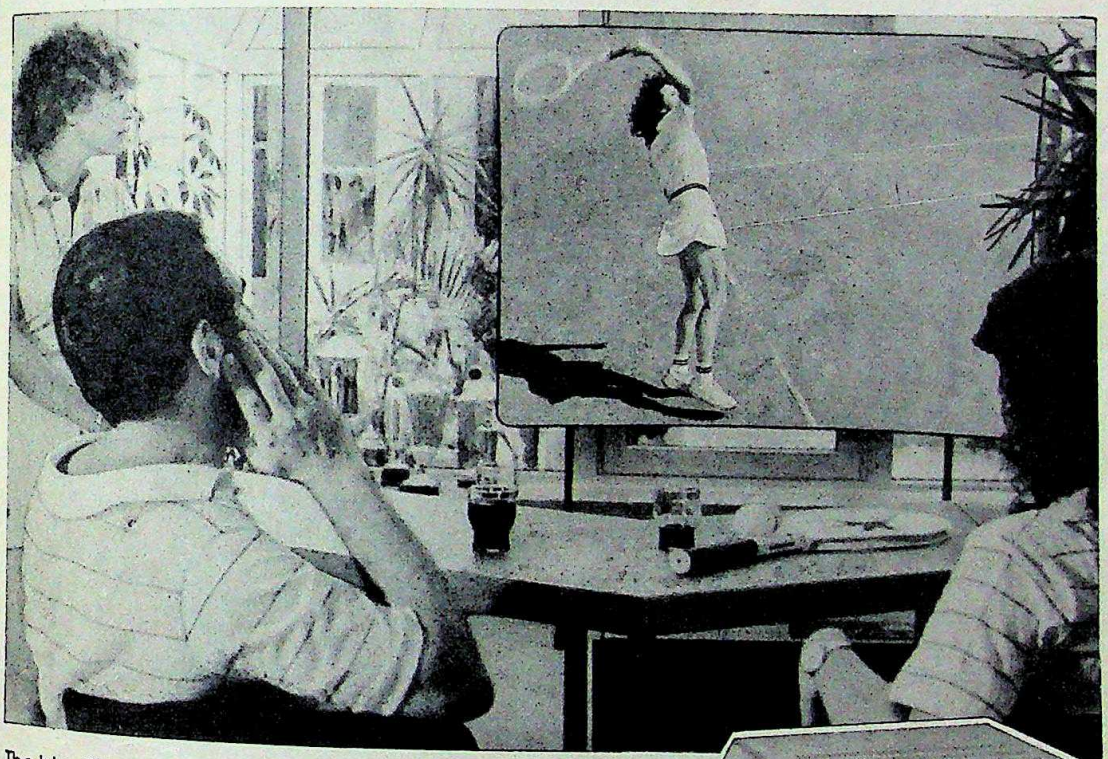

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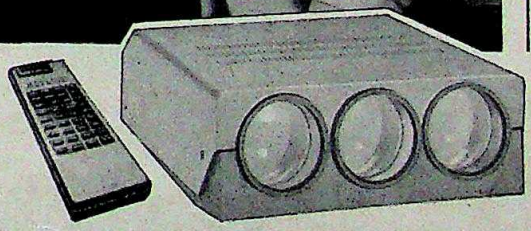

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AJEYA SINGH

Calling the Bluff

By returning to India, disclosing his assets, and daring the Government to prosecute him, Ajeya Singh has seized the advantage in the St Kitts controversy which was aimed at sullying the reputation of his father, V.P. Singh.

ON September 11, 2.30 a.m., a slim, bespectacled Rajput in his early 30s, with a receding hairline but still sporting a boyish look, alighted at the capital's Indira Gandhi airport from a Pan Am flight that had originated in New York. Expecting trouble, he was travelling without any check-in baggage. He carried with him only a Samsonite brief-case containing three trousers, four shirts, undergarments, a passport and documents about his wealth abroad.

He sailed easily through immigration, and was the first passenger to clear customs. Once outside, he heaved a sigh of relief. As did his mother, Rani Sita Singh, wife of Vishwanath Pratap Singh, who had been awaiting his arrival. Ajeya Singh's swift and trouble-free entry into Delhi was not the result of any special treatment accorded to him by Indian officialdom. It was, instead, proof that the Government had been taken by total surprise. It was, in effect, embarrassingly trapped in the backfire of a rocket fired in the direction of V.P. Singh in the form of the St Kitts bank account controversy.

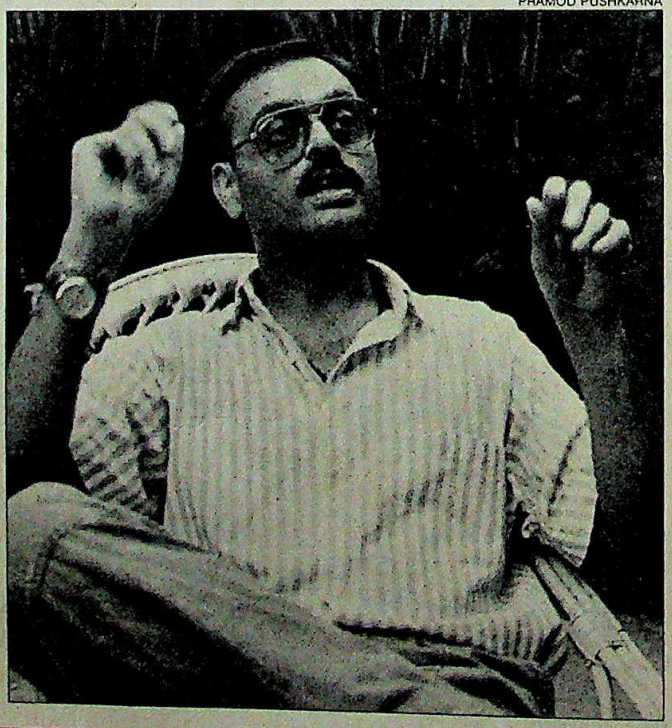
The last thing the Government could have expected was that Ajeya would return to India and openly challenge it to prove allegations that he had opened a bank account in The First Trust Corporation Ltd in St Kitts. That was a serious miscalculation. Next came a bigger surprise when, in an unprecedented move, Ajeya publicly declared all the assets and holdings he had accumulated in 14 years of working abroad. It was done in response to an unusual order served on him

INTERVIEW

"They thought I would be a sitting duck"

AJEYA Singh, 33, may be in the eye of a raging controversy, but the strain does not show. Reclining on a cane chair in the courtyard, or sitting in front of a personal computer in his father V.P. Singh's book-lined study at 28, Lodhi Estate, the introverted banker from New York is calm and composed. He gave his side of the story in the course of a three-hour-long interview with Senior Editor PRABHU CHAWLA. *Excerpts:*

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Q. *Why did you suddenly return to India?*

A. I have returned to stand by my father. I am here to take the bull by its horns. Let them ask any question. They have not mentioned a single charge so far. It is a question of the family's honour. I have given them the entire information. As an NRI, I am not supposed to—I am governed by the laws of the country I live in. They want to create the impression that I am evading taxes. If there was an iota of truth in that, the FBI would have been investigating. The FBI doesn't have officials who toe the official line. US revenue laws are more stringent. They can send me to jail.

Q. *You have been signing your press statements in Hindi. Are you hiding your actual signature?*

A. After the St Kitts forgery, I am a little careful about giving out my signature. They have it on my passport and other official documents. It is a deliberate attempt on my part to prove it was forged by people with access to it.

Q. *But is the signature on the St Kitts agreement yours?*

A. It does resemble my signature. But basic elements have been missed out.

Q. *Why did you go underground after the controversy surfaced?*

A. I don't mix with anyone. That is the way I live. No one has the right to interfere with my

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PEALI DUTTA GUPTA

GEORGE MCLEAN

"You are a bunch of liars"

TRANSCRIPT of INDIA TODAY*'s conversation with George McLean:*

India Today: Can I speak to Mr McLean?

McLean *(in heavy voice)*: You are.

India Today: Mr McLean, I believe our London correspondent approached you for an interview just now. I'm given to understand you said no because you were preoccupied....

McLean: No, no. I declined to speak to INDIA TODAY.

India Today: But why, Mr McLean? We are a fair publication. We are also India's biggest newsmagazine. Why are you so firm on saying no to us?

McLean *(shouting)*: Terrific, man. You are India's biggest magazine. Marvellous. Good luck to you. You are a bunch of liars. Go f*** yourself... (and bangs down the phone)

McLean's interview with Newstime, *a Hyderabad daily, clearly show what his 'revelations' amount to. Excerpts:*

Newstime: Did one Captain Satish Sharma have an account?

McLean: I can neither confirm nor deny that.

Newstime: Why can't you be a little more specific?

McLean: Because of St Kitts laws.

Newstime: In that case will it be correct for us to say that you have confirmed that Mr Ajeya Singh had an account in your bank?

McLean: No. I've never said he had an account, nor that he didn't have.

by officials of the Enforcement Directorate within 48 hours of his landing in India. The order, besides asking him for extensive personal details, stated that "it is understood that Account No. 29479 with The First Trust Corporation Ltd Basseterre St Cristopher and Navis W 1 was opened by him on 16.9.86 which remained operative till 13.2.1988". If this were true, the order demanded, then he should furnish details of the account.

Ajeya disclosed that his last salary was in the range of $55,000 annually and that he had accumulated assets and bank balances worth over $1,40,000. He also declared he had served seven different employers. Curiously, he had served Companie Financiere Tradition and was posted at Lausanne near Montreux in Switzerland where Ajitabh Bachchan had bought a flat. Ajeya was last employed on a temporary basis with Tradition Berisford, New York, one of the largest commodity traders in the world.

As an NRI, Ajeya was under no obligation to report any of this to the Indian Government. Says he: "I have come on my own and declared all my assets

privacy. Am I under any obligation to publicise my address and phone number? Also, I have avoided social meetings for security reasons.

Q. *You have been on leave from Citibank.*

A. I was one of those who were to be retrenched in the banking sector last year due to the stock-market crash. I represented my case for re-employment, saying my performance as an executive had been excellent. They agreed and I was given leave of absence till they found a suitable post for me.

Q. *Why should McLean and others risk their credibility?*

A. The forgers seem immature and foolish. In their hurry to cook up something, they delivered half-baked stuff. And the ever-obliging Enforcement Directorate has picked up this gossip for questioning me.

Q. *Don't you think it was the officials' duty to investigate the case?*

A. There is no dispute on that. But in this case, it is meant to attack my father. They have been after my family for the last 30 months. Since they couldn't find anything against him, they thought I would be a sitting duck. I have come on my own and declared all my assets abroad. Has anyone else done it? Were the NRIs close to the rulers asked to declare their assets? Let the Amitabh Bachchans, the Satish Sharmas, the Lalit Thapars and the Lalit Suris ask their relations abroad to declare their assets and how they have earned them.

Q. *But they have been questioned.*

A. I would like to know the outcome. I have been informed by my friends that the person directing the investigation against me is the one who put the lid on the cases registered against the Bachchans, the Suris, the Thapars and the Sharmas. Yet another official who has been sent abroad is the one who was deputed to collect certificates saying that no Indians, including Win Chadha, were connected with the Bofors pay-offs. How can you trust a machinery, which instead of prosecuting the real culprits, lays the foundations for their exoneration? So it is clear the foundations for the puppet frame-up have already been laid.

Q. *On what basis do you claim that the top leadership is behind this?*

A. What else can explain the blatant misuse of the electronic media and the inspired leaks in the friendly media? Suddenly McLean seems more important than even the President of the United States. His views are aired for over 7 to 10 minutes, thrice a day, on Doordarshan and AIR. Neither Bush nor Gorbachev got that much favour. And McLean talks only to those cleared by someone in New Delhi.

Q. *You are said to have been organising secret meetings regarding the deals with industrialists abroad.*

A. On the contrary, I had to suffer humiliation. I had to keep a low-profile because my father was a high-profile political figure. I never met any industrialist anywhere in India or abroad.

Q. *Why did you choose to invest in Reliance Industries?*

A. No favour was shown to me by Reliance. I bought the shares in the open market like everybody else. And that explains how much I was in touch with the developments in the Finance Ministry headed by my father. I invested in Reliance at a time when the Finance Ministry was investigating Reliance.

Q. *Is it true that you landed the job with Citibank because you were a son of the Indian finance minister?*

A. What nonsense. I was a qualified chartered accountant. And I had work experience in the banking sector. If I had to use my father's name for a job, I would have been rolling in money abroad like other relatives of ruling party members. In fact, I have suffered because of my father. I had to reject good postings with numerous multinational corporations. I would not have been unemployed for over nine months in 1983 when my father was the commerce minister.

Q. *Are you likely to leave soon?*

A. It depends on the Indian Government. Let it satisfy itself. I am here as long as it wants me here.

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INDIRA PURAM PHASE II

A peaceful life in the neighbourhood of the capital

Registration of houses under Self Financing Basis at Ghaziabad, near Delhi.

DETAILS OF HOUSES

S. No.	Type of House	No. of Houses	Plot Area / Plinth Area in sq. mt.	Accommodation	Cost in lacs Rs.	Registration Amount + Rs. 20
1.	HIG (Duplex)	250	133.88 / 180.85	Drawing cum Dining 3 Beds attached with Toilet, Family Lounge, Box, Kitchen, Puja, Verandha, Porch, & Staircase.	8.50	85,020.00
2.	HIG (Single Storeyed)	300	167.23 / 103.06	Drawing cum Dining, 2 Beds attached with Toilet, Family Lounge, Kitchen, Verandha & Staircase.	5.96	59,620.00
3.	HIG (Double-Storeyed)	GF 350 FF 350	167.22 101.00	— do —	GF 4.89 F.F. 4.14	48,920.00 41,420.00
4.	MIG (Triple Storeyed)	GF 500 FF 500 SF 500	158.00 116.17	G.F.:Drawing cum Dining, 2 Beds, attached with Toilet, Kitchen Family Lounge, Box, Verandha & Stair case	GF 4.71	47,120.00
		FF & SF	91.75	Drawing cum Dining, 1 Bedroom attached with Toilet Kitchen, Lounge & Staircase	F.F. 3.24 S.F. 3.30	32,420.00 33,020.00
5.	LIG-I (Triple Storeyed)	GF 750 FF 750 SF 750	86 56.64	GF:One Livingroom, Bed, Bath, Wc, Verandha & & Common Staircase FF & SF.: — do —	GF 2.19 FF 1.78 SF 1.80	21,920.00 17,820.00 18,020.00
6.	LIG-II (Triple Storeyed)	GF 1000 FF 1000 SF 1000	40 22.66	One Room, Kitchen, Bath Wc, Verandha, & Common Staircase.	GF 0.92 FF 0.86 SF 0.81	9,220.00 8,620.00 8,120.00
		FF & SF	24.91			

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- Availability in almost 3 years.
- The land has been acquired and it is in effective possession of G.D.A.

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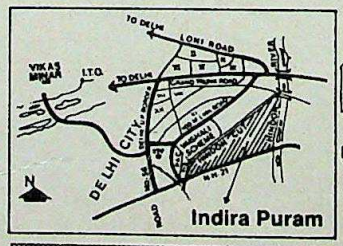
300 houses (including all the various categories) are reserved for the applicants who were not sucessful in the draw held on 21.8.89 in Vaishali 'Rachna' Code No. 544. They may get their deposit transfered to this scheme and also indicate their preference of their category of the house.



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For further details kindly contact
J.P. Bajpal, Chief Accounts Officer, G.D.A. Ghaziabad.

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abroad. Has anyone else done it? Would the NRIs close to the rulers asked to declare their assets?" *(see interview)*. But legality and regulations were the least of his concerns. For him it was a political battle. And in going on the offensive by daring the Government to prosecute him, he seemed, at least for the time being, to have gained the edge in what is widely considerd as a massive disinformation campaign aimed at sullying the reputation of V.P. Singh through the financial dealings of his son. And V.P. Singh is seizing the advantage.

CHARGED V.P. Singh: "I have given blanket authority to the Government to probe my accounts or my son's and prosecute us. But no such offer has come from either the prime minister or his friends who've been stashing money abroad." Ajeya, meantime, began pointing out the discrepancies in the documents of The First Trust Corporation. Among the flaws he identified were the gross miscalculation in interest figures, transactions shown to be occurring on holidays, and statements bearing no date *(see box)*.

The alacrity of Ajeya's response, the extent of the disclosure and the discrepancies pointed out, put the Enforcement Directorate in a quandary about how to proceed further. But they didn't have to wait long, as within 12 hours the mysterious George McLean, the obese 180-kg managing director of the now defunct St Kitts bank, surfaced with succour. McLean, who had gone into hibernation for two weeks after "confirming" Ajeya's account number, suddenly popped up like an overweight jack-in-the-box in London's Hilton Hotel.

There he made himself available again to selected Indian correspondents. This time, he spoke not to *The Telegraph* or *The Hindustan Times*, but to UNI in person and to *The Times of India* over the telephone. Both had apparently been tipped off by government sources that McLean was expecting them to contact him and would be willing to talk.

Other journalists too came to know that McLean had resurfaced in London and was talking to the press. But when they attempted to contact him, he brushed them aside. When INDIA TODAY called McLean at his hotel, he rudely refused to talk *(see box)*. This gave rise to immediate speculation that McLean had been advised to speak to only selected publications and journalists. But even though McLean avoided cross-examination by other journalists, his detailed rejoinder to Ajeya's statement was weak and contradictory as established by McLean's own documents, as well as interviews with his former associates.

For example, a closer perusal of the document purporting to show Ajeya's St Kitts account exposed some fundamental inaccuracies in the calculation of interest allegedly paid to him. Seven out of nine entries were so full of mistakes that the entries themselves appeared to be false *(see box)*. Over the 18-month period that the account was supposed to be operative, Ajeya's total interest earnings, according to the "agreement" with the bank, should have totalled $12,88,778.40. But McLean's document showed only $3,31,432.42. McLean's defence of the glaring $9,57,345 gap was lame—"I am a businessman not an accountant"—and raised further doubts about his credibility. He told *Newstime* that he had "calculated the interest by hand. I may well have made a mistake"—an astonishing statement from the managing director of a bank

THE FIRST TRUST CORPORATION LIMITED
Basseterre, St. Christopher and Nevis, W.I.

Date	Withdrawals	Interest	Deposits	Balance
16, 9,86			2,000,000.00	2,000,000.00
10,10,86			2,000,000.00	4,000,000.00
13,12,86	1,038,575.68	38,575.68	5,000,000.00	8,000,000.00
31,12,86		11,835.72		8,011,835.72

N.B. Daily interest $219.18 per day per $1,000,000.00

I certify the above is a true record of the entries of account #29479

Managing Director

I certify the above is a true record of the entries of account #29479

Director

According to the statement the interest was $219.18 per million per day. The alleged account showed a balance of $2 million between September 16, 1986 and December 13, 1986 (88 days) and another deposit of $2 million between October 10 and December 13 (64 days). On this basis the interest should have been the sum of:

88 × $219.18 × 2 = $38,575.68
and 64 × $219.18 × 2 = $28,055.04
Total = $66,630.72

But the banker credited only $38,575.68

◆

Since seven of the nine interest calculations were wrong in the statement, there was a whopping difference between the interest due and the interest actually credited to the account holder.

Interest due	$12,88,778.40
Interest credited	$3,31,432.42
Shortfall of interest	$9,57,345.98

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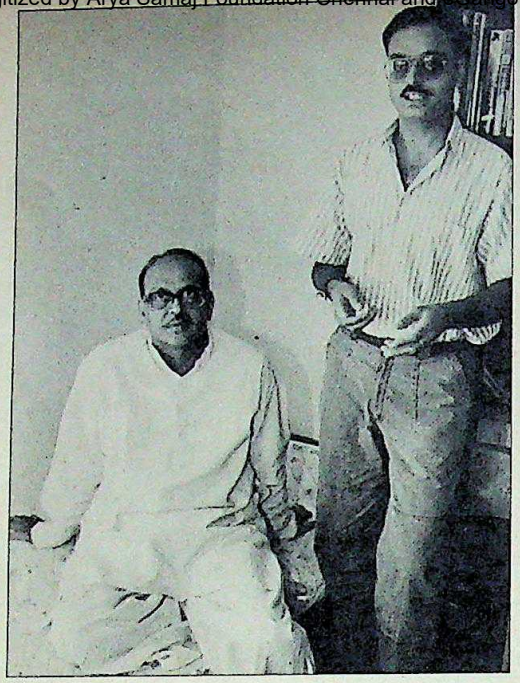
supposedly with millions of dollars in its accounts. As Ajeya retorted: "You mean a person with a $21 million account could not even afford a $5 calculator?"

But a loss in credibility was the least of the problems that were in store for McLean. As the controversy escalated, several newspapers including the New York-based *India Abroad*, began to investigate his past. A chequered career graph and a media background were revealed. The 58-year-old McLean had in the '50s worked as a reporter for *The Toronto Star*, and had also dabbled in TV, advertising and public relations.

BUT the investigations resulted in some damning revelations too. A one-time friend of McLean and a director of The First Trust Corporation, Singapore-based Ian G. Pyper, told the weekly: "Frankly I find this whole thing about Indian accounts incredible." Pyper further underlined the dubious nature of the St Kitts bank by revealing that in June 1987, two of the bank's board of directors had been arrested and charged in Canada with smuggling narcotics into that country.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Ajeya and V.P. Singh: ready for battle

Surprisingly, the Congress(I), unlike in the past, responded to the 'revelations' in a low-key amnner, preferring to rely on the media to keep th issue alive. Of course, not entirely successfully as Doordarshan could not resist the temptation of playing up McLean's reply to Ajeya's statement, which it carried twice a day for two days running, five minutes each, on the news. Ajeya's statement, to which McLean was replying, had of course earlier been completely blacked out.

Doordarshan's unusual display of interest in McLean, even as it ignored Ajeya's version, indicated that the controversy was part of the Congress(I) strategy to render corruption a non-issue: ensure that during election time there are so many unverifiable charges flying around that the cognizance given to them becomes minimal. But at the moment Ajeya Singh continues to cock a snook at the Government. He has challenged McLean to come out with whatever he has, relieving him of the clause of confidentiality McLean has been touting for his inability to come out with further disclosures. And as Ajeya keeps taunting them, his antagonists have to keep taking steps to produce more evidence and take action against him. If they don't, the party's and the Government's credibility will have suffered a critical blow. And efforts to gather more dirt on Ajeya Singh are afoot.

Ultimately this episode will be decided in the court of pubic opinion. If the Government produces evidence verifiable by independent agencies—so far it has not—then there will be no escape for V.P. Singh. His clean image, if there is proof of wrongdoing, will deservedly be shattered.

But right now, V.P. Singh is seen as a man who had the courage to call his son home and face the heat openly while the ruling party is being viewed as having sheltered the prime minister's friend, Ajitabh Bachchan, when the purchase of his house in Switzerland came under question on the basis of authentic documentation. And this is an image Rajiv Gandhi cannot afford to project in an election year. —PRABHU CHAWLA

AJEYA SINGH	GEORGE MCLEAN
■ "The statement of accounts is totally fake. Seven of the nine interest entries are wrong. A man who was handling millions of dollars couldn't get even one figure right."	■ "I am a businessman and not an accountant. I calculated the interest by hand and I may well have made a mistake."
■ "The statement was written by a novice. He forgot to put the date on which it was issued to the account holder."	■ "I never put any dates on them because I was not about to establish any audit trail."
■ "The agreement says it was signed at Bassettere but I never visited St Kitts in my life. I have my passport to prove this. I was not a green card holder on the day the account was supposed to have been opened by me."	■ "I think you should know that foreigners who live in the US and have a green card can go out without their passport being stamped. To my knowledge Mr Singh didn't visit St Kitts and Nevis and I can't say if he was there or not. But in nearly all cases, accounts were set up by agents, not by the principals."
■ "In international banking, they have floating interest rates and not fixed ones as has been promised in the agreement."	■ Not available.
■ "A large number of transactions took place on weekends or holidays which is very unusual."	■ "That was because I was around, my family was not with me, and I was glad to do business anytime."

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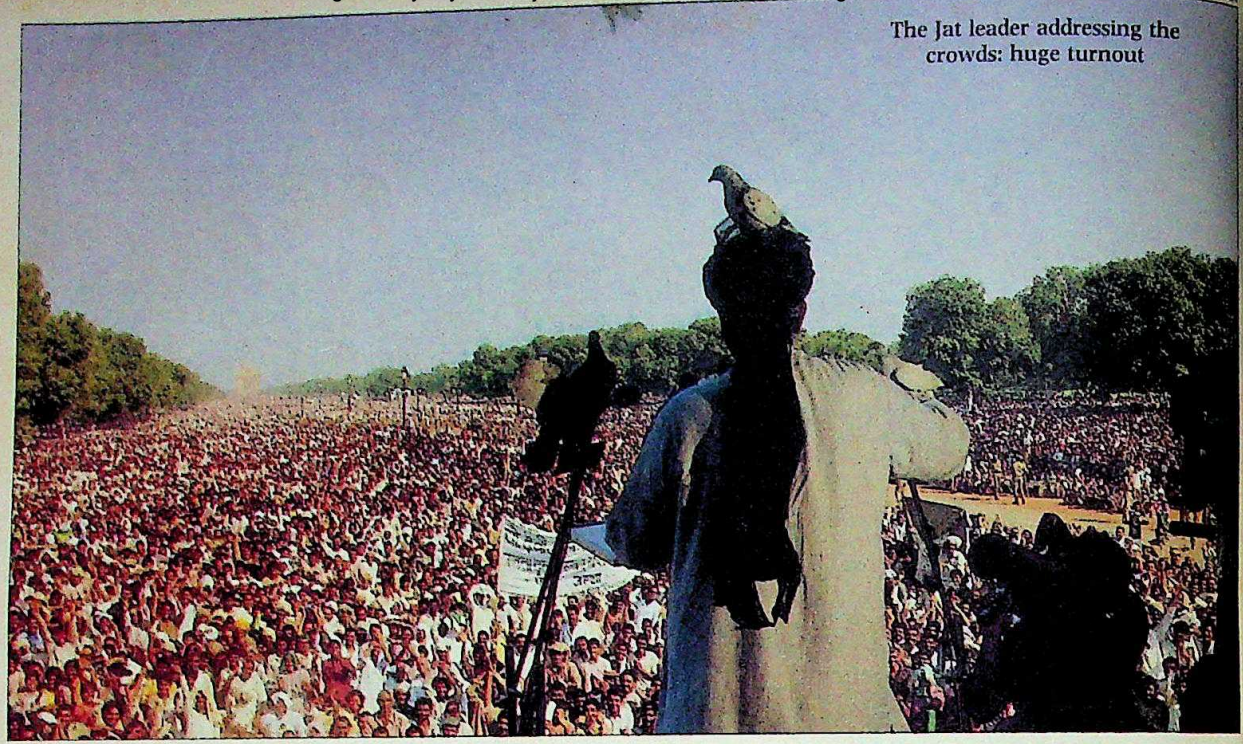

The Jat leader addressing the crowds: huge turnout

DEVI LAL

Rallying Strength

The Haryana strongman's 75th birthday celebration was transformed into a massive opposition rally. But the behind-the-scenes bickerings continued as the kisan leader attempted to eclipse the other opposition stalwarts.

AS birthday parties go, this was literally of gargantuan proportions. Over 7 lakh people, a galaxy of political celebrities, huge cut-outs of the birthday boy, 75 pigeons released from captivity and an array of presents.

But it was the venue that was most significant—in the heart of the Indian capital with the imperial facade of North and South Blocks as a backdrop. That, and of course, the man. Devi Lal. The strongman of Haryana revelling in his role as king maker of the Opposition conglomerate—perhaps even the king.

Devi Lal's 75th birthday celebration was transformed into a massive political rally, a show of strength. And, more important, a deliberately exaggerated public display of his political stature and rural muscle.

On the gaily-decorated dais, almost the entire spectrum of the opposition leadership lined up one by one to garland him and present him with gifts. The crowds who had poured in from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Bihar and Punjab, cheered lustily each time the Jat chieftain turned to them and raised his beefy arms in triumph.

And triumph it certainly was. It rivalled in pomp and circumstance any rally that Charan Singh had been able to organise at the height of his power. Devi Lal's greatest moment came when V.P. Singh, the man the Opposition projects as the future prime minister, presented him with a green turban. The king had been anointed. The turban, with its cocky plume, heralded the shift in power. At least for Devi Lal's supporters. For, after all, that was what the rally was all about.

Behind the scenes, Devi Lal's eldest son, Om Prakash Chautala, preened with pride. The brain behind the bash, Chautala heaved a sigh of relief as arm in arm with V.P. Singh, his father waved to the crowds. And on cue, came the loud cries of "*Desh ke neta, Devi Lal*". The entire stretch from India Gate to South Block reverberated with the frenzied chants.

But the opposition leaders occupying the stage along with Devi Lal, shared neither his joy nor the crowd's frenzy. They were, in fact, against the very idea of a birthday celebration but faced with the Jat leader's bulldozing tactics, had little choice in the matter. And rather than appear on stage as mere guests paying homage to Devi Lal, they deemed it better to convert it into a National Front affair.

The behind-the-scenes manoeuvring that preceded the rally was yet another indication of the rivalries that continue to dog the Opposition. Janata Dal Secretary-General Ajit Singh, Charan Singh's son, strongly argued against holding any celebration at all. He reportedly told V.P. Singh that the rally would do no good to the party's image. To prevent another

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Opposition leaders on the dais: bickerings continue

squabble, V.P. Singh came up with the idea of converting the birthday bash into a political event. He suggested that the day be celebrated as *sangharsh divas* (day of struggle) and assigned Arun Nehru to convince Chautala of this.

The attempt to turn it into a National Front show—instead of an all-Devi Lal affair—saw N.T Rama Rao being made chairman of the Devi Lal Diamond Jubilee Birthday Celebration Committee. Yet, the bickerings continued. Ajit Singh's name was kept out of the panel and added at the last minute, only after his supporters threatened to boycott the function.

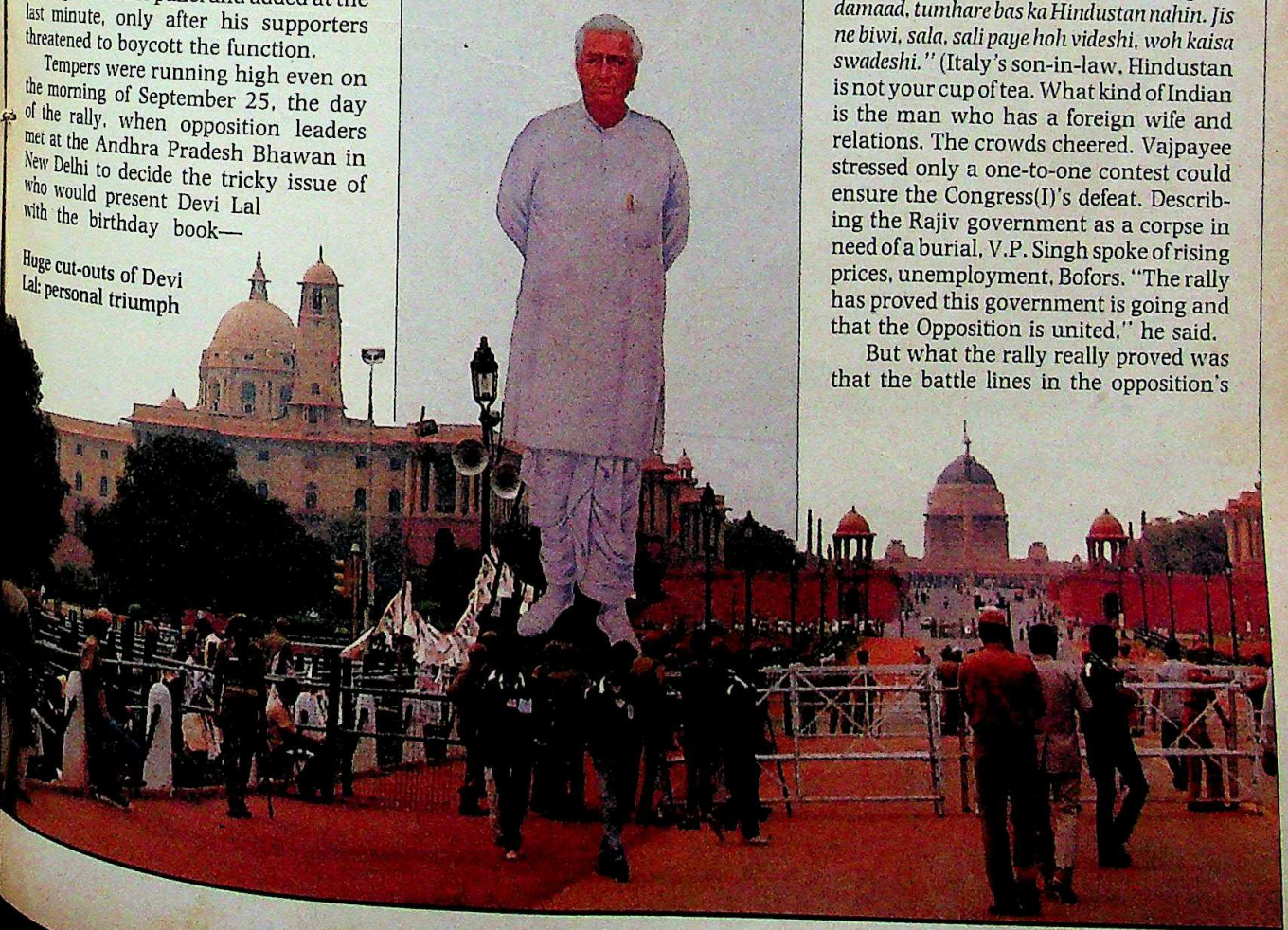
Tempers were running high even on the morning of September 25, the day of the rally, when opposition leaders met at the Andhra Pradesh Bhawan in New Delhi to decide the tricky issue of who would present Devi Lal with the birthday book—*Abhinandan Granth*. It was finally decided that each leader would gift him something. So while Devi Lal occupied centre-stage, N.T. Rama Rao came with a garland, Ramakrishna Hegde and Atal Behari Vajpayee with shawls, Ajit Singh a bouquet, Vijaya Raje Scindia a coconut, Chandra Shekhar a memento and Jagjit Singh Aurora and S.S. Barnala a sword.

The rally was aimed at displaying to the other opposition leaders Devi Lal's awesome mobilisation powers.

Yet, infighting could not be kept off the stage. Arun Nehru, Arif Mohammed Khan and Maneka Gandhi left after putting in brief appearances while other Janata Dal leaders took great care to divert attention from the birthday boy. Ajit Singh and Hegde exited just before Devi Lal's address. The only point on which all agreed: Rajiv Gandhi must go.

The large crowds did serve one purpose—the jamboree became the official launch of the Janata Dal's election campaign. The speeches confirmed this. Devi Lal crudely attacked Rajiv: "*Italy ke damaad, tumhare bas ka Hindustan nahin. Jis ne biwi, sala, sali paye hoh videshi, woh kaisa swadeshi.*" (Italy's son-in-law, Hindustan is not your cup of tea. What kind of Indian is the man who has a foreign wife and relations. The crowds cheered. Vajpayee stressed only a one-to-one contest could ensure the Congress(I)'s defeat. Describing the Rajiv government as a corpse in need of a burial, V.P. Singh spoke of rising prices, unemployment, Bofors. "The rally has proved this government is going and that the Opposition is united," he said.

But what the rally really proved was that the battle lines in the opposition's



Huge cut-outs of Devi Lal: personal triumph

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leadership struggle are more clearly drawn than before. As far as Devi Lal is concerned, the rally was his personal show of strength as well as his personal bid for the mantle of opposition strongman. Haryana, obviously, is not big enough for his political ambitions. As Madhu Dandavate acknowledged: "He has brought so many people here. The man obviously has his strengths." Crowed Chautala: "It is the biggest ever kisan rally, attended by more people than even Choudhary Charan Singh's rally in December 1978."

Despite the National Front veneer, Devi Lal and his supporters had thrown everything into making the show a major success. Chautala, known for his organisational skills, had requisitioned almost the entire Haryana Government into making it a memorable show. Twenty lakh giant posters of Devi Lal were printed and splashed all over the country. Though a National Front sponsored show, no other opposition leader was visible on any publicity material.

An artfully made video cassette was put together at Delhi's Jain Studios, owned by Dr J.K. Jain, a BJP sympathiser. Projecting the Haryana chief minister as the saviour of the kisans and backward classes, the 50-minute video cassette with the message '*Delhi chalo*', was sent to all districts of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar. The highlight of the cassette was a poem titled *Italy ke damaad* (Italy's son-in-law), an obvious dig at Rajiv Gandhi.

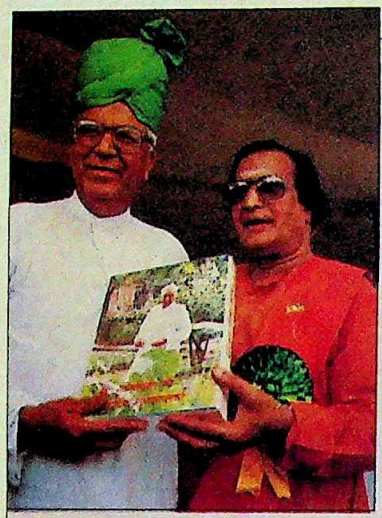
The cassette, interspersed with popular film songs (Sadhna singing *Aa ja aaye bahar* and Jaya Prada and Rakesh Roshan dancing round trees) proved a source of great entertainment to villagers. While Devi Lal was presented as a national hero, care was taken to downplay other leaders: 30-second clips of Chandra Shekhar, Hegde, V.P. Singh and N.T. Rama Rao were thrown in while Ajit Singh was left out altogether. The obvious aim: project Devi Lal as the main leader in the electorally crucial Hindi belt.

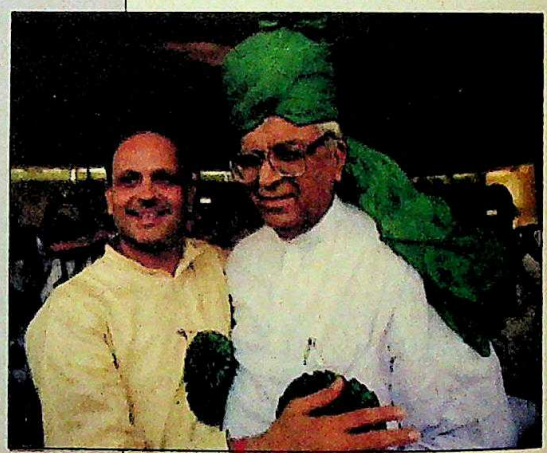
Producing the cassette and screening it must have cost a packet. Each of Dr Jain's video-fitted vans rent at Rs 50,000 a month—all nine vans had been hired by the Haryana Government.

THERE were other expenses: 20 lakh handbills and postcards; special uniforms—green shirts and scarves along with white pyjamas—were tailored for the rural brigade; and six hoardings at crucial sites in Delhi were hired for a month. To top it all was the cost of hiring the 30,000 vehicles—trucks, buses, tractors, motor cycles and cars—used to transport the masses to Boat Club and back. Though Chautala claims people came on their own, one truck driver who drove in from Rajasthan said he was paid Rs 4,500 for the round trip.

The Haryana Government virtually suspended all other work for over a fortnight as ministers and political workers were sent out to mobilise the masses. While the lesser ministers fanned out into the districts, senior ones flew into the state capitals to address press conferences. Deputy Chief Minister Banarsi Dass Gupta flew to Lucknow, Home Minister Sampat Singh to Jaipur, Irrigation and Power Minister Veerinder Singh to Bhopal and Gwalior and Industry Minister K.R. Punia to Calcutta. Chautala addressed press conferences in Bangalore, Bombay, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad, all in the space of 48 hours.

In the capital, a team comprising Devi Lal's former associates huddled together to give shape to the *Abhinandan Granth*—a 300-page book which eulogises the Jat leader and traces his life from childhood to freedom fighting to becoming a kisan leader.





Rather than appear to be paying homage to Devi Lal, many opposition leaders deemed it better to convert the rally into a National Front affair.

(Clockwise from above) Devi Lal with Rama Rao; Barnala; and V.P. Singh: oneupmanship game

Last fortnight's rally was an extension of the book, perhaps the climax. From remote Sirsa to centre-stage in Delhi. Though Devi Lal has often said that "the next prime minister will be a kisan's son", he nailed speculation on this score by declaring after the rally that he backed V.P. Singh for the top job.

But it was clear a king-maker the kisan's son had become. Devi Lal had established that for the Opposition he was indispensable; that controlling 80-odd seats in the Hindi belt, he could make or mar political fortunes—even that of V.P. Singh. As birthday assertions go that was as powerful as any he could have made. —HARINDER BAWEJA

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You don't have to be India's wittiest artist to be a Raymond's man.

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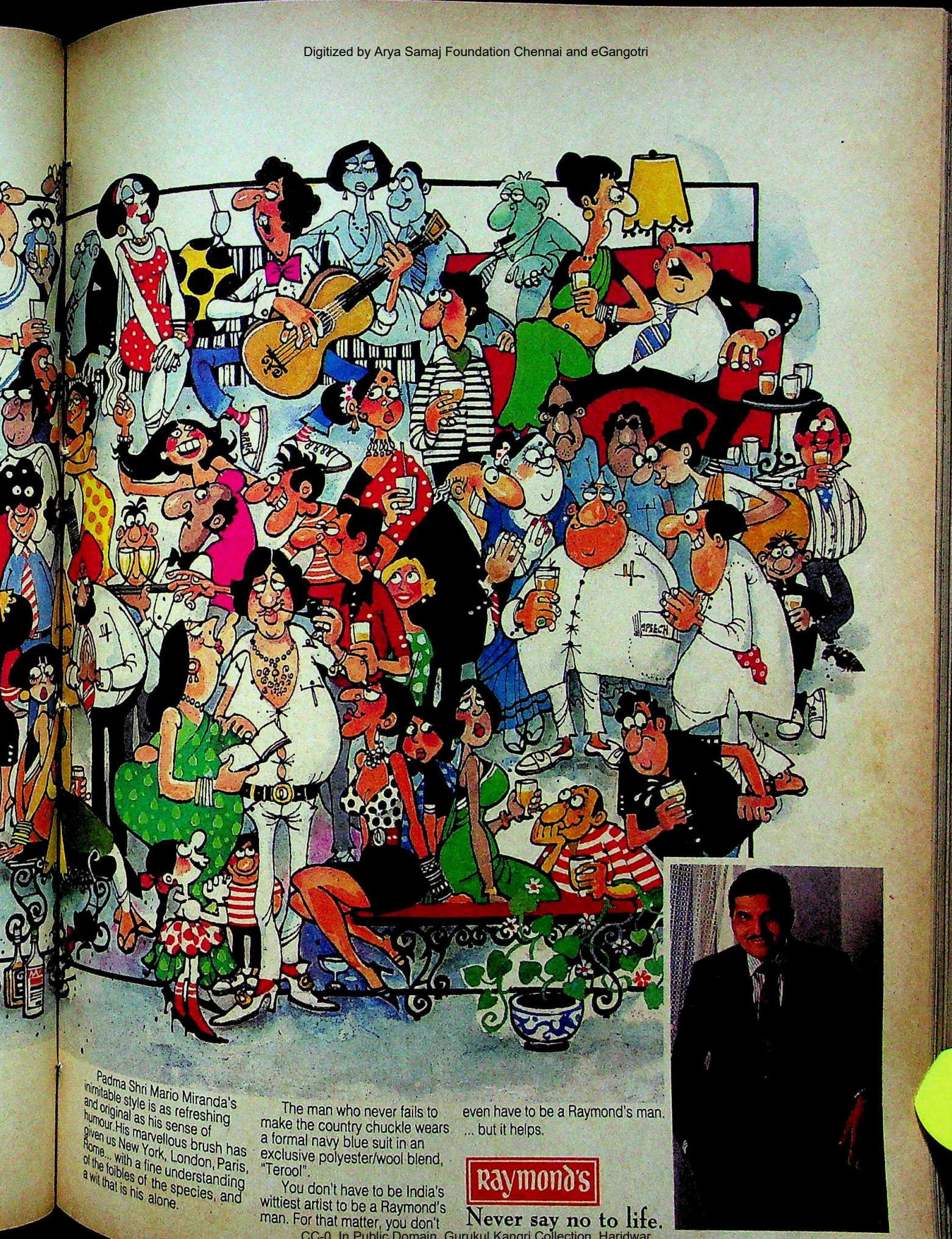

Padma Shri Mario Miranda's inimitable style is as refreshing and original as his sense of humour. His marvellous brush has given us New York, London, Paris, Home... with a fine understanding of the foibles of the species, and a wit that is his alone.

The man who never fails to make the country chuckle wears a formal navy blue suit in an exclusive polyester/wool blend, "Terool".

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Raymond's

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Emirates

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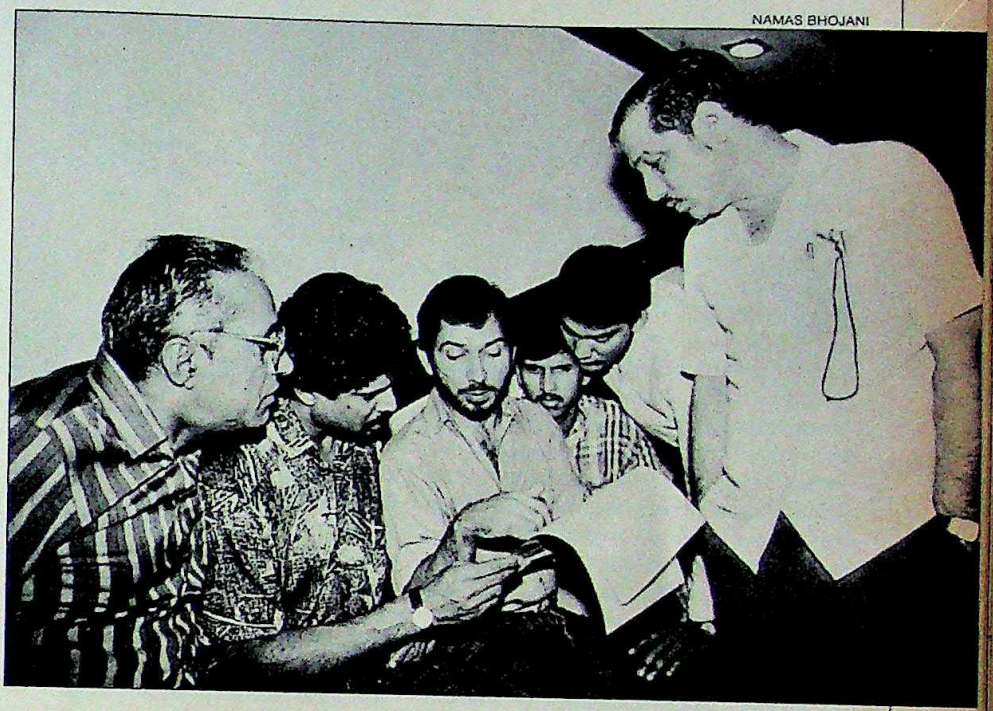
CRICKET CONTROL BOARD

On a Sticky Wicket

Even as it smarts from its embarrassing capitulation on the ban issue, the Board of Control for Cricket in India is faced with fresh confusion. If the recent board meeting at Chandigarh is any indication, Indian cricket's cup of controversy is far from full as yet.

NAMAS BHOJANI



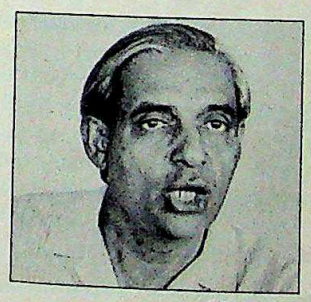
Players and officials: contentious contract

FOR once, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), on the backfoot for the past few weeks, got its timing just right. But on the wrong wicket, in the wrong game and to make the wrong point. Last fortnight, the board delegates and officials from all over the country congregated at Chandigarh's Mountview Hotel for their annual general meeting to lick their wounds. And if they had hoped to leave the past behind them, it was not to be so.

For, as they hurled accusations at one another for the humiliating capitulation in their ongoing war with the cricketing superstars, the man who had engineered the collapse was barely a few yards away. E.S. Venkatramaiah, chief justice of India, who persuaded the board to give up the confrontation with the players, was addressing the Punjab and Haryana High Court Bar Association on the lawns of the same hotel. He even walked up to speak to C. Nagaraj, joint secretary of the board and chief of the Karnataka State Cricket Association. A board member, on one of his many breaks from the meeting, said wryly: "Any illusions about a second innings in the battle against the players evaporated quickly."

With the ominous shadow of the judiciary falling over the Chandigarh meeting, it was understandable that despite the bickering and mutual recriminations, regrets and bitterness, the two score men who control the destiny of India's most popular and money-spinning game decided to duck and play for survival. Such was the scare that the courts may still act against the cricket board, that much of the factional politics was forgotten. "The court has questioned the very existence of an organisation that is 59 years old," said National Selection Committee Chairman Raj Singh Dungarpur, adding: "Maybe we haven't changed with the times enough."

That change was imminent became evident as some perfectly-timed signals emanated from Madras, where the superstars had gathered for yet another *masala* match, an unofficial, unusual, top batsmen versus top fast bowlers match organised by MRF. The stars formed a players' association and assigned two senior cricketers to renegotiate the playing contract with the board. The board too reciprocated as if on cue, setting up a committee to "amicably settle outstanding issues" with the players.



RAJ S. DUNGARPUR

"The last three cricket seasons began on a note of controversy. When the new season begins, we want it to be happy and pleasant."

"The board is solely responsible for the sorry state of affairs. Elections are faulty. Manipulation and lobbying ensure that the same faces stick on."

AJIT WADEKAR

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Said newly elected Board Vice-President I.S. Bindra: "The old contract was some 30 years old and antiquated. So some changes are called for." Sensing yet another victory, the players upped the ante, refusing to wear the MRF logos for the forthcoming Nehru Cup extravaganza unless they were given a part of the sponsorship bonanza the board was going to reap. The confrontation could be entering a new phase.

That what should have been yet another boring meeting of a sports organisation became one of the more important sporting events of the fortnight was a depressing commentary on the state of Indian cricket. After being forced to eat crow so unceremoniously—withdrawing punitive measures against the six stars who went to the US as also against Mohinder Amarnath for calling the selectors a bunch of jokers—the board now had to salvage its prestige as well as one of the busiest cricket seasons in recent years. "The last three cricket seasons began on a note of controversy," says Dungarpur and added hopefully: "The day after tomorrow, when the new season begins, we want it all to be happy and pleasant."

That may be optimistic despite the fact that both the players and the board seem to be settling back into familiar roles. Most of the superstars are back, preparing for the training camp for Sharjah at New Delhi's railway stadium in the coming fortnight. Kapil is getting into shape and Dilip Vengsarkar is back hitting the ball with the reassuring thud of the willow. He strode on the Matunga Gymkhana ground in Bombay to the gentle applause of about 500 fans. Said Avinash Pai, 28, a fan in the crowd: "Now he is a free man, thank God."

More than God, the players have to thank the judiciary for their resounding come-back. As the Supreme Court reprimanded it for its ways, the board meekly caved in. The court was about to open a Pandora's box, which made the board hastily rescind the ban.

Meanwhile, three Supreme Court judges and the attorney-general unleashed legal bouncers that left the board ducking and swaying. Venkatramaiah raised questions which threatened the existence of the board, including: Can a party to the contract (BCCI) have the sole right to decide a case of violation? And if the board has not been granted any statutory authority, what would prevent players or any other association of persons from forming their own team?

Kapil, Srikkanth and Vengsarkar in Madras: in the clear

WHEN a board lawyer pleaded that it was a private body, Venkatramaiah asked: "The board would be doing harm to itself by claiming (that)." And when the board said it had the authority to administer the game, Justice K.N. Singh remarked: "Who gave you that authority?" Attorney-General K. Parasaran chipped in: "You are given (the) authority by the state to administer properly."

Ultimately, the board was only paying for its own arbitrariness regarding the contentious contract, which was heavily loaded against the players. The contract began with an admonition from the board secretary: "I am to inform you that any deletion, addition or alteration in the agreement will be taken as your refusal to play for India." That certainly queered the pitch. The chief justice asked: "Is this contract fair?" Later, he added testily: "Making it a court proceeding and pushing it into an end may result in the board losing several privileges."

Faced with such a barrage, the board declared the innings closed. The erstwhile disciplinary committee members would not sit in the working committee panel which would re-examine the issue. Hectic lobbying from commentator Balu Alaganan, railways representative Amrit Mathur, board vice-president and former Maharashtra stumper D.C. Agashe and Dungarpur got the ban rescinded within two days. On September 14, the 21-member working committee of the board met again in Bombay, inviting the stars to lunch: it was time to kiss and make up. Kapil Dev and Ranbir Singh sat together savouring *bhindi masala* and *sitaphal* ice-cream. Said Kapil to Ranbir: "*Ab hum pooja kar sakenge* (Now we can pray)," referring to his earlier statement that banning cricketers from playing was like asking priests not to pray. Said Singh: "Please forget the past. We start a new chapter."

In Bombay, as the board stood humiliated, rebellious officials were already sharpening their knives for "*katal kee raat*" (the night of long knives) even as the Chandigarh meeting was being called. Ultimately, it took a lot of persuasion and pressure from the board elders to prevent the showdown

I.S. BINDRA

"The old playing contract was some 30 years old and truly antiquated. This meant that certain fundamental changes were urgently called for."

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Chandigarh board meeting: hectic lobbying

and further embarrassment.

The board had much to be embarrassed about. Jockeying for posts escalated to the point where Jagmohan Dalmia—whose brief was to arrive at a compromise in the ban imbroglio with the cricketers in Calcutta late August—instead tried to strike a deal with the cricketers on which brand of balls to use and which logos to wear for the coming season. Dalmia told INDIA TODAY in Chandigarh he was doing no more than carrying out the board's brief, but surely, his reported statement to Kapil Dev, calling Ranbir Singh, whose job he covets, "incompetent and incapable" couldn't have been so. "As a player I can't tolerate anyone saying a thing against my captain. As the board how do you tolerate your own people talking like this about your own secretary?" Kapil taunted the committee and as Ranbir joined issue with Dalmia, the BCCI's stock fell even further.

The crowning embarrassment at Chandigarh was the downcast visage of Prithipal Singh, a delegate from Himachal Pradesh, who nearly walked out of the board meeting and broke down explaining how "I am not being allowed to go as an official with the team to Pakistan just because I am a Sikh". Singh, adorned with a string of pearls, gold chain and medallion round his neck, stormed away in his Mitsubishi Pajero, saying: "I won't take Sharjah in place of Pakistan because all my friends are in Pakistan." In fact, like many Indian teams, the board was now realising that defeat is an orphan. Said former captain Ajit Wadekar: "The board is solely responsible for the sorry state of affairs. The method of electing officials is faulty. There is intense lobbying and alliances and the same faces stay on with sheer manipulation."

The angling for the board positions is understandable as it is the country's richest sports organisation, controlling investments exceeding Rs 3.4 crore. Consequently, even former presidents, instead of retiring gracefully, stay on as treasurers, secretaries, and working committee members. Recently, in order to seek minor clarifications from their Pakistani counterparts, as many as seven officials went to London for the International Cricket Conference (ICC) meet, travelling first-class. Again in July, officials went to London to ask the ICC if anyone had any questions about the Reliance Cup accounts, even after ICC officials said they were not interested in the accounts. Two "honorary" officials of the board were paid Rs 50,000 each for "excellent" work in conducting the tournament. Players legitimately ask: who has earned all this money? Interestingly, the Chandigarh meeting also discussed the board's annual financial report for 1988-89—'strictly confidential and not for publicity'. Even the self-defeating disciplinary exercise of this monsoon has cost the board a hefty Rs 15 lakh, including the cost of travel of 21 working committee members, daily allowances and hotel charges.

> **"We don't think that we have won and the board has lost in the present controversy. Ultimately, what matters is that we can now get on with the game once again."**

KAPIL DEV

If anything, the showdown with the players on the eve of such a busy season has caused a new rethinking on the structure of the board, its relationship with the players and the management of India's most important sport. But, the hatchet has not been buried. Many in the board are smarting under the humiliation and waiting for the stars to fail in the coming season. "Then they will not even have popular sympathy," predicted an official, somewhat wishfully. Some of the players, on the other hand, were planning to rub the board's nose into the ground yet again on the issue of the MRF logos. Either way, the voices of sanity were in a minority and when Dungarpur said "Indian cricket will not be judged by any balance sheets but by what 11 men achieve between 22 yards", he seemed to be in a hopeless minority as the others prepared for the next innings in the game of cricketing politics.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Chandigarh and SALIL TRIPATHI in Bombay

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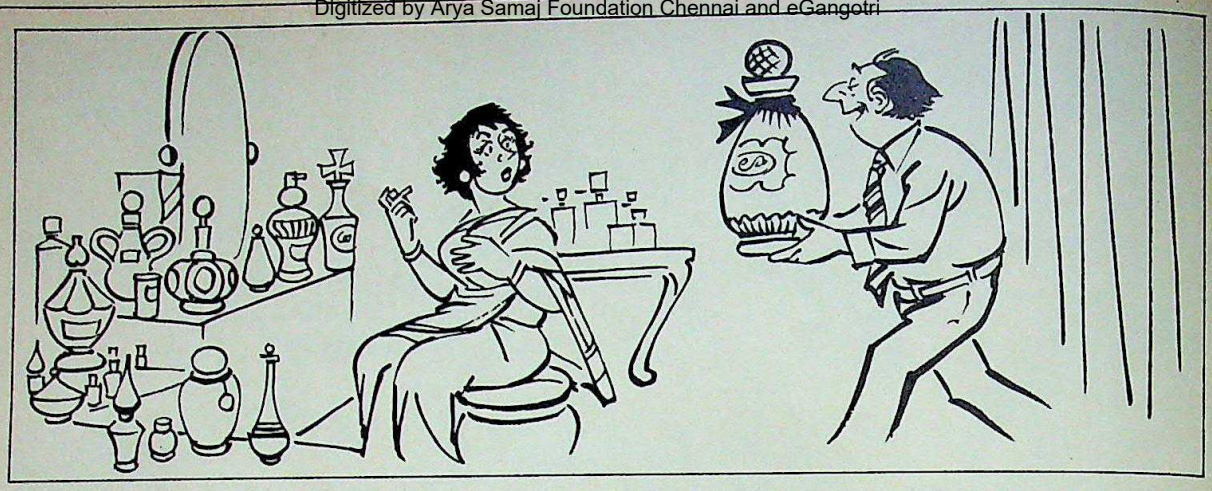

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SWADESHI POLYTEX LIMITED

Regd. Office : New Kavi Nagar, Ghaziabad (U.P.)

Excerpts from The Speech by **SHRI AJIT SINGH**, Chairman, at the 19th Annual General Meeting of the Company

Shri Ajit Singh
Chairman

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

I am happy to welcome you to this 19th Annual General Meeting of your Company.

PERIOD UNDER REVIEW

The audited accounts and the Directors Report for the period ended 31st March, 1989 (i.e. 18 months) has been in your hands for some time now. I will take these as read.

The Company has achieved a number of firsts during this period. For the first time the turnover of the Company has crossed Rs. 100 crores as against 98.26 crores for the corresponding previous period. The sales were the highest at 14028 MT against 13896 MT during the corresponding period last year. Production was also the highest at 15790 MT compared to 14868 MT during the corresponding period last year. The Company is now producing for the first time fine deniers of less than 1 denier for which there is a very good demand. For the first time the Company introduced into the market Super High Tenacity Fibre, Bright Fibre and Coarse Deniers for the non-woven industry. The company entered into the export market for the first time by exporting 210 MT fibre to Italy, Russia and Belgium. The quality of the product has also substantially improved. A grade production is now 90.47% against 86.13% last year. Similarly, fine denier production has gone upto 71% from 62% last year. Waste generation has also come down to 5.45% from 5.76% last year and the entire waste is now being recycled into fibre to get better realisation instead of selling waste at throw-away prices.

Profit before tax at Rs. 700.41 lacs as against 790.00 lacs for the corresponding previous period is considered very satisfactory in view of the very difficult market conditions. **This represents a return on equity of 180% before Tax.**

The installed capacity of the Plant, after debottlenecking, now stands at 14000 tpa. Your Company has continued to perform much better than a number of other manufacturers of PSF. Capacity utilisation was 80% whereas that of the Industry as a whole was around 45%.

As assured by me at the last AGM, the professional character of your Company has been maintained and the Company has been functioning as an independent Public Limited Company. The connection with NTC has been beneficial to both NTC and SPL. SPL has an assured large market for its fibre in the NTC mills, while NTC with the assistance of SPL has been able to upgrade its product and at the same time increase its production of blended fabrics. NTC came to exercise control over the management of the Company since March 1988. **For the 12 months period between April, 1988 and March, 1989 the company earned a net profit of Rs. 528 Lacs as against Rs. 406 Lacs in the corresponding previous 12 months thus showing an improvement of Rs. 122 lacs or 30%. The share value which was Rs. 26/- at the time of NTC coming in was around Rs. 40/- at the end of July, 1989.**

DIVIDEND AT 35%

You will be happy to note that the Board of Directors have proposed a final dividend of 20% **This together with 15% interim dividend already paid, makes a total of 35% for the period under review.**

As mentioned at the last AGM, the PSF Industry has entered a new phase. Installed capacity has reached a level of around 2.50 lac tpa while the demand continues to stagnate at around 85/90,000 tpa. The reduction in excise duty in the year 1988 was expected to stimulate demand. The price reduction, however, was short lived as the prices of raw materials for PSF, both MEG and DMT rose to unprecedented levels, forcing the company to raise prices. This in turn affected demand belieing all hopes of growth.

The Industry had made a number of representations to the Government for reduction in import duties on raw materials and in the excise duty on PSF. Only a marginal relief was allowed. PSF demand, therefore, continues to remain stagnant around 85/90,000 tpa. Under the circumstances the market remains extremely competitive and realisation have been adversely affected. The recent reduction in the prices of DMT, although belated, is a welcome step. This, alongwith the slight softening in the international price of MEG, would help bring the fibre costs down to some extent. A comprehensive review of the taxation and import duties and of Textile Policy in general is called for to enable PSF Industry to achieve the levels of annual growth touched a few years earlier and improve utilisation of installed capacities and financial investments involved.

ECONOMIES

Under the current difficult environment for PSF, the Company has launched a series of schemes to bring about reduction in costs, improvement in efficiencies and product upgradation for value addition. Most of these schemes have already started yielding the desired results.

EXPANSION AND DIVERSIFICATION

Your Company's business at present consists primarily of manufacture and sale of PSF. Your Board recognizes that this dependence upon single product is not conducive to the company's healthy future growth particularly in view of the stagnant PSF market. It has, therefore, reviewed its earlier decision to expand the PSF capacity substantially. This decision was quite timely and saved the Company from falling into dangerous pitfalls in the face of very low utilisation of even the existing Industry capacity. Instead, it has been decided to diversify into manufacture of POY/PFY, which has much better growth rate and capacity utilisation. The project has made considerable progress.

The Company's PSF plant was installed in 1972 and your Board of Directors realises the need for modernising it in order to enable it to stay competitive. The Company has therefore invested about Rs. 5.0 crores in the modernisation of the Plant over the last eighteen months which has yielded the following benefits :

The installed capacity has been raised to 14000 MT from 8131 MT at least cost.

The Raw material consumption and energy efficiencies, have substantially improved, contributing to additional revenues.

Quality of product has been further improved.

The Company is also looking at a number of other options for diversification and will soon take a final decision.

PERFORMANCE DURING THE CURRENT YEAR

There has been general erosion of profitability of PSF Industry consequent on adverse market conditions and creation of excess capacity. We are no longer in the sellers market. The Company is, therefore, bound to be affected as other companies have been, some of them more adversely. However, I would like to assure that due to its inherent strenghts and efficiencies, the Company would continue to flourish and ensure a good return on investment made by its shareholders.

In the first four months of the current year, i.e. from April 1989 to July 1989, your Company has achieved a turnover net of excise of Rs. 1865 lacs compared to Rs. 1599 lacs during the corresponding period last year.

The Company has made a net profit of Rs. 90 lacs during the period despite much more unfavourable market conditions, stiffer competition consequent on the commissioning of three new Plants of JCT, BRPL, IEL expansion and practically stagnant market.

The Company has been making net profit of Rs. 50 to Rs. 60 lacs a month since June and barring unforseen circumstances hopes to close the year ending March 1990 (i.e. 12 months) with a net profit of about Rs. 5.0 crores which will be comparable to the profit for 18 months period last year.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

The most important assets of any industrial enterprises is its employees. We are proud of the quality of the effort put in by all our staff and workers and their deep commitments. It is through this effort that Swadeshi Polytex Limited continues to enjoy market leadership in the consistent quality of its product. The Industrial relations continue to be cordial; the credit for this goes to the loyalty and maturity of our employees. My wholehearted appreciation for this co-operation.

It is my pleasure to express our sincere thanks to the Central Government, the Government of UP, Financial Institutions and Banks for their guidance, co-operation and help. I am also grateful to my colleagues on the Board for their wise counsels in helping us to steer the Company towards better performance and growth My thanks are also due to the Shareholders those who are present here and those, who are unable to do so, for the confidence you have reposed in the Management of the Company

30th August, 1989

Ajit Singh
Chairman

***NOTE** : This does not purport to be the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.*

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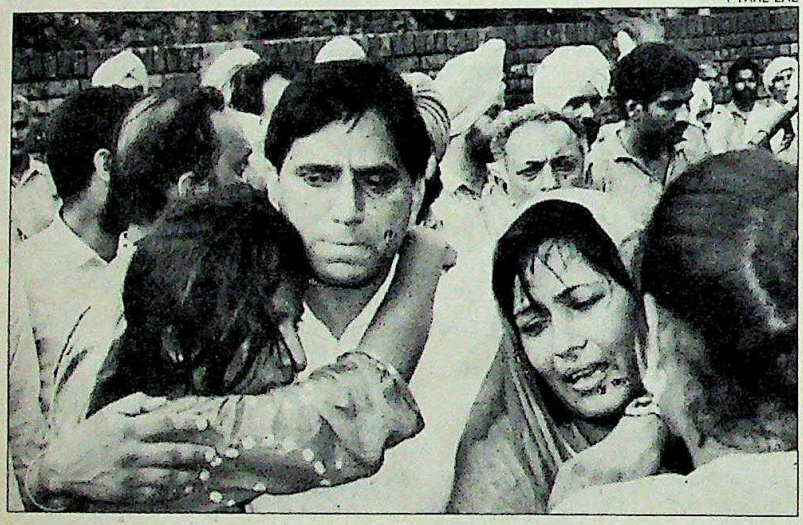
PUNJAB

Dangerous Strategy

Terrorists increasingly target policemen's families

ON the battle-scarred terrain of Punjab a new spectre rides ominous. The frontiers of terrorism have taken yet another exceedingly callous step, and now they hover at the domestic doorstep. With the recent killing of the teenaged son of one police officer and the kidnapping of the four-year-old son of another, it has become clear that the rules are being rewritten to bring women and children into the ambit of the war-zone.

PYARE LAL



Last fortnight, 18-year-old Rajan Bains—son of former Batala SSP Gobind Ram who was transferred after being accused of torturing two women (INDIA TODAY, September 30)—was gunned down by terrorists. Three days later, on September 16, terrorists kidnapped little Manish Kumar, the son of Tarn Taran SP (operations) Des Raj. Rajan's death stunned, but it was Manish's fate which kept people on tenterhooks.

Manish, who was picked up from Faridkot while he was going to school, was finally released, but the release itself pointed to an alarming precedent: the use of a hostage for extricating imprisoned accomplices. A practice that can play havoc with the business of law enforcement in the violence-torn state.

The terrorist behind the strategy was the Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF) chief, Gurjant Singh Budhsinghwala. In a note, he declared he had kidnapped the child to make police officials who indulged in fake encounters undergo the agony of losing their children. But that explanation was too facile. The KLF chief had a more immediate objective in mind: the release of his right-hand man, Dhir Singh Dhira, and a few others.

It was a classic hostage crisis. The Punjab police chief, K.P.S. Gill, along with DIG (Ferozepore range) Ajit Singh and Faridkot SSP, S.K. Sharma, rushed to their colleague's aid. And instead of sabre-rattling, responded to the situation with judicious diplomacy. Negotiations were started, a secret deal struck, and the hostages exchanged.

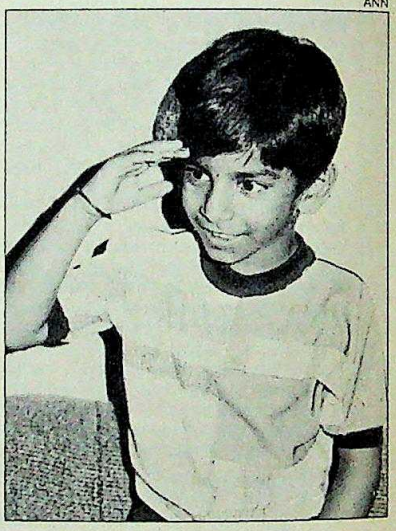
> The well-planned kidnapping of Manish Kumar points to an alarming precedent: the use of a hostage by terrorists to extricate imprisoned accomplices.

For obvious reasons the police does not admit to having given in. Gill claims no "arrested terrorist" was released. The catch here is that Dhir Singh Dhira had been detained illegally. Also released were some others from Faridkot district who had been picked up for questioning. Justifying the giving-in to criminals, an officer said: "The prime consideration was to save the child's life."

The child, in fact, sprung a couple of surprises. Blithely unaware of his possible brush with death, he told of living among two *nanis* (grandmothers) and four *mamas* (uncles), who treated him to soft drinks, fed him sweets and narrated heroic tales of the Sikh gurus. On the fifth day, he was dressed in brand new clothes, handed Rs 11 by one of the *nanis* and taken to Kotkapura, 11 km from Faridkot. There he was sent by rickshaw to the police station nearby, where "his father was waiting".

Manish's experience would suggest that the terrorists of Punjab might not be quite the inhuman monsters they are made out to be. But the well-planned kidnapping and the sudden release was a calculated attempt to win some public sympathy. The terrorist record is stained with the blood of too many children to place any special emphasis on the extraordinary treatment given to Manish.

ANN



Gobind Ram with grieving family (left); and Manish Kumar: innocent victim

In the last few years, several children of police officers have been targeted. In June 1986, DSP Raj Kishen Bedi's son, Ashok, who had just graduated, was killed in Ludhiana. In November the same year, Ravneet Singh, the 19-year-old son of H.S. Kahlon, SP (city), was shot dead in Amritsar. A month later, Arun Kumar, the school-going son of Inspector Brahm Dev was killed in Amritsar. The father died of a heart attack soon after. Gurmeet Singh, the 22-year-old son of Harpal Singh, DSP Baba Bakala, was killed along with his father in February 1987. In the same month Dr Manjit

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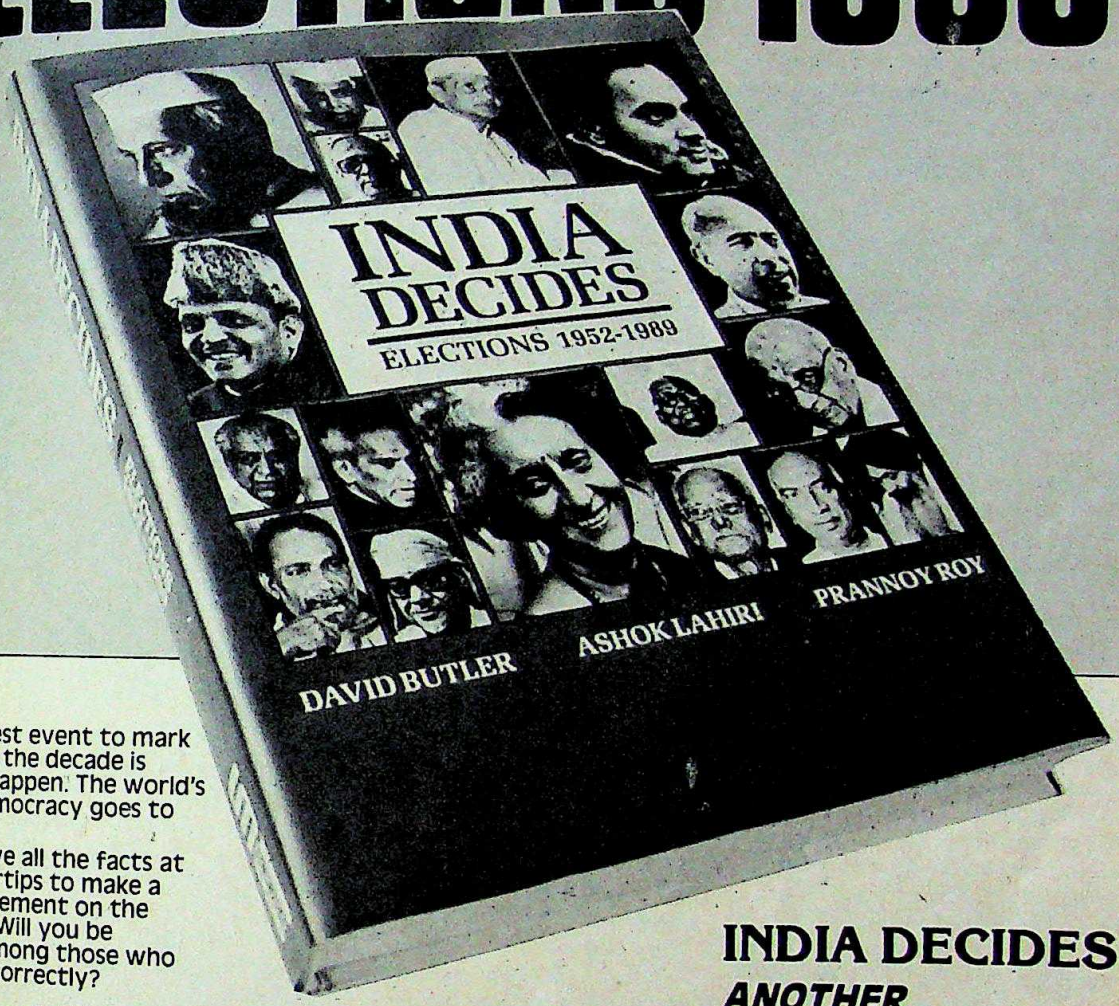
ELECTIONS 1989



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Singh, the newly-married son of IG D.S. Mangat, was killed at Patiala.

Those were reprisal killings, opportunistically seized. But the kidnapping of Manish reveals a dangerous strategy. And cruel though it may seem, the police's giving-in may spark off a horrifying trend. Terrorists may adopt it as standard procedure to obtain releases. Some senior police officers claim to be working on a theory that the kidnapping may have actually been the handiwork of criminals to secure the release of one Manohar Singh of Faridkot district. This theory appears extremely thin for Budhsinghwala is a dreaded terrorist, and he would have issued a denial if the crime was being imputed to him falsely.

The recent events have badly demoralised the force. Many police officials have stopped sending their children to school; all now demand vehicles and armed escorts. The upshot: on September 17, at a meeting in Jalandhar presided over by Gill, it was decided to shift the families of policemen on the terrorists' hit-list to the police lines. The policemen who interrogated and tortured the two women in Batala have also been receiving threats that their wives will be abducted.

In Punjab, a new era of callousness seems to be dawning. One in which the wives and children of policemen will stare into the muzzles of guns.

—KANWAR SANDHU

AISSF MEET

Old Games

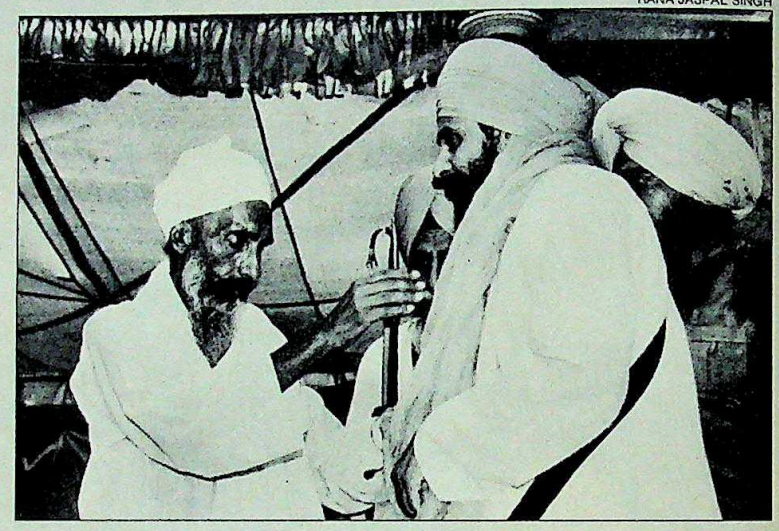
HOW many times has the scenario repeated itself in Punjab in the last eight years? A bedecked gurdwara stage, vibrant with militancy amid a sea of expectant villagers. Enter enraged speakers, and the air is rent with litany. After it has died down, rumours of a government hand in the proceedings begin to proliferate.

On September 20, at Gurdwara Ramsar, 1,500 metres from the Golden Temple, Manjit Singh received a typical initiation into panthic politics at an open house session of the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF). Younger son of former head of the Damdami Taksal, late Sant Kartar Singh, and brother of Bhindranwale's right hand man Amrik Singh, Manjit was elected president of the AISSF while in jail. Released after five years of detention, like other entrants into panthic politics, he too seemed poised to add to the confusion. This was indicated by the tenor and ambiguity of the function's resolutions.

The resolutions reiterated Bhindranwale's statement that the "foundation of Khalistan will be laid the day the Akal Takht is attacked" and that the federation would fight for the fulfilment of this "goal". Yet, Manjit Singh did not mention Khalistan. But the statement sent by the detained AISSF General Secretary, Harminder Singh Sandhu, was hardline. It appealed to Pakistan to "provide shelter to Sikhs on the pattern of the Afghan Mujahedin". This is surprising as Sandhu had, after Bluestar, offered to cooperate with the Government.

Adding to the confusion was the widespread feeling among Akalis that the Government was tacitly backing the meeting to foment more trouble in order to impose an emergency and postpone elections. Asked Akali Dal(L) lawyer, M.S. Khaira: "Why was so much hullabaloo made when some persons talked of Khalistan in April 1986, and not a word now?" Even Congress(I) leaders admitted that since the Government had prevented the "dharna" of the Akali Dal(T) at Jalandhar on September 18, the AISSF meet too shouldn't have been allowed.

RANA JASPAL SINGH



Rode being confirmed Takht chief

The Government's silence is intriguing. "We are still examining the issue," says DGP K.P.S. Gill. Lending further credence to the feeling of the Government's tacit support is the fact that at the meeting the AISSF confirmed Jasbir Singh Rode as the Akal Takht jathedar, though the SGPC appointee is Professor Ragi. Rode last year had been the subject of a controversy, with IG (Border), Chaman Lal accusing Central agencies of liaising with him. Also, a few months ago, a senior Taksal functionary had admitted to INDIA TODAY that a cabinet minister had met Manjit Singh in jail.

There was dispute about allowing the function to be held. Sources reveal the IG (Intelligence), O.P. Sharma, had written that it "may not be allowed". Governor S.S. Ray was of the same view. However, Gill and Ray later decided to allow it if the venue was shifted from Manji Sahib to Gurdwara Ramsar.

Backing Manjit Singh is likely to prove counter-productive: it will destroy the Government's credibility and give lawlessness a further impetus. For, despite the impressive gathering, Manjit has the suppport of only one of each of the three federation and Panthic Committee groups. "We expected a programme against extortions by terrorists and police excesses in the villages and not political rhetoric," said Harbans Singh, an ex-serviceman of Verka, echoing the villagers' disappointment.

Observers feel the AISSF-Taksal combine now proposes to project itself as a political alternative to the Akalis. Akali leaders agree there is no harm in reintegrating terrorists into legitimate spheres of political activity but the manner in which it is being attempted, they claim, shows that the Government continues to play games in Punjab.

—KANWAR SANDHU

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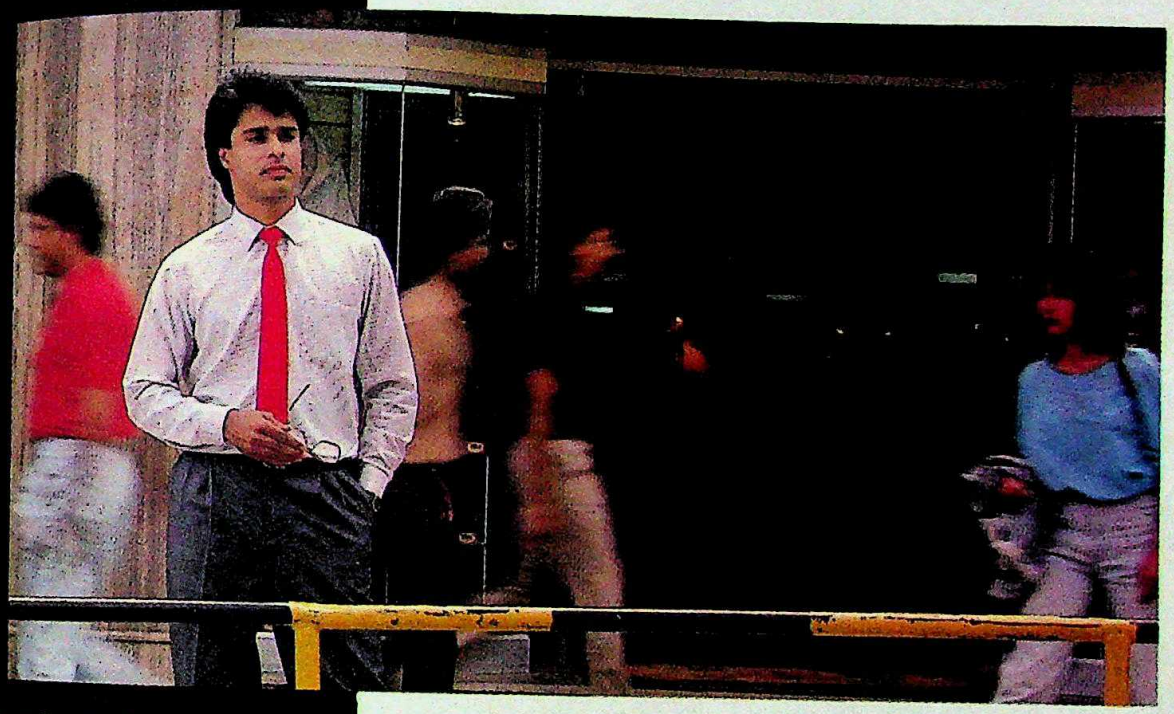

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JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Acrimonious Exit

Minister resigns, indicts government

RATTLED by subversive activity in the valley and the chaos in the administration, the besieged Jammu and Kashmir coalition government has been teetering on its feet. Last fortnight, it suffered another bruising rapier thrust: the resignation of Rajinder Singh Chib, tourism minister and one-time confidant of Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah.

Chib is the second National Conference (NC) leader to part company with Farooq this year—earlier Abdul Rashid Kabli, MP, was expelled from the party for his criticism of the NC leadership. A stunned Farooq did not react to Chib's resignation letter attacking the Government, even as he delayed his expulsion from the party. Two days after Chib's resignation, the NC Jammu unit was restrained from passing a resolution demanding his expulsion. Explained a member: "The party high command felt that precipitating matters at this juncture could invite more resignations."

The resignation was not entirely unexpected. It was known that Chib, a Rajput from the Jammu region and a former air force officer, had been simmering with resentment over various administrative decisions. As recently as on July 9, he had threatened to quit on the issue of transfer of a senior officer in his department. But, following intervention by senior NC and Congress(I) leaders, he had withdrawn his resignation.

This time Chib did not reconsider, nor did he pull his punches. In a shocking indictment of the Government by an insider, he referred to the "anarchical conditions" in the valley, Ladakh and Jammu and to the corruption and "unprecedented chaos in the annals of administration". On the press censorship bill "where the state Government was put to ridicule", Chib revealed that the Cabinet was not taken into confidence.

Attacking the 1986 accord between the NC and the Congress(I), Chib said it had "dipped a well-knit organisation like the NC to the lowest ebb, not only politically but also in matters of administration". Said he: "The ominous accord has encouraged the Centre to handle the levers of the state administration. They count and we are nowhere."

What has, however, raised disturbing questions is his revelation that the law and order situation worsened only after some hardcore extremists were released in July "at the behest of the Centre". Added Chib: "We have it from the public that while hardened criminals and undesirable elements are afforded shelter, innocents are punished."

An embarrassed Farooq Government was stumped into silence and faced with the worry that the resignation would further erode the already weak base of the NC in Jammu. Of the 40 elected NC members in the Assembly, only six are from Jammu. Though Chib is not an elected representative—he was nominated to the Upper House—he was able to invigorate the NC in the R.S. Pura area.

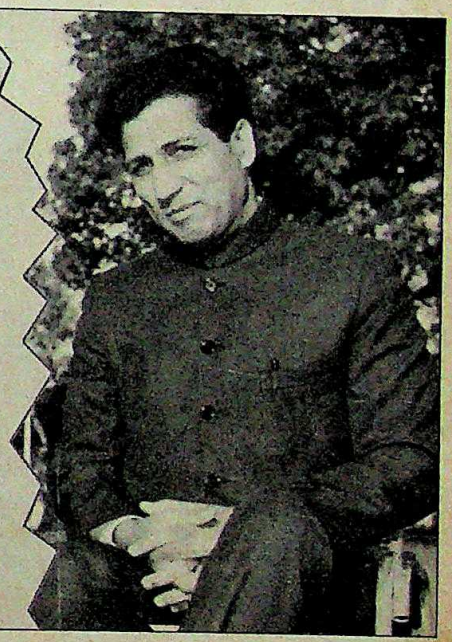
One of Chib's strengths is his sizeable following among ex-servicemen. In fact, his resignation letter criticises the Government for its neglect of ex-servicemen along with displaced persons. It is not surprising then that prominent ex-servicemen have hailed his resignation.

Meanwhile, there is speculation that Chib may join the Janata Dal, thus heralding its emergence as a political force in Jammu. Chib, who is reported to have held meetings with senior Janata Dal leaders, V.P. Singh, Devi Lal and Mufti Mohammed Syed, might be offered the Jammu or Poonch parliamentary seat. Chib told INDIA TODAY he would go by the feelings of his supporters. But on one score he was emphatic: "The Centre must allow one party to function in Jammu and Kashmir."

The influential daily, *Kashmir Times*, which criticised Chib's move to resign in July has now hailed it as an "Act of Courage". It commented that Chib could emerge as a rallying figure for all those who feel choked with the NC.

For the time being Farooq seems to have staved off more desertions. But with the NC's failure to tackle the mayhem in the state and its increasing dependence on the Centre, the future of the NC as a political entity appears to be in danger. —KANWAR SANDHU in Jammu

Chib's resignation signals that the future of Farooq and the ruling NC hangs by a thin thread. It could also herald the political birth of the Janata Dal in Jammu.



Abdullah (left) and Chib: serious signals

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UTTAR PRADESH

Tax Clash

Officials beaten, government reacts

WHEN the 88 income tax officers—drawn from all over Uttar Pradesh—gathered at Meerut on September 14, they thought they were out on another routine raid. At 10.45 a.m. they opened the sealed envelope containing the names and addresses of the two businessmen to be raided—steel and paper mill owner Harish Chhabra and jeweller Chittaranjan Swarup. And shortly after, they split into nine groups and set out for the nine premises to be raided—in Muzaffarnagar and in Bijnore. Expected recoveries: Rs 2 crore.

BHAWAN SINGH

BHAWAN SINGH

Chhabra; (top) demonstrating income tax employees; (inset) injured officials: money power

What the raid yielded was something quite different. At Chhabra's office in Muzaffarnagar, the raiders were met by an abusive Chhabra who bragged about his political connections. He finally signed the warrant agreeing to a search but then went to the gate and signalled to neighbouring shopkeepers.

Soon enough, hordes of them rushed into the office and began beating up the search party. One victim now lies in Meerut Medical College—nursing a broken nose and blood clots in his eyes.

The fate of the other raiding parties was no different. At Anupam Jewellers, Swarup's office, a taxman was "thrown about like a football", in the words of Pankaj Gupta, deputy income tax commissioner, Muzaffarnagar.

The officials who went to Chhabra's factory on Meerut Road were stripped naked and beaten with leather belts and iron rods. They had to borrow pyjamas to travel to Meerut. Other tax officials had to literally run for their lives since the mob had damaged their vehicles.

The fact that each raiding party was accompanied by four armed policemen made no difference. Said a senior income tax commissioner: "None of them even fired in the air." When the trouble began, they simply vanished. The district authorities too provided little help. The seriously injured tax officials—with multiple fractures, broken teeth, burns and bleeding faces—were taken to hospital by their own colleagues. When the news of the attack reached them, income tax officials in Muzaffarnagar went on strike demanding action against the traders.

But the traders too had taken to the streets, shouting slogans against the income tax department. They are certainly powerful. Swarup was once a Congress(I) MLA, and Chhabra is a senior Congress(I) worker having links with local Hindu bodies. He organises Ganesh Rath Yatras and Ram Lilas in the area and was detained for two months under NSA after the communal riots last year. State officials say the two are also close to Minister of State for Home Syed ur Zamal and Food and Civil Supplies Minister Hukam Singh.

Those political links ensured that no arrests were made—for five days after the incident. Says SSP M.S. Bains: "We wanted to defuse tensions first." But the taxmen were not prepared to take things lying down. As the news spread, work was suspended in income tax offices all over the state. Delhi and Calcutta joined in, organising walk-outs and half-day strikes and threatened an all-India strike if their demands were not met.

The demands: handing over of the case to the CBI; immediate arrest of the people responsible for the attack; action against the local SSP and the district magistrate; compensation to the victims; and granting of magisterial powers to income tax staff.

In Delhi, the Indian Revenue Service Association kept up the pressure. And the meetings with Finance Secretary Gopi Arora and Minister of State for Finance Ajit Panja finally yielded results. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Narayan Datt Tiwari, who was hastily summoned to Delhi, conceded the major demands: arrest of the businessmen and handing over of the case to the CBI, cash compensation to the injured officials—Rs 50,000 for the grievously injured, Rs 25,000 for those with minor injuries and Rs 5,000 for the rest of the search party. Under consideration now are: more powers for tax officials and issue of weapons to the income tax department.

But all is far from settled. Traders in Uttar Pradesh have been threatening a jail bharo stir to protest against arrests. The Vyapar Mandal has vowed never to allow a raid. And Shyam Bihari Mishra, president of the state Udyog Vyapar Mandal, has been exhorting traders to "raid income tax officers' houses".

The state Government, though forced to act against traders in Muzaffarnagar, is unlikely to do anything more for fear of antagonising them. The clout they wield is indispensable in an election year. The result will be a growth of what taxmen call "traders' terrorism". And the ascendance of money and crime over law and order.

—HARINDER BAWEJA in Muzaffarnagar

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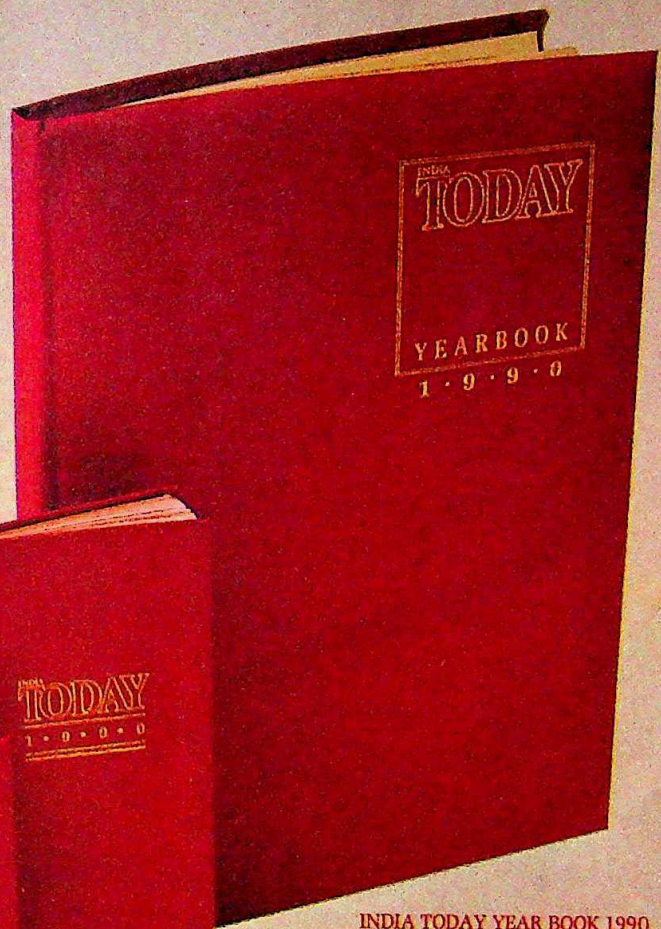

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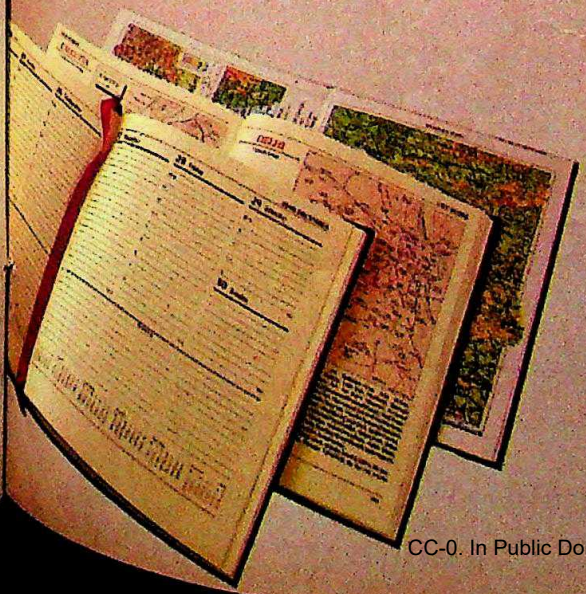

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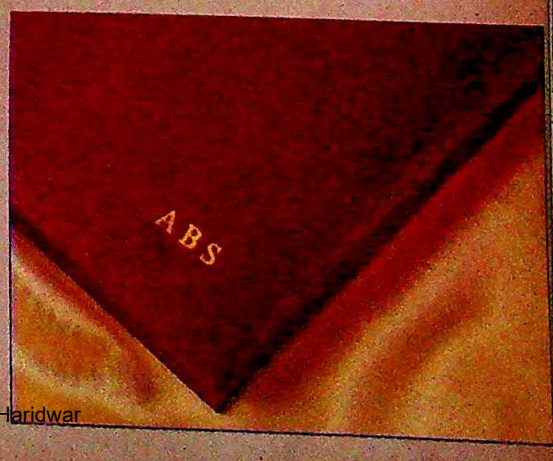

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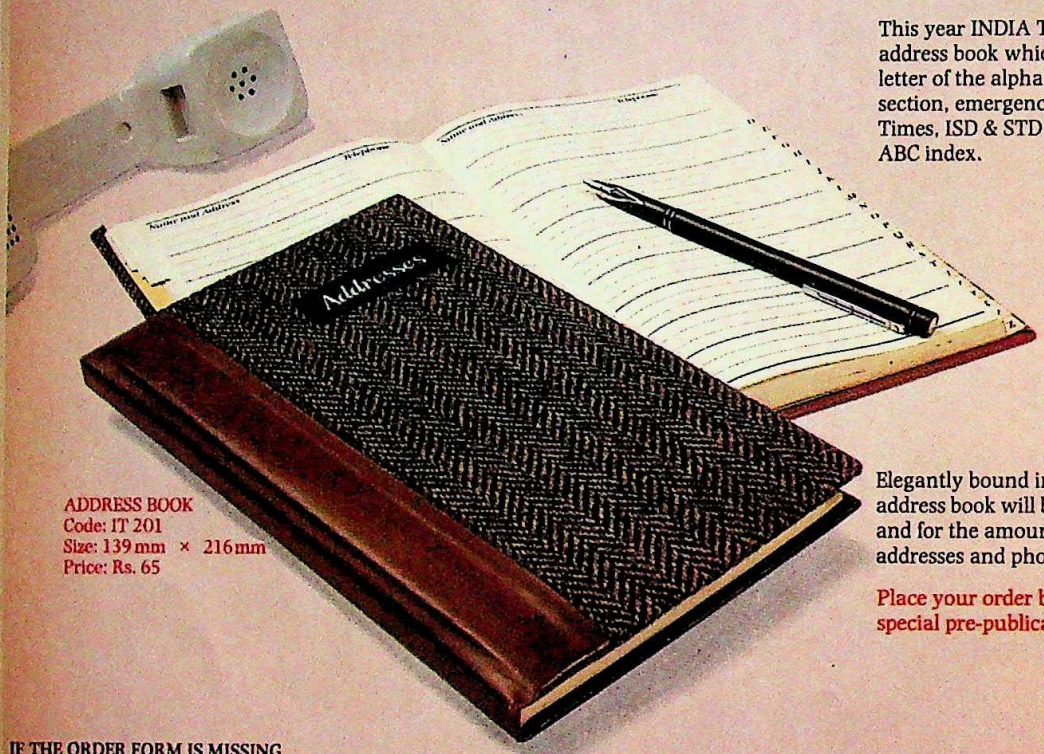

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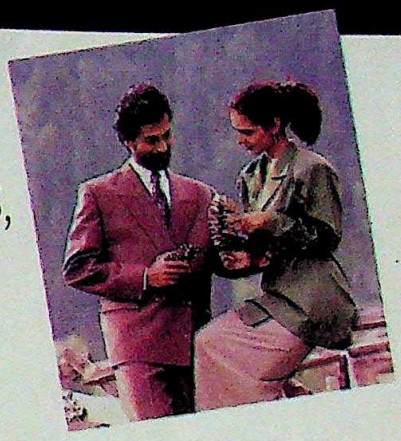

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UTTAR PRADESH

Urdu Uproar

Fracas over language's status

CHIEF Minister Narayan Datt Tiwari's recent bestowal of second official language status to Urdu is clearly a political move—to woo Muslims. But it is also one that could boomerang.

Initially, the new status is to be accorded to districts with an Urdu-speaking population between 15 and 20 per cent. Claims Tiwari: "We are fulfilling our party's election manifesto promise. Like Bihar we will have Urdu as the second language."

But the strategy has already come under fire from vociferous protagonists of Hindi. Even a strong lobby in the Cabinet, including Irrigation Minister Lokpathi Tripathi and Education Minister Swaroop Kumari Bakshi, is against it.

A similar bill couldn't be passed by the Vidhan Sabha in 1984 when a minister, Vasudeo Singh, created history by opposing it on the floor of the House. Observers foresee a repeat of that embarrassing situation.

Hindi writers and litterateurs, including Amrit Lal Nagar and Gaura Pant 'Shivani', are solidly opposed to the proposal. Says Nagar: "I honour Urdu, but can't accept it at any cost as the second official language." Adds BJP leader Bhagwati Prasad Shukla: "The step is an insult to Hindi-speaking people."

Nagar and writers Sri Narain Chaturvedi, Kunwar Narain and Sri Lal Shukla refused the Hindi Sansthan awards, boycotting the function. Worse, midway through the function, Governor Mohammed Usman Arif, had to leave after he was heckled by an audience shouting anti-Urdu slogans.

The decision is also against constitutional provisions. The Government's survey, based on the 1981 census, established that the Urdu-speaking population in the state was only 9.74 per cent, while the Constitution says that only a state with a minority population of 30 per cent can be called a bilingual state.

Earlier too, attempts had been made to make a provision for Urdu as the second language through seven ordinances—amending the Uttar Pradesh State Language Act of 1951—promulgated between 1982 and 1984. But the move was stalled when in 1984, the state Hindi Sahitya Sammelan challenged their constitutional validity.

In its judgement of April 6, 1984, the Allahabad High Court barred the Government from promulgating ordinances on the issue. It ordered that under Article 345, Urdu couldn't be the official or the second official language. In 1987, the Supreme Court ratified the judgement.

Now, the new draft bill proposes to insert a clause after Section 2 of the principal act, which reads: "In the interest of Urdu-speaking people, Urdu may be used as the second language in addition to Hindi for such purposes as are specified in the schedule." Interestingly, the word 'official' is missing. But the provisions of the schedule already exist and will lead to no significant change in the status of Urdu. So, the bill is unlikely to please Muslim hardliners. Calling it "an election stunt", M.A. Haleem, national president of the All India Minorities Federation, formed a committee to secure a rightful place for Urdu.

R.K. GUPTA

Shiv Sena agitation: stoking the flames

With the BJP backing the Hindi protagonists, the issue threatens to take a communal turn. BJP state President Kalyan Singh has threatened a "violent and gigantic" agitation, a view echoed by party leader Atal Behari Vajpayee. On September 20, over 250 Shiv Sena men, brandishing spears and trishuls, courted arrest outside the Vidhan Sabha.

While the Janata Dal says it will not oppose the bill, the anti-Urdu lobby is gearing up to challenge the act after it is passed. With the Ram Janmabhoomi issue already tearing apart the state, Tiwari's electoral gambit is in danger of following suit. —DILIP AWASTHI

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Dr. Bhupendra Kumar Modi
Chairman & President

On 27th April, 1989, the Board of Directors of Modi Xerox unanimously elected Dr. Bhupendra Kumar Modi as Chairman. Dr. Modi, who was personally responsible for bringing Xerox to India, has helped to establish Modi Xerox as the undisputed leader in the industry. The following is an excerpt from Dr. Modi's review of the company's performance, delivered at the Annual General Meeting on 26th September 1989.

1988-89 has been a Year of Consolidation. We have matured as a company and been able to maintain a steady profit position. I am pleased to recommend our maiden dividend of 11%.

We have worked with single–minded dedication towards improving business results through better controls, better utilisation of our plant capacity and resources, greater focus on the development of our people and a conscious drive for achieving customer satisfaction and quality in every single area.

One of the major reasons for our success is the fact that we have the best partners in the business. We have benefitted greatly from the technical advancement and experience of Rank Xerox. I would like to thank our collaborators. our customers. our employees and our growing family of shareholders for their continued support.

MAINTAINING A STEADY PROFIT POSITION

Our Net Profit before Tax for 11 months stands at Rs. 5.01 crores – an annualised growth of 8% over last year. The Cash Profit at Rs.9.16 crores for 11 months shows an annualised increase of 6%. Our revenue has increased to Rs. 88.09 crores for the period ending March 1989. At Rs. 96.10 crores annualised, this reflects a growth of 19%.

Return on Net Assets has also improved to over 10% annualised. The interest cost of 5.5% of revenue is a significant improvement over 7.1% last year and has resulted in better profits. There is a reduction in absolute terms as well – from Rs. 5.73 crores to Rs. 4.48 crores. The Debt Equity Ratio has dropped to 1.58 from last year's 2.19. In the long–term, our goal is to increase our RONA to 20%.

CONSOLIDATING OUR MARKET LEADERSHIP

Despite competitive pressure, we have been able to increase our market share to 43.2%. Our year–end sales productivity showed a 20% imcrease over last year.

The number of our machines in field now exceeds 15,000 and our copy volume has crossed the billion mark – an annualised growth of 48% over last year.

This year we also launched the 2510, India's first engineering plan printer and the 1038, a programmable desktop copier with many value-added features.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES: GIVING OUR BUSINESS AN IMPETUS

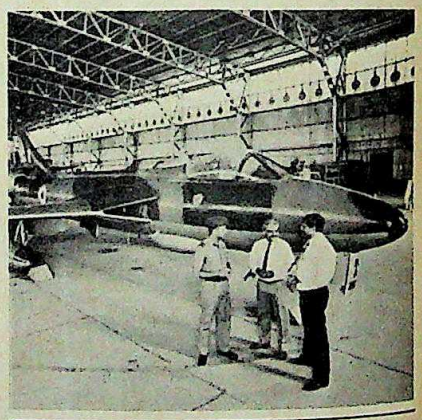
The new industrial policy of the Government allows sale of parts manufactured as OEM to the extent of 25% of the value of licensed product. We now have an opportunity to sell photoreceptors, sub-assemblies, toner and developer to other companies.

The implementation of the GATT Valuation Rules for Customs purposes is a very welcome step.

Our continued manufacture of toner and developer has made significant contribution in import substitution and helped save considerable foreign exchange. Competition continues to rely only on import of toner and developer, the import volume of which is continuing to grow, leading to higher foreign exchange remittances. The manufacture of toner and developer by other manufacturers is not economically viable on account of lower economies of scale, coupled with low import tariffs and easy access to imports under OGL for stock and sale. The Government needs to look into this aspect.

WINNING CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE AND LOYALTY

The drive for customer satisfaction in every area of our business has won us strong customer loyalty. Today more than 50% of our business comes from existing customers. We are now setting up a computerised Customer Complaint Management system to improve our service even further. A Customer Satisfaction Measurement Survey revealed that Modi Xerox is seen as the No. 1 copier company.



HARNESSING PEOPLE POWER

We spend over Rs. 1 crore on training. Our trainer: employee ratio is one of the highest in India. All our employees are exposed to international training programs developed by Xerox and Rank Xerox. Our training programs are integrated with the principles of Leadership Through Quality – the global Xerox strategy aimed at fully satisfying customer needs.

RESPONDING TO NEW CUSTOMER NEEDS

This year, we set up the Special Business Division to help us explore business opportunities in new market segments. The

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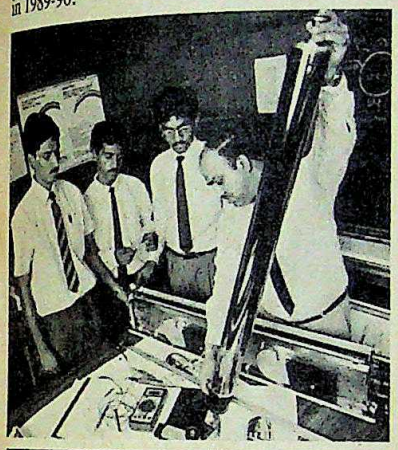
2510, which was launched by the SBD, has not only enriched our product offering, it has extended our customer base.

In response to market needs, the SBD also launched MX Business Paper, polyester film, tracing paper and telecopier paper for facsimile machines. Our range now includes the entire gamut of EIS throughput material.

In 1988-89, MX 75 acccounted for one-third of the branded copier paper sold in the country.

We now plan to double the SBD turnover from Rs.8.5 crores in 1988-89 to Rs.17 crores in 1989-90.



SETTING EVER-HIGHER STANDARDS OF SERVICE

Preventive Maintenance continues to be an important focal point of our service strategy.

We have increased the productivity of our service engineers through better Time Management and have appointed Commercial Engineers with the dual function of sales and service in 14 locations.

Our distribution system is unrivalled in flexibility and speed. Our network now covers 65 branch-outs, including several in remote areas. We are also improving spares supplies at the branch level and continue to maintain the fastest response times in the industry.

FOCUSSING ON PLANT PRODUCTIVITY

The Rampur Plant is one of just 2 fully-integrated plants in the Xerox world, that manufactures copiers, special materials and parts, under one roof.

This year, our focus has been on improving the returns on our investment in Rampur through better capacity utilisation. We have been able to significantly improve the productivity of the plant without any major capital investment, through innovative management practices and a new layout, with built-in flexibility for error-free process flow.

We have also introduced contemporary concepts like Value Engineering, Just-in-Time Inventories and Statistical Process Control.

We have increased machine production by 17% annualised over last year and have doubled the output of both the toner-developer and photoreceptor units. The capacity utilisation of our toner-developer plant is now 60% going to 100% by the end of the year.

We are examining the possibility of manufacturing frames, fuser rollers and pressure rolls to accelerate indigenisation and help us maintain a better control over both cost and quality. Our R & D department is playing a major role in giving an impetus to our in-house manufacturing plans and our value engineering efforts.

Our special materials team, with the support of Rank Xerox, was able to successfully develop the coating formula for the Japanese 1025 model photoreceptors. Today ours is the only plant outside Japan which manufactures these photoreceptors.

We have invested more than Rs.1 crore towards the safety and health of employees, the safe disposal of effluents and the preservation of the environment.

As part of our Effluent Control and Energy Conservation Management, we have installed a solar energy-based effluent treatment system — the only one of its kind in the entire Xerox world.

DRIVING FOR QUALITY IN INDIGENISATION

We have met our Indigenisation Plan with continued focus on quality and reliability of parts. We are bringing our vendors in line with the global Xerox drive to improve the entire manufacturing process and have full-time personnel for the quality assurance and training of vendors.

Indigenisation in Modi Xerox entails tremendous engineering efforts and investment. For example, we have invested around Rs. 2 crores in moulds and toolings to support the indigenisation efforts of our vendors.

To suit our future plans for Just-In-Time Inventories, we will be developing a team of first-rate, reliable vendors in the vicinity of our plant.

BECOMING AN INTEGRAL PART OF XEROX

This has proved to be a landmark year in which we have emerged as mature partners of our collaborators. In recognition of our engineering capability, Rank Xerox has signed an agreement to source 1025 and 1038 model copiers from us on an ongoing basis for their international markets. The initial order of 3000 machines valued at around Rs.9 crores is the single largest export order placed with us and makes Rank Xerox our biggest customer.

We continue to offer technical consultancy to Xerox Shanghai and Xerox Eygpt. We have also added a new dimension to our exports with a maiden order for consumables from Xerox Shanghai.

Today Modi Xerox is the only export-oriented company in the copier industry. With exports at Rs. 12.19 crores F.O.B. for the period 1st April, 1988 to 31st March, 1989, we have exceeded our obligation for the third year in succession.

PLANNING FOR EXPANSION AND DIVERSIFICATION

The 1990s will see us reaffirm our pledge to our two main priorities – satisfying customer needs and improving business results.

We plan on expanding our product range even further and maintaining a strong presence in both domestic and export markets. We are also exploring the possibilities of diversifying into related areas of office automation.

We have maintained our leadership from the start. And we intend to remain the leaders.

Our aim is to make Modi Xerox the No. 1 Quality Company in India. With the dedication of our team and your continued support, I am sure we can do it.

This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

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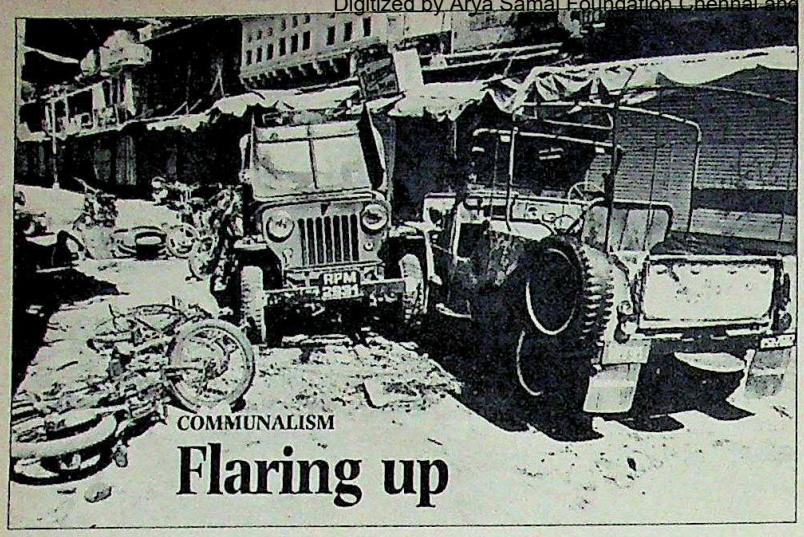

COMMUNALISM

Flaring up

Damaged vehicles in Kota: tragic events

WITH electoral tension mounting, the tiniest spark can lead to a conflagration. The upshot: even places free of the communal malaise are going up in flames. Even as caste riots rocked the southern state of Tamil Nadu last month, communal violence had engulfed the two western states of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The brunt was borne by the industrial town of Kota in Rajasthan: 16 dead, hundreds injured and property worth lakhs destroyed. All this in a town that has not witnessed a communal flare-up for over three decades.

The sequence of events was depressingly familiar. On September 15, the Anant Chaturdashi procession was pelted with stones by Muslims who found the slogans being raised objectionable. The processionists hit back; a communal riot flared.

The two dozen-odd policemen accompanying the procession were no match for the rioters. By nightfall, the army had to be called out, indefinite curfew clamped, and shoot-at-sight orders issued. But even as the police picked up 248 people between September 15 and 18 and the army kept staging flag marches, isolated incidents of violence continued. As the violence spread to neighbouring towns in the district, by September 20, Section 144 was clamped on Kota division, prohibiting the gathering of more than four people.

The administration sought refuge in denials and name-calling. Chief Minister S.C. Mathur and Union Minister of State for Home P. Chidambaram held the BJP, the RSS and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) responsible. The BJP and VHP, in turn, squarely placed the onus on the administration's lethargy.

Adding to the confusion were the differing accounts from the administration. According to police intelligence, they had informed the administration 10 days in advance that trouble could erupt on Anant Chaturdashi and recommended that Bajrang Dal and Shiv Sena activists be kept under surveillance.

The chief minister claims the administration had reviewed the situation and deployed about 350 policemen. But even his own partymen do not bear out this version. According to Somnath Sharma, the regional organiser of the party's environment cell, he had warned the district magistrate seven hours before the procession that trouble was imminent. Yet the administration refused to respond, and only two-dozen odd policemen accompanied the procession.

Meantime, neighbouring Gujarat too was hit by the communal virus. Ominously, in Gujarat it was villages that reeled under the violence. Trouble erupted in villages surrounding Kheralu town in Mehsana district when the BJP and VHP managed to give a communal colour to an isolated incident in which some Muslims killed a Hindu due to personal enmity. Immediately, VHP volunteers went on the rampage, looting Muslim homes. The result: Muslims have now fled from about 60 villages surrounding Kheralu.

The communal divide was also cemented in villages in Gujarat's Kheda district. Muslims stoned a Ram Janmabhoomi procession and the Hindus of Nadiad town in the district promptly observed a protest bandh.

No lives have yet been lost in the district, but as the communal cycle reveals, bloodshed is but a stone's throw away.

BIHAR

Up in Arms

A spate of strikes and protests

BIHAR once again resembles a state under siege. First state Government employees struck work on September 12 to press their demand for parity in pay-scales with their counterparts at the Centre. Then junior doctors followed suit with their demands and chemists downed their shutters from September 19 to protest against the high turnover tax on medicines.

Last fortnight, events took a more serious turn with students unleashing an orgy of violence in protest against the induction into the state cabinet of two ministers with allegedly dubious track records.

A beleaguered Chief Minister S.N. Sinha could only exclaim in despair: "As elections draw near, these agitations are inevitable. Today I failed to talk to my chief secretary even once since he was busy negotiating with striking government employees."

It was while these negotiations were on that the students launched their three-day campaign in protest against the induction of certain controversial ministers into the state cabinet in August. The agitation turned violent as

Protesting junior doctors: rising anger

Photographs by KRISHNA MURARI KISHEN

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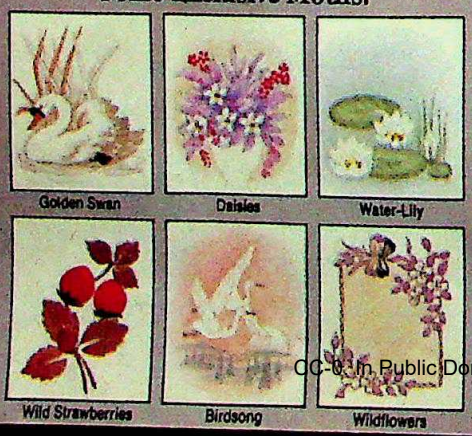

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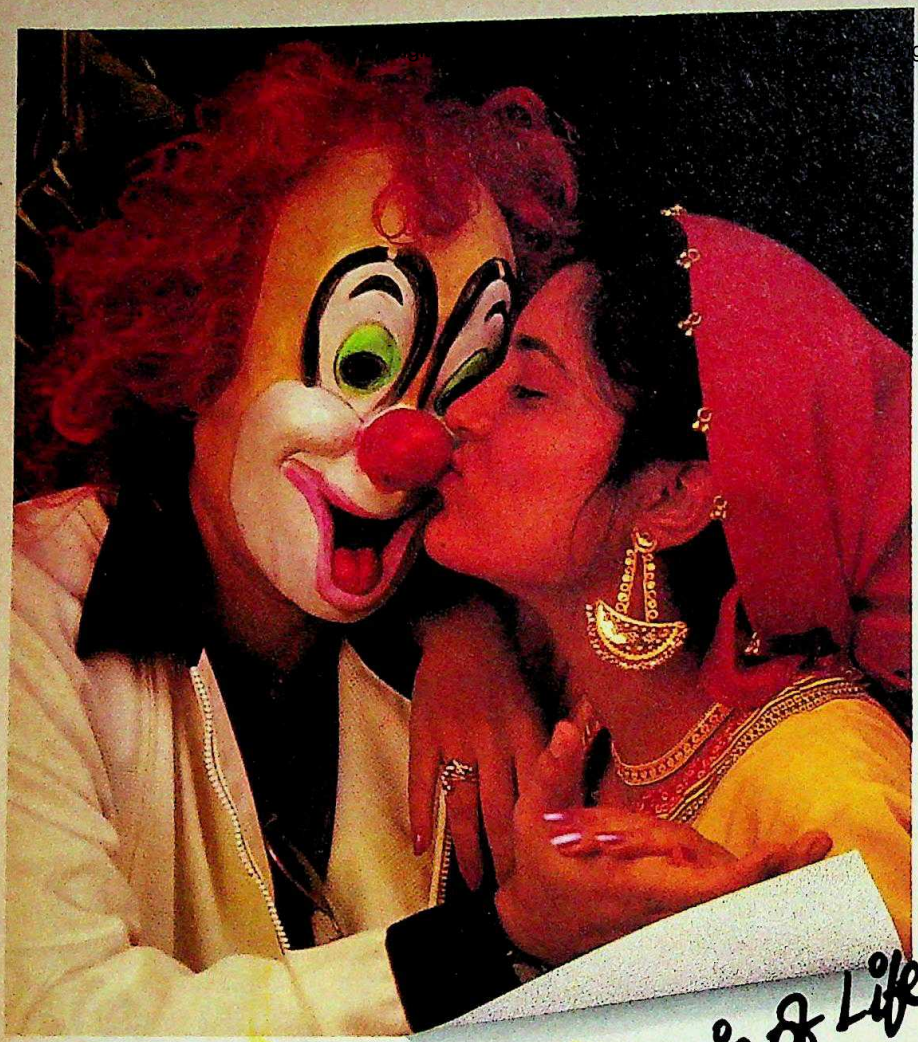

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SHIRT FOR CONTRAST. MASK, RED HAIR, SMILE – OPTIONAL

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the houses of three ministers of state—Kripanath Pathak, Girish Narain Mishra and Bhola Singh—were attacked by the students who also resorted to stoning of buses.

The police retaliated on September 21, brutally beating up the students. This in turn sparked off another agitation across the state. The ruling party fears this could turn into a rallying point for the splintered opposition groups in the state.

If the strike by junior doctors demanding more employment avenues, more stipends, and a strict stand on mushrooming private medical colleges almost paralysed the functioning of hospitals, the closure of chemists' shops added to the agony of the sick.

The state Government tried to combat the crisis situation by persuading public sector drug companies to open retail outlets for the public. At the same time it accused the Chemists and Druggists Association of initially agreeing to a lowering of additional tax on medicines and then reneging on the deal and demanding an even lower rate.

With so many segments of professionals and students up in arms against the Government, the chief minister's claim that the agitations are just a build-up to the general elections hardly holds water.

What it does mean is that the ruling party is going to have its hands full in the crucial weeks leading up to the elections. For the chief minister and the Congress(I), September has indeed turned out to be a cruel month.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA

BOTTOMLINE by D. BUNKER

Law of St Lucre

THE island of St Lucre is the classic tourist haven. Total privacy. Sin and sand. Its offshore banks lapped by soothing waves of greenbacks. Best of all is the personalised service. Banks stay open on Sundays and holidays where the chairman personally attends to customers who left home without their American Express cards. But last fortnight, the idyll was disturbed by the invasion of sleuths from the Indian Intelligence Bureau investigating charges that a number of Indians had numbered accounts in St Lucre. Here's how their sleuthing went:

IB sleuth (IBS): I'd like to meet the chairman please.

Man in chair: I am the chairman. Pick a number.

IBS: Aha! So you do stay open on Sundays and holidays as we suspected.

Man in chair: Well, you did insist on making an appointment for today. My name is MrClean, chairman of Trust First.

IBS: We are from the Indian Government investigating a very serious matter.

MrClean: I have great regard for the Indian Government. Some of my best clients are Indians. First Trust Indians, that is our motto. That is why all the Indian accounts were handled by me personally. You can bank on me to help you in any way.

IBS: So you confirm that you stay open on weekends?

MrClean: My dear fellow, we only open on weekends. Weekend sales are always the best. More privacy, no snooping staff around who might spill the beans later. Secrecy is the foundation of this business. Mum's the word.

IBS: How about pop? Does a Mr Singh have an account here?

MrClean: Under the laws of St Lucre, I cannot divulge that information. However, since you have come such a long way to meet me, I'd hate to send you back empty-handed. Let me say that I will neither confirm nor deny the existence of any account in the name of Ajaye Singh which has deposits of $ 21 million.

IBS: But we never mentioned his full name.

MrClean: Telepathy my dear fellow. Telepathy is the foundation of this business. The moment you mentioned Mr Singh, I knew exactly which one you were talking about.

IBS: That means he does have an account here?

MrClean: I can't give you that information. But I can give you a hint. There is a certain five-digit number that begins with 2 and ends in 9. I'll give you another hint. The other three numbers add up to 20.

IBS: So, you do have five-digit numbers?

MrClean: I cannot give you that information. Let me put it this way. Normally, we give all our clients six-digit numbers. But if a Mr Singh came in and asked for a five-digit number I would make an exception. I have this special partiality for Singhs.

IBS: Can you show us a sample of a numbered account, say with withdrawals and deposits just so we can see how an offshore bank operates?

MrClean: What a strange coincidence. I have one right here that I keep handy to show any client who asks. Purely random choice of course.

IBS: Of course. What a strange coincidence. This account has deposits of exactly $ 21 million. And it is a five-digit number. And it begins with 2 and ends in 9. And the other three numbers add up to 20.

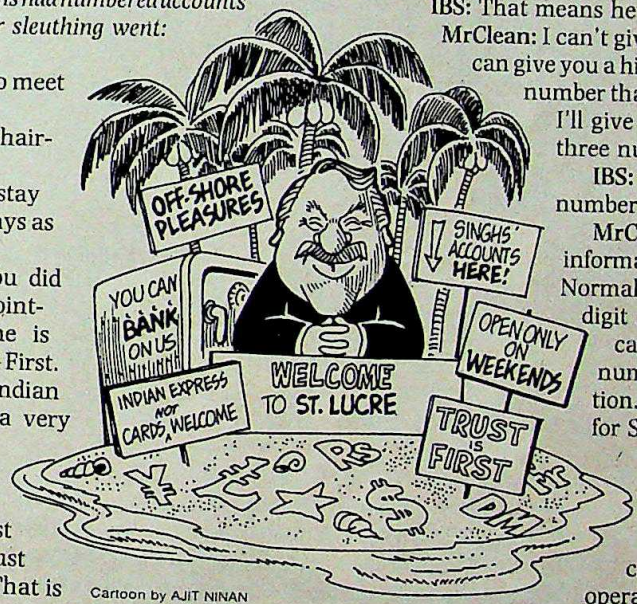
MrClean: My dear fellow, offshore banking is full of strange coincidences. It's the foundation of our business.

IBS: But these figures don't add up.

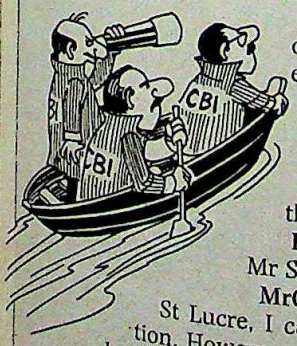
MrClean: What do you expect? I handled all the Indian accounts personally and the calculations could have gone wrong. I am a businessman not an accountant.

IBS: One last question. Your previous employees say your bank went bankrupt and is no longer in business?

MrClean: Under the laws of St Lucre, I can neither confirm nor deny that.



Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



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WEST BENGAL

Ensuring a Victory

● COMING on the eve of the general elections, it was a major victory for the Left Front Government in West Bengal, which has been engaged in a battle with the Central Government over the execution of the 840 MW Bakreshwar thermal power project.

Some time ago, the Centre, with typical high-handedness, had blocked the efforts of Chief Minister Jyoti Basu to get Doordarshan to telecast an appeal to raise donations from the public for the Rs 1,000-crore Bakreshwar project. The Centre justified its action on the ground that the appeal went against paragraph nine of the AIR code.

The code stipulates that appeals for funds by individuals cannot be telecast, except for the prime minister's national relief fund at a time of external emergency or if the country is faced with a national calamity.

Since then, the West Bengal Government has been raising funds from the public by making the project an emotional issue—"a symbol of our self-respect".

In addition, the Power Development Corporation had moved the Calcutta High Court, challenging Doordarshan's contention.

And in a significant verdict last fortnight, the Calcutta High Court struck down the controversial AIR code. The court directed the Union of India, AIR and Doordarshan Calcutta not to withhold the broadcast and telecast of such appeals.

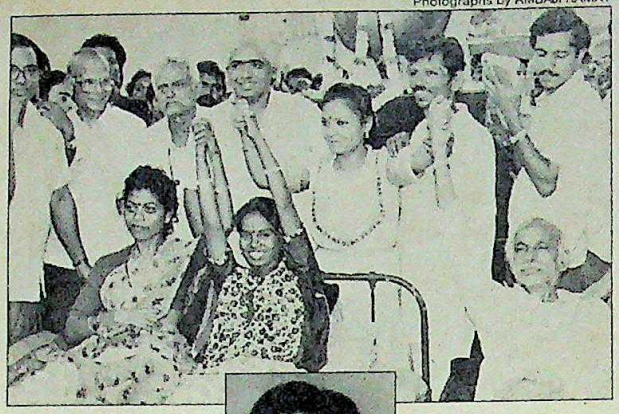
The controversial code evoked a sharp reaction from Justice A.M. Bhattacharya of the high court, who described it as "patently unreasonable" and "nakedly discriminatory".

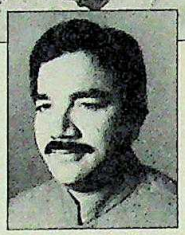
For Basu and his Government the high court verdict is a major political victory. Undoubtedly, it will also have far reaching implications for the Centre-controlled electronic media.

GOA

Forced to Resign

Photographs by AMBAJI KAMAT





Sunita with hunger-strikers; Narvekar

● AFTER weeks of vacillation, last fortnight the Congress(I) leadership in Goa was forced to act. Assembly Speaker D. Narvekar was asked to resign following a protest wave by students against his alleged molestation of a young typist, Sunita Haldankar.

The students' passionate protest encouraged Sunita to speak out in public. Escorted by Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party leader R. Khalap, she conducted herself like a politician. "Are you with me in my struggle for justice?" she asked students, inviting a resounding "Hoy" (yes). She also offered to join three hunger strikers for Narvekar's removal. But as it happened, Narvekar got the message and resigned a day later.

UTTAR PRADESH

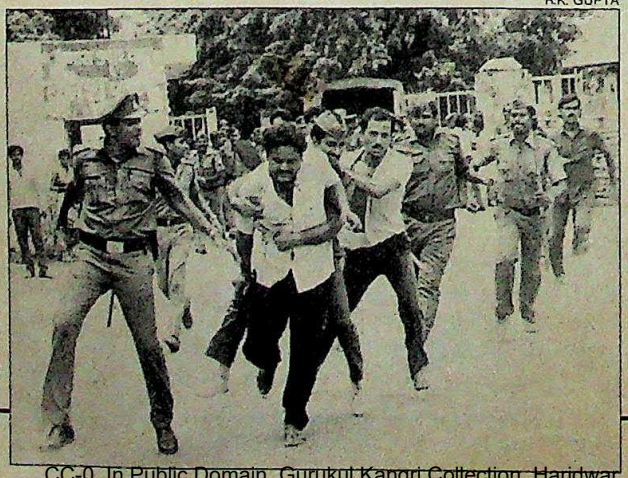
Campus Tug of War

● IF there's one thing students resent it's control. That's why Lucknow University's move to check unwanted admissions by introducing written tests met with stiff resistance. The students were also ordered to vacate hostels as several rooms are under illegal occupation.

Protesting students brought the city to a standstill and staged a dharna outside the vice-chancellor's house. Last fortnight, the chief minister brought the authorities and students to the negotiating table. But with both sides unrelenting, peace seems a distant prospect.

Students grapple with the police: stiff resistance

R.K. GUPTA



BIHAR

Green Card Lure

● FOR those who cannot get the fabled American Green Card, there is still hope. Now there is an Indian 'green card'. The Bihar Health Department has announced that it will issue green cards to couples with two or less children and who have undergone sterilisation after April 1985. The cards are to be a ticket to top priority in education, health and housing.

But like most schemes in Bihar, this one also appears to be doomed. To begin with, the state does not have much of a public health system—in fact, it does not even have a blood bank. And the state housing board is no better. It constructs barely 300 houses in five years.

In any case, the programme has been caught in the predictable tangle of bureaucratic apathy—since the entire process of verifying the size of families and checking the date of operation is tiresomely time-consuming.

As a result, Patna, the only district to have launched the scheme this September, has decided to take on only 10 couples at a time—initially distributing 20 green cards to hopeful couples. However, even health officials are embarrassed about the health services that the green cards are supposed to ensure.

Also, in the field of education, the Government has yet to fix the quota of seats in medical and engineering colleges. Justifies a smug official: "These couples would anyhow require admission for their children only a decade and a half later."

The plan is also locked in a Catch-22 situation. While the target audience it seeks to motivate is the large mass of people in the countryside, these people do not have much use for the technical education and urban housing that are being offered. But despite these loopholes, the green card is still seen as a ticket to opportunity.

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Hundreds and thousands of sunflowers stretch out into the horizon in Kurnool, near Hyderabad. Standing amidst a crop as high as himself, Raghuram Reddy is inspecting the plants. The sunflower heads are nearly filled with seeds and soon it will be time for the harvest.

This has been a truly wonderful season: Raghuram has discovered that growing sunflowers is easy and profitable. The crop does not depend on the monsoon. Nor does it require large quantities of expensive fertilisers and pesticides. Reassured by the promise of a rich harvest, Raghuram has made up his mind to plant sunflowers on most of his 18-acre land. The hopes of a brighter future for his wife and their two-year old son now soar high. And his thoughts go back to that day, almost two years ago, when ITC came to his help...

Raghuram Reddy of Kurnool. Every time the rains failed, the sight of his barren fields filled his heart with despair.

Until ITC's Agri-businesses Division helped him reap a golden harvest.

ITC's Sundrop is already emerging as a brand leader.

For close to eight decades, ITC's scientific methods of cultivation have benefited the tobacco farmer. As part of a national programme to bridge the gap between supply and demand of oilseeds, ITC is transferring technology to this sector.

The hybrid varieties of sunflower, safflower, cotton, castor and groundnut developed at its Government-recognised research centre are helping farmers increase yields substantially. Continuing this golden chain of activity, ITC is now buying their crop to manufacture edible and non-edible oils. The Company is also supporting the establishment of oil-processing complexes in backward areas—one such unit is already operational and more are being planned.

With ITC's marketing strengths, its Agri-businesses Division has successfully launched Sundrop, the first of several branded oils. In addition, the exports of fruits, vegetables and spices are helping ITC increase its foreign exchange earnings for the country.

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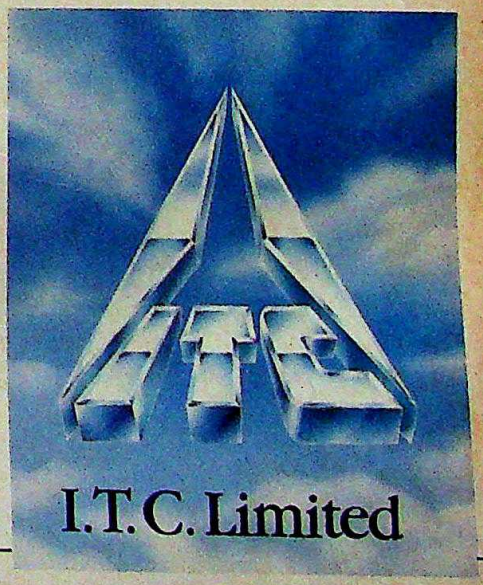
Where else is ITC working for India?

Family Health and Welfare: Through its far-flung marketing network, ITC distributes millions of Nirodh contraceptives and promotes the advantages of a small, well-spaced family: an effort acknowledged by the 1988 FICCI Award for Family Planning.

Cottage-sector Craftsmanship: With looms, raw materials and technical knowhow, the ITC-promoted Triveni Handlooms has revived Shahjahanpur's traditional craft of carpet weaving. These carpets are exported by ITC along with many other products from small-scale and cottage-sector units.

Paper and Board—in the core-sector: The ITC-promoted Bhadrachalam Paperboards is a leader in its field. It has set new standards by combining record productivity with exemplary concern for wood conservation, environment protection and tribal welfare.



New horizons, new hopes.

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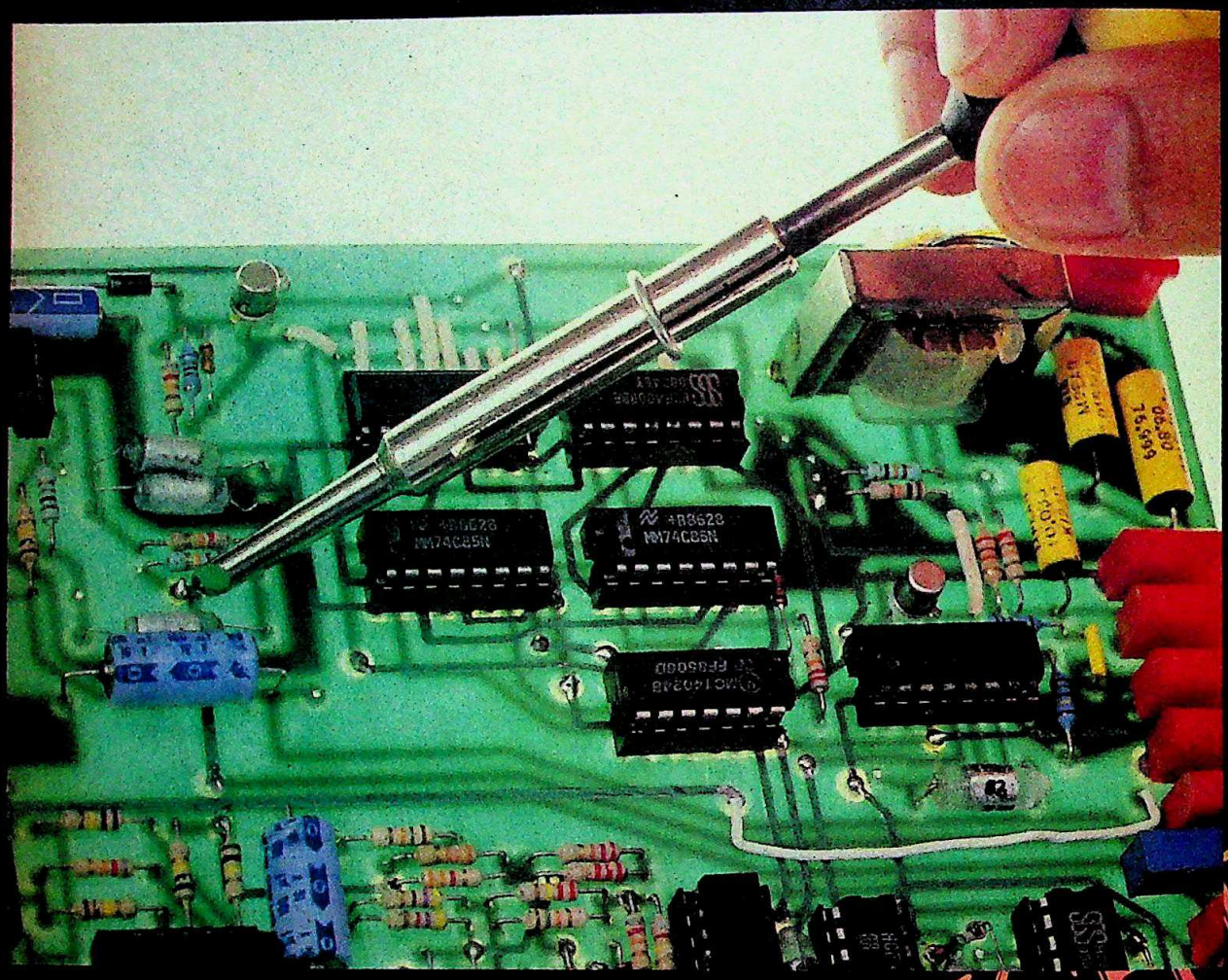

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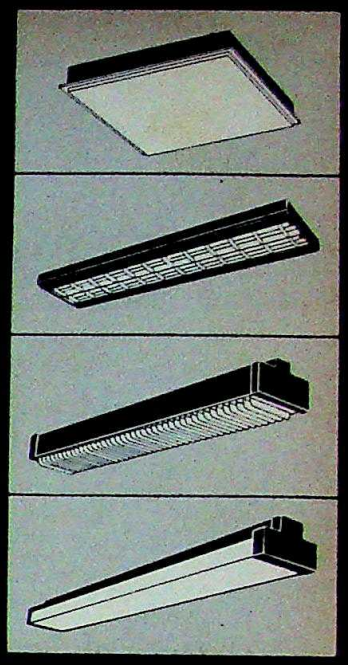

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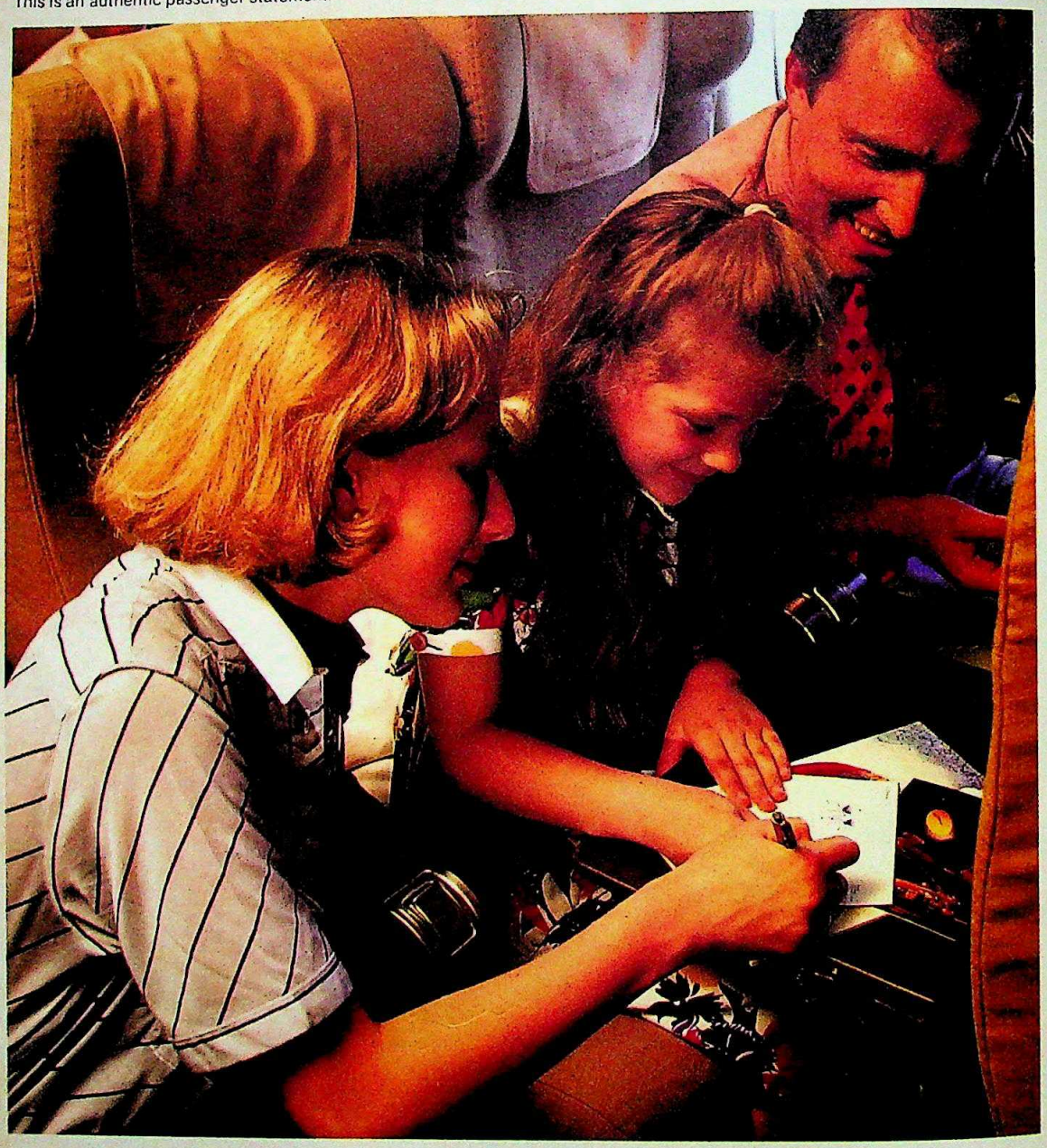

Lufthansa

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GUJARAT

Unholy Row

● WHEN Swami Dhansukhnath of Ramdev Pir Temple in Ahmedabad was arrested last fortnight on charges of molesting Vanita, a teenaged devotee of his, it seemed as if justice had finally won the day. But that was only the beginning of a snowballing controversy.

The incident came to light when Vanita made a criminal complaint in the sessions court alleging that the swami had molested her on the temple premises when she went to offer morning prayers. Stunned Hindus of the area took to the streets and Dhansukhnath seeing the public fury, fled Ahmedabad. But last fortnight, following a warrant against him, he presented himself before the police and is now in custody.

NIKHIL BHATT

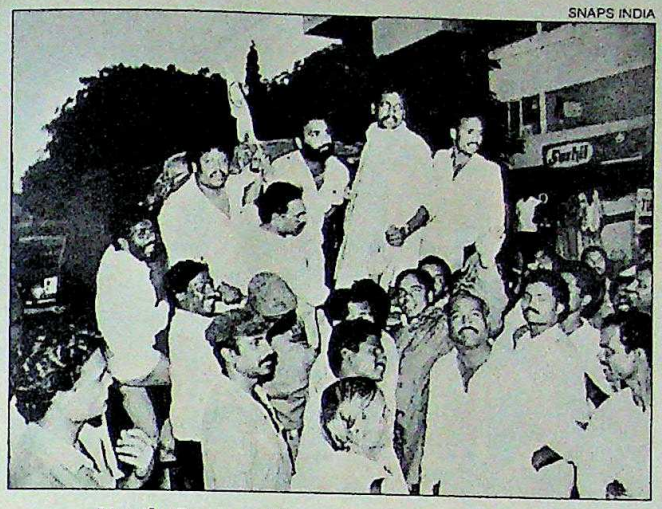
Dhansukhnath: ungodly act

But matters have not ended here. Die-hard followers of the swami are trying to protect him by alleging that Vanita is a girl of easy virtue and had, in fact, tried to trap him. This has not cut much ice with the incensed Hindus who are determined to see Dhansukhnath punished. They have been holding protest marches in Ahmedabad every alternate day. But Dhansukhnath may after all hold the trump card. He has got connections in high places and his religious functions are attended by prominent people, including the chief minister. Which side the scales of justice finally tilt, thus remains uncertain.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Battle for Supremacy

SNAPS INDIA



Youth Congress(I) workers being re-arrested

● FOR the second time in just five months, the Supreme Court locked horns with G. Narayana Rao, Speaker of the Andhra Pradesh Assembly, last fortnight.

The court directed the suspension of the arrest warrant of Paramaiah, a revenue divisional officer of Medak district. His arrest had been ordered by the Speaker on the recommendation of the Privileges Committee, for belittling the prestige of P. Ramahandra Reddi, a Congress(I) MLA.

The episode came close on the heels of another controversy involving the Speaker. The Supreme Court had accused Narayana Rao of contempt of court for not complying with its April 25 order to release 32 Andhra Pradesh Youth Congress(I) activists, jailed for misbehaviour in the precincts of the state Assembly on March 29.

As the activists had already completed 29 days in jail, the Speaker did not challenge the order at that time. However, when the House resumed its sittings last month, the Speaker ordered the activists to be arrested again for a day to implement the assembly resolution in toto.

Chastising the Supreme Court, Narayana Rao said: "The legislatures are supreme in their own right and not subordinate to the judiciary." A nagging question was back in focus: who is supreme, the judiciary or the legislature?

MADHYA PRADESH

Cultural Charade

● THE latest CAG report, tabled in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly, presents an alarming picture of wasted resources in the Culture Department. Apparently, 80 per cent of its publications—claimed to be pioneering efforts in the field of art and culture—have remained unsold.

An appalling example: half the copies of *Purvagraha* and *Kalavrata*, Hindi magazines published by the now defunct Madhya Pradesh Kala Parishad, were unsold between 1982-83 and 1985-86. The loss: Rs 3.67 lakh. Noted the CAG report: "With demand being so low, where was the need for printing so many copies?"

Again, over 2,000 copies of four books on Khajuraho, the Gwalior fort, Orcha and Indian rock paintings had no takers, although many copies had been distributed free to VIPs. The bill for this folly: Rs 7.82 lakh.

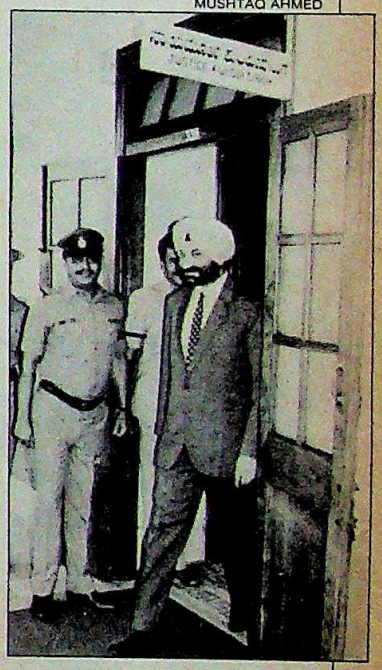
KARNATAKA

Hounding Mission

● LAST fortnight, former Karnataka chief minister Ramakrishna Hegde faced an embarrassing probe. The Kuldip Singh Commission, appointed by the Centre, was going into the Revajeetu land deal and the NRI housing scam that took place during Hegde's tenure as chief minister.

While Hegde gained a reprieve when the high court absolved him of any misuse of power in the Revajeetu case, the panel came perilously close to linking Hegde's son-in-law to a Bombay group of dubious land developers in the NRI housing case.

MUSHTAQ AHMED



Kuldip Singh: probing scams

What was remarkable about the hearing was the alacrity with which Justice Singh questioned witnesses himself, often giving details the government counsel was unaware of. The commission has indicated that it will not hesitate to call even Hegde to the stand—a suggestion he has received angrily. Hegde says if he is called to depose before the commission, the prime minister will have to do likewise, since he is the "complainant".

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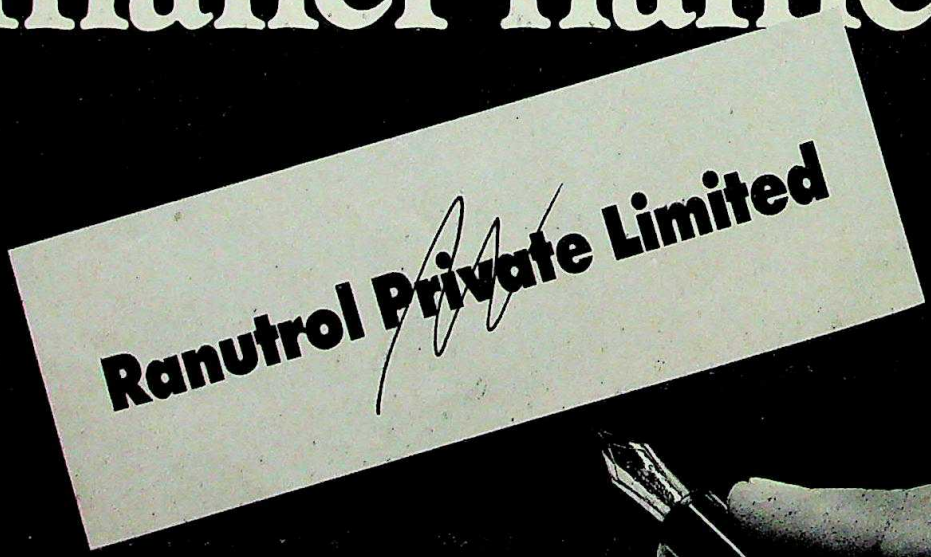

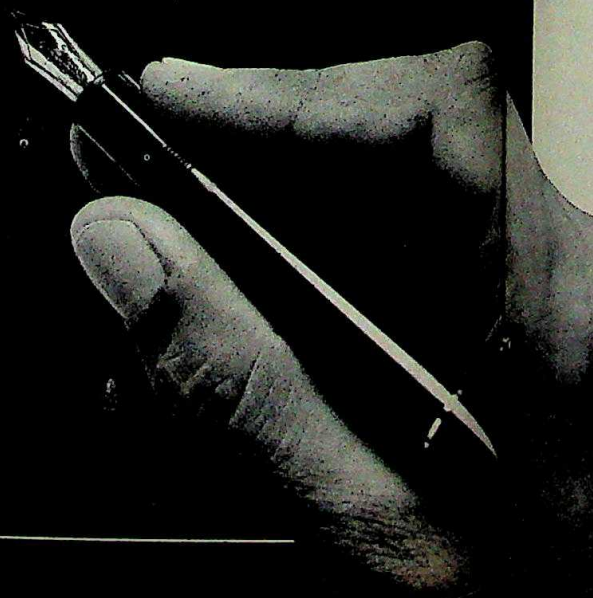

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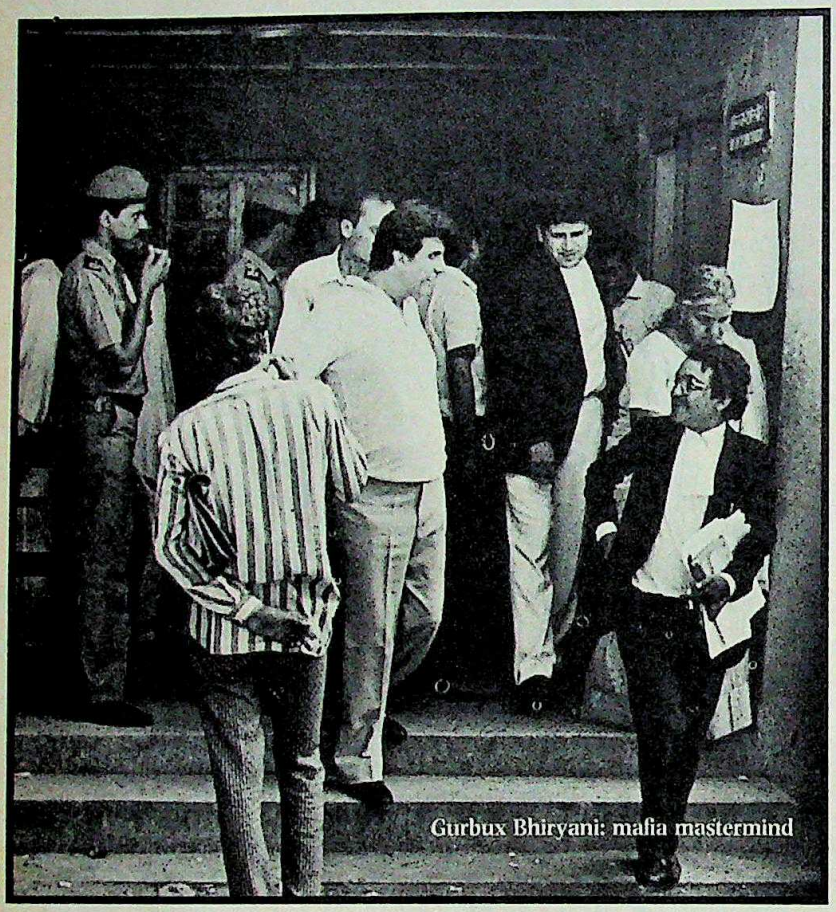
NARCOTICS

The Empire Strikes Back

Agency and drug mafia locked in battle



Gurbux Bhiryani: mafia mastermind

THEY may well be India's answer to Eliot Ness' *Untouchables*—the police squad that took on Chicago's powerful mafia gangs. A handful of men, who lack even the bare essentials of law enforcement—weapons—have taken on the organised might of India's drug-lords whose turf stretches from run-down motor garages in New Delhi to plush hotel suites in New York City. At stake: a Rs 1,000 crore illegal business in drugs.

Since its inception three years ago, agents of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) have been slowly winning the war. But now, the drug empire is striking back. After being hounded by the only Indian agency exclusively dealing with drug offences, the mafia bosses have, according to narcotics officials, come up with a coordinated strategy masterminded inside the walls of the capital's high security Tihar Jail, to neutralise the Narcotics Bureau. This strategy includes:

► Filing a murder case against four NCB agents, including a deputy director. A metropolitan magistrate issued non-bailable warrants against them. The case has bogged down the agents in a day to day legal battle.

► Raising a joint pool of Rs 80 lakh to hire the best legal advice on the cases filed against them by the NCB. Apparently to bind the staff in fighting legal battles rather than pursuing investigations.

► Obtaining medical certificates on specious pleas to get easy bails from the courts. The NCB with its limited staff cannot contest the authenticity of every certificate which also involves other government departments.

► Continuing drug operations from the court-houses while in police custody in an effort to demoralise the NCB.

The reason for such a coordinated onslaught is pretty obvious. In just three years, the fledgling organisation has been able to bust major drug-running rings which were operating from India. Among the Central agencies involved in the fight against the narcotics smugglers, the understaffed NCB—with only 95 officers—has made a significant impact as compared to larger agencies.

In the number of successful raids conducted and quantity of drugs seized, it is second only to the huge Customs and Excise Department (*see charts*). Most important, it has arrested the most notorious and powerful drug barons after careful intelligence work. Out of the 20 Indians most wanted by the American Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), 14 have been nabbed by NCB.

And these are the men, lodged in compound number four of Tihar Jail, who have decided to pit their resources and brains against the NCB. Leading them is 6 ft 3 inches tall Gurbux 'Sam' Bhiryani. He was arrested last summer after a search which started from a New York City hotel where the DEA arrested Indian and American couriers with 9 kg of heroin in a parking lot. On the streets, the consignment was worth about Rs 10 crore. Half of this consignment belonged to Jasbir Singh Sandhu alias Jassi, Bhiryani's associate—a gold smuggler from Punjab with strong links in Pakistan where the heroin originated.

> The Narcotics Bureau has made a significant impact in the war against drug running, but now the mafia is regrouping and hitting back.

The New York arrests led to an intricate chain of contacts which finally revealed Bhiryani to be the mastermind. His operatives included specialists in concealing drugs for smuggling and money launderers abroad. He was also on Interpol's wanted list for his operations in Europe. Along with him, the NCB caught many of his associates in what turned out to be an elaborate operation.

Before the Bhiryani case, the bureau had earned plaudits for smashing another major drug ring headed by Delhi-based Yudhishthir Kumar and Joginder Malhotra involved in smuggling heroin from Pakistan to the US, UK and Netherlands.

In one such operation, a consignment

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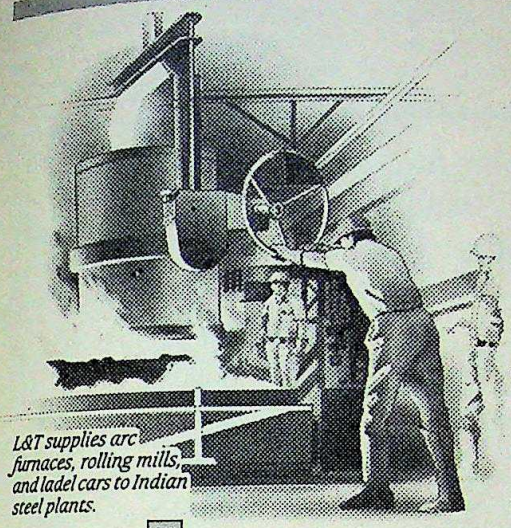

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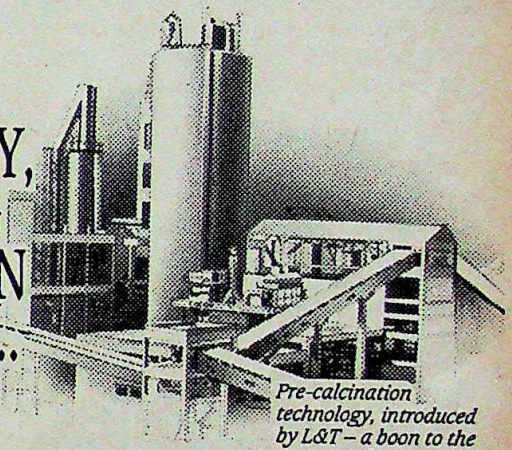

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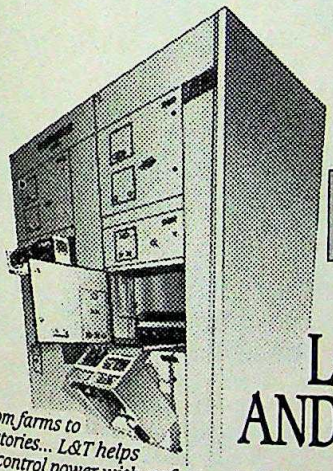

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of 10 kg of heroin smuggled in from Pakistan was brought to a farmhouse on the outskirts of Delhi. The heroin was to be concealed inside tins of ghee by Malhotra's brother, Surinder. But the NCB busted the racket before the tins could be exported.

Last year, the NCB detained about 120 suspected drug smugglers under the Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (PITNDPS). Eighty of these were lodged in the Tihar Jail, from where the drug mafia launched their counter-attack.

THE classic example of this is the Tandon case. In this case, a Delhi businessman Bhagwan Dass Tandon, had jumped from his second floor office during interrogation in the course of a raid by the NCB. His nephew, Gopal Dass, who was lodged in Tihar Jail with other traffickers for about six months, alleged to the police that his uncle was murdered by NCB men after torture.

The police undertook an investigation of the case and found the complaint to be baseless. But a Delhi metropolitan magistrate, D.R. Jain, found the case fit enough to issue non-bailable warrants against the NCB officials on murder charges.

The bureau has, however, challenged the magistrate's order in the high court on a variety of grounds. The bureau says that the Central Economic Intelligence Bureau officials had given a written undertaking to the police that they were interrogating Tandon and that the questioning was not being done by the NCB men.

Further, they assert that the other two employees of Tandon had never mentioned any torture or murder. Neither had Tandon ever complained of any torture to the doctors at AIIMS where he had been taken.

They also add that in two bail applications, neither Gopal Dass nor Tandon's wife, Pushpa, mentioned murder and torture. Bureau officials also add that they did not need to torture Tandon since they had already recovered heroin from him, which was enough to put him behind bars. They point out that his statement before the magistrate was different from what he had said in court earlier. Lastly, they say that Gopal Dass did not even know the names of NCB men involved. So how could he have named them in the complaint?

The unusually vigorous manner in which cases filed by the bureau are being contested, say senior NCB officials, indicates the existence of a coordinated strategy. For example, it took 13 hearings to commit a case to the sessions court compared to the usual average of a couple of hearings.

Another case took 25 sittings for conviction, despite the fact that the new narcotics legislation is very stringent against violaters. In yet another case, a sessions judge held nine hearings to confirm that the powder recovered from one offender was actually heroin when a simple drug testing kit could have established the same fact within minutes.

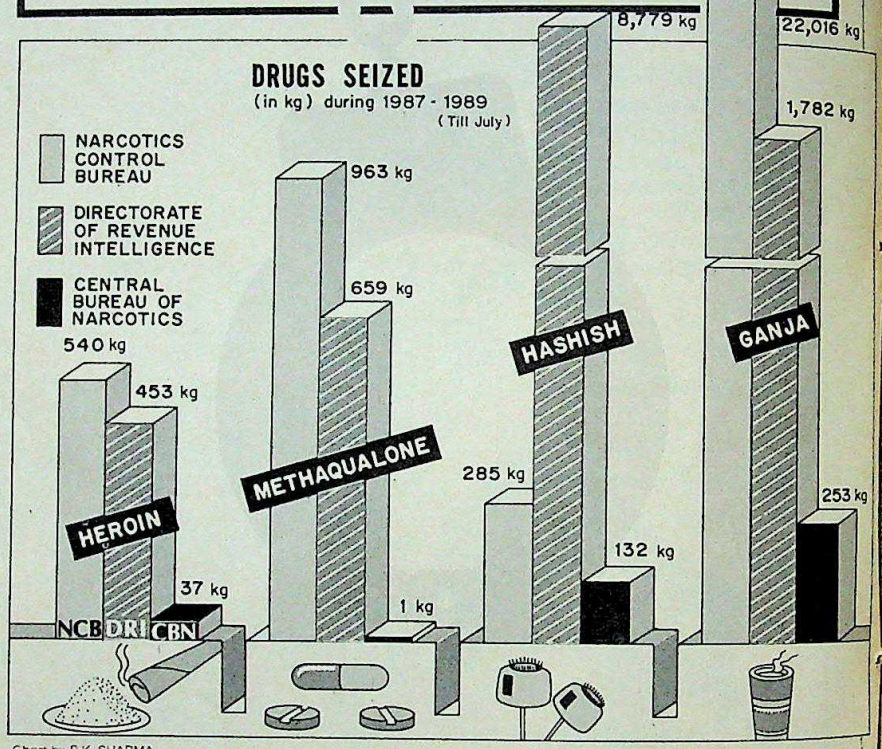
Since the promulgation of the PITNDPS Act last year, drug-running in the country has become a high risk offence with a minimum sentence of 10 years. Consequently, the drug mafia have also been innovatively scheming to beat the system—and the NCB. Of late, the bureau has been facing hurdles at every stage of its sleuthing. It has, for instance, complained to the Chief Secretary of Delhi, V.K. Kapur, about dubious medical certificates signed by a kidney specialist of Lok Nayak Jaiprakash Hospital. Apparently, the doctor had issued certificates for heart ailments which was not his department. In addition, they were not ratified by the chief medical officer. But even after a year nothing has come of the NCB complaint.

Another NCB complaint on which the administration has not taken any action is regarding Bhiryani's disappearance from the same hospital. Apparently, he forged a doctor's signature to get admitted to the G.B. Pant Nursing Home. Though he was lodged in Tihar Jail that time, neither the jail authorities nor the police in whose custody he was, had an inkling of his whereabouts for three days. Rues an NCB official: "Other departments still treat drug traffickers like ordinary criminals. They should be reoriented to see drug offences in a different light."

NCB agents believe that the huge profits in the drug trade are being used to buy-off officials in the local administration, hospitals, high security jails and even judiciary. This was demonstrated two years ago when the chief metropolitan magistrate of Delhi, Subhash Wason, was suspended for hobnobbing with drug-runners.

According to estimates of the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control, global drug-trade has crossed a whopping $3,000 billion a year. With Pakistan and Afghanistan as a major source centre, India has, in the last few years, become a prominent conduit point for drugs being smuggled to the West. The

In just three years the NCB has been able to nab 14 of the 20 Indians most wanted by the US Drug Enforcement Administration.



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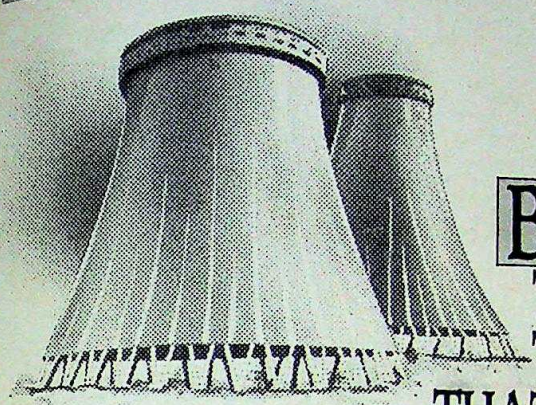

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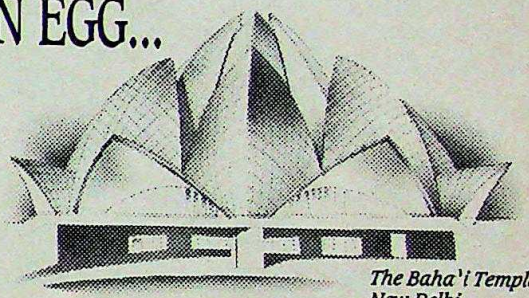

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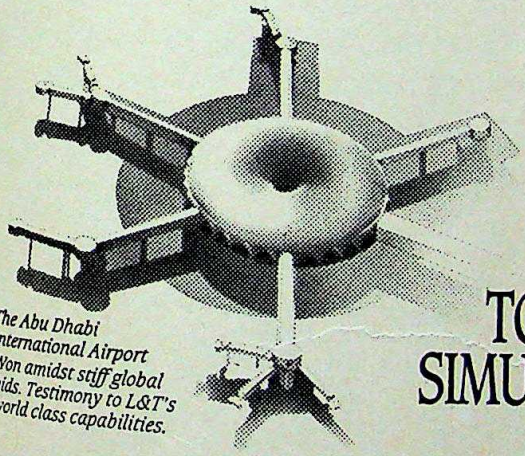

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MILESTONES/IT/236

Surinder Malhotra with family; Yudhishthir (top); and Joginder Malhotra (below)

Sources in Tihar Jail say that the rules are shamelessly flouted. Drug undertrials get whatever they want in jail. One was found with a television in his cell, another had curtains for his bathroom.

money that prominent drug smugglers flaunt is clear indication of how big a business it has become for the India-based drug mafia.

According to sources in Tihar, the drug undertrials get whatever they want in jail. Gopal Dass for instance managed to get a letter typed outside, then smuggled in for him to put his signature and then had it mailed—all against the jail manual. Another drug undertrial was found with a television in the cell, while another had bathroom curtains. NCB's complaints with the jail authorities have had no effect.

More shocking is the police-drug mafia collusion especially during court hearings. Last month almost every big drug trafficker facing trial gathered in the Patiala House court for what was virtually a reunion. There was Joginder Malhotra and his brother having lunch with their families on the courtroom lawns. Jassi's relatives were distributing cold drinks to the policemen. Bhiryani was jesting around with his lawyers and roaming around the court compound unfettered. And Yudhishthir Kumar was pacing to and from his lawyer's chamber to the courtroom.

Barring Kumar, all others were in judicial custody and were not supposed to even talk to anyone according to the jail manual. The undertrials need the court's permission to even talk to their lawyers. Commented an official: "They can continue their operations from the security of the prison. We have no control over this." The Delhi Administration has done nothing much to curb this practice which encourages trafficking in narcotics.

No state has formed special courts—which can do away with long-winded legal procedures—to try narcotics cases though the new legislation stresses this point. Going by the experience in Columbia, the drug mafia's first attack is always on the judiciary. And if the Government has to succeed in this war, it has to fight on all fronts at the same time. And now with the only effective sword arm in this battle, the NCB, also under pressure, the fortunes of the drug war could easily swing the other way.

—PANKAJ PACHAURI

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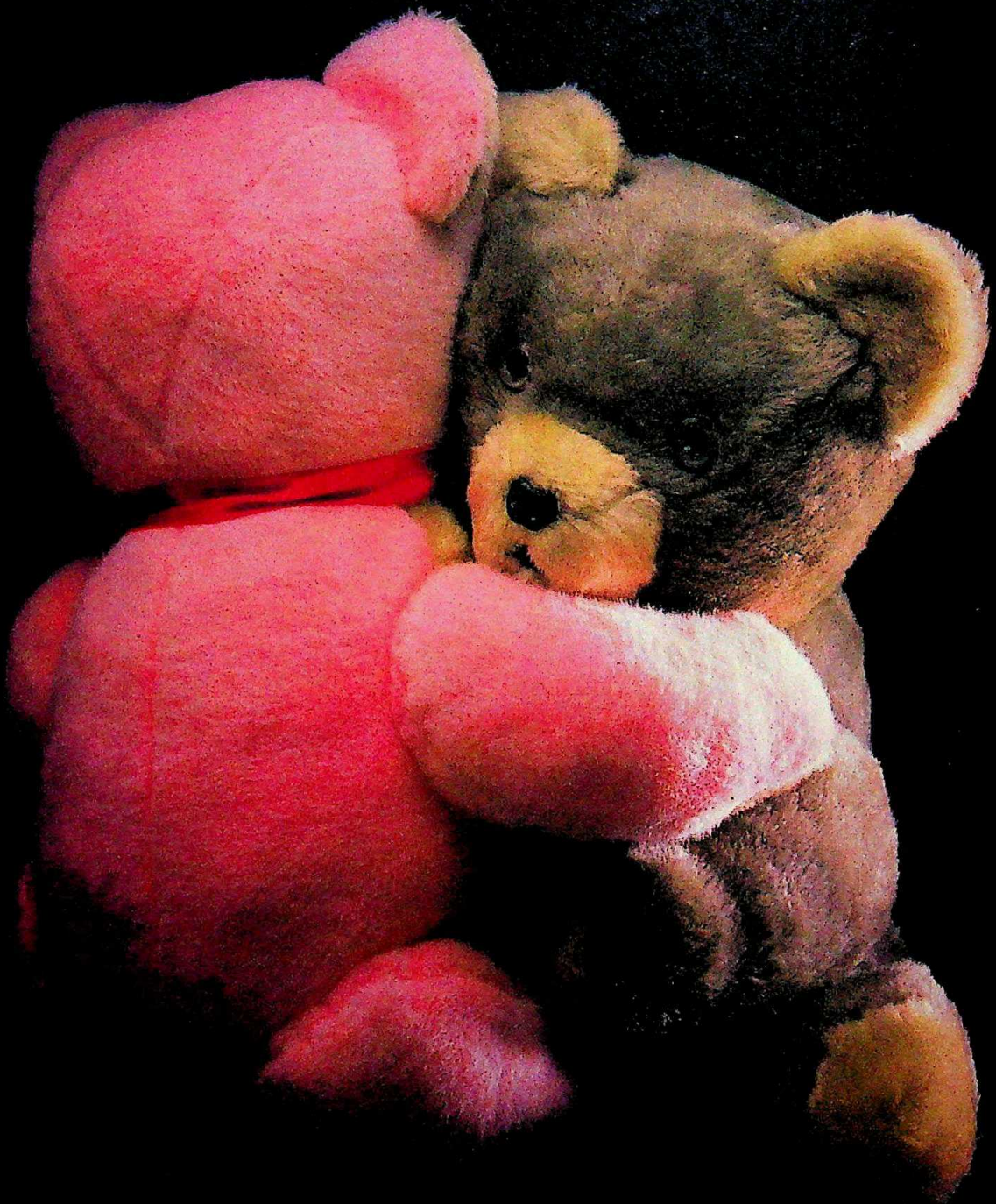

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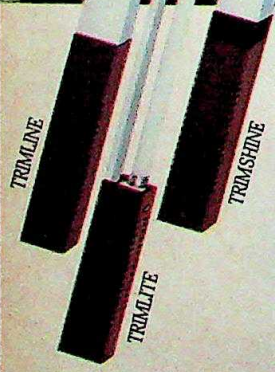

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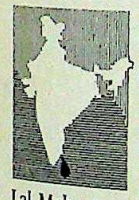
No Exit in Sight

Differences with India on IPKF pull-out as killings continue



ANOTHER conciliatory chapter was added to Sri Lanka's continuing saga of political turmoil and instability last fortnight as Indian High Commissioner Lakhan Lal Mehrotra and Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Bernard Tilakratne signed yet another accord. This time it was to lay down the framework for the withdrawal of the IPKF from the north-east.

To this chapter was added one more—the Premadasa Government's offer of a three-day truce to the radical JVP which has held the Sinhala mainland to ransom. But as is Sri Lanka's wont, discord followed quickly. Differences arose with India on the IPKF withdrawal and despite the olive branch to the Sinhala subversives, killings continued.

Just as the Government was trying to use the accord to take the wind out of the sails of the JVP, which thrives on anti-Indian Sinhala chauvinism, problems arose on the interpretation of key clauses of the accord. Indian spokesmen, including Minister of State for External Affairs Natwar Singh, said the withdrawal was linked to devolution of power to the provisional government in the north-east.

Foreign Minister Ranjan Wijeratne questioned this interpretation. As fresh discussions started it became clear that India was keeping its options open. It had no intention of retreating without achieving the gains it had expected to make: bringing the LTTE into the democratic mainstream, securing a north-east linkage and devolution of powers to an autonomous Tamil government.

No withdrawals had begun till a week after the accord was signed and South Block sources indicated the withdrawal was not going to be front-end-loaded, but rear-end-loaded leaving India the option to change its mind till the very end. Sources say the mutual, unwritten understanding is that elements of the IPKF could linger till March '90.

Despite the differences, Premadasa supporters called the accord a feather in his tattered presidential cap and persuaded him to "exploit the positive mood" by offering a three-day truce to the JVP. Significantly, the truce offer was sponsored by the all-party conference convened by Premadasa to end the blood-letting. So, last fortnight two cease-fires came into effect in the island.

But Sri Lanka's headlong rush to self-destruction continues, with killings providing a macabre background score to conciliatory moves. The latest incident of tit for tat violence came from Kandy district, where nearly 150

LTTE militants; (top) IPKF in Jaffna

Photographs by SHYAM TEKWANI

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IPKF

Valuable War Lessons

THE image is a bit incongruous. Unlike the usual starched soldier standing stiffly to attention, this sentry outside Lt-General Amar Singh Kalkat's headquarters is on the prowl, alert, his finger ever on the trigger. But the trigger is not of the usual Indian Army issue, the 7.62 Ishapore Self Loading Rifle (SLR). The curved magazine, the short barrel, the foldable butt: the ubiquitous Kalashnikov silhouette. The sentry himself, as his red beret and flashes indicate, is a paracommando.

The first IPKF unit to suffer casualties in September 1987, the paracommandos have been the first to learn. "It took just two bash-ups to show the major problem. Our rifle was lousy, too big, packing too much range and too slow a rate of fire for close combat," says an officer.

Subsequently, the commandos started using Kalashnikovs captured from the LTTE. The army has ordered a sizeable number of rifles in the Kalashnikov genre. It has given up its earlier insistence on not giving the Ishapore SLR burst-fire capability. The aim had been to conserve ammunition. But in close quarter battles, the Indian jawan found his one-shot-at-a-time SLR hopelessly inadequate. "Here we need to bring in an effective volume of fire," says Major-General R.N. Bhalla, commanding the 54 Infantry Division at Palaly near Jaffna. So planners have now allowed a burst-fire position on a certain percentage of SLRs. "The rethinking on small arms is the first fallout of the Sri Lankan adventure," says a senior general.

Two years of low-intensity conflict has changed much else. Many lessons have been learnt, many new theories tested, many demolished. The results are already visible. Others are being debated and stored on paper and videotape and punched into the army's vast institutional memorybank. "Sri Lanka will make a long-term difference to our army," says Lt-General Kalkat, the affable, bespectacled soldier who was himself baptised in Chhamb in 1971.

A team of experts from the College of Combat at Mhow has been recreating the major IPKF battles on videofilm. Where actual footage is not available, battles are being simulated either on the ground or on computers. "We are rewriting our infantry combat manuals," says an expert from Mhow.

The Indian Army, despite its three decades of counter-insurgency experience, had many lessons brought home to it. The foremost: that the modern soldier needs to be motivated to fight in a foreign land. Says a general: "Today's jawan is literate, he listens to the BBC and asks questions. You have to tell him what he is doing here, something we did not do earlier on and paid the price." So, soldiers had existentialist doubts or tended to treat the Sri Lanka operations like any other war, liberally using firepower and destroying houses as if they were operating in enemy territory. Says Major-General Ashok Mehta, commander of the 54 Mountain Division based in Batticaloa: "We had to learn to fight in a situation where your adversary need not be your enemy."

The army, incidentally, realised too late that the old convention of shipping home the ashes and not the bodies of jawans from the lower ranks (officers' bodies are sent back) was hopelessly outdated today when jawans and their families are more demanding.

Sri Lanka also underlined the inadequacy of a conventional force in an unusual situation. Two major operations recently undertaken by the 54 Mountain Division deserve mention. To the south and south-west of Batticaloa lie large expanses of impenetrable jungles where the LTTE has several major camps. By snooping electronically on the LTTE's radio communications, broad locations of two camps were identified, Mawila near Verugal river and Topimalai in the thick Kanjikudiaru jungles.

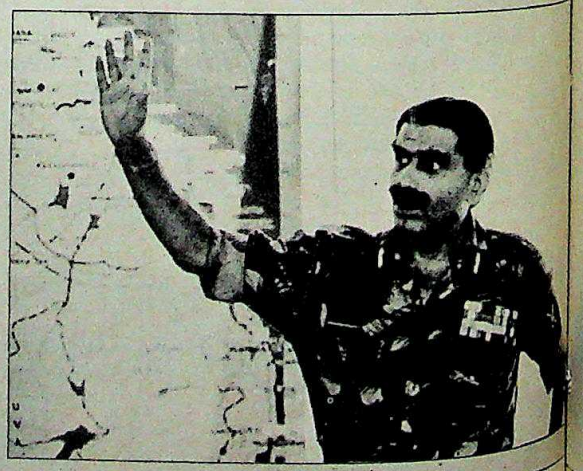
Mawila was assigned to the 1/11 Gurkhas in Operation Kiranti and 4 Bihar was to seek out Topimalai (Operation Angelfire). While the Gurkhas took four days of hard trekking through tropical forest to approach their target, the Biharis had to literally sniff theirs out. After wandering around clueless, an adivasi jawan caught the scent of human excreta and, following it, the raiding party climbed a hillock where the camp was perched. But a company of infantrymen climbing through shrubbery makes a lot of racket. So, by the time the Biharis got there the Tigers had vanished leaving behind maps, wireless

"We have had great battle training. Our boys are no longer afraid of the bullet."

MAJOR-GENERAL R.N. BHALLA

"In Sri Lanka, we had to learn to fight in a situation where your adversary need not be your enemy."

MAJOR-GENERAL ASHOK MEHTA



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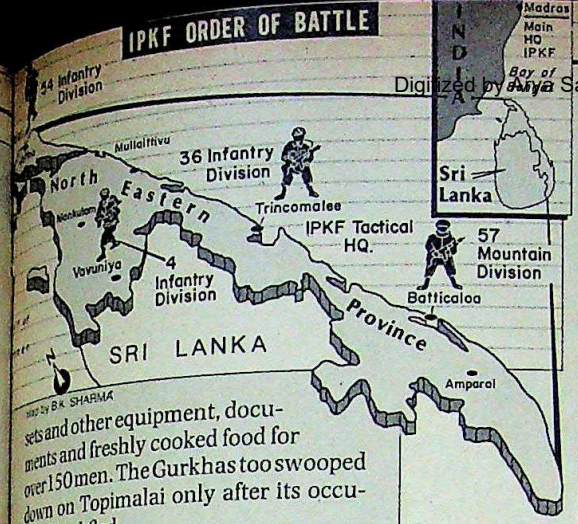

sets and other equipment, documents and freshly cooked food for over 150 men. The Gurkhas too swooped down on Topimalai only after its occupants had fled.

Both operations are now the subject of intense debate. Each camp was a major LTTE hide-out and, if the army had been reached before the Tigers fled, a large body of rebel manpower would have been trapped. But you can't surprise with a 100-odd infantrymen rummaging through the forest.

Surprise might have been possible if the IPKF had heli-landed commandos. Yet again, the problem is you cannot land troops unless you know the exact location of the camp. Experts say that requires modern—but easily available—infra-red imaging equipment mounted on aircraft if not satellites. At night, human habitations in a damp jungle radiate heat waves that infra-red sensors can pick up.

This is how the US has been picking out cocaine units hidden in the Colombian forests. Experts feel Indian forces need to acquire such equipment—in the post-Sri Lanka phase it could be invaluable in the jungles of the Indian north-east, or even Punjab's Mand swamps covered with elephant grass. The problem, however, does not end with infra-red sensors. "Even when you know the location of the camps you can't land troops since the jungles provide no opening for the helicopters. What do you do? Defoliate?" asks an officer. That left army planners inevitably looking the Agent Orange syndrome in the eye.

Many feel that the most important outcome of the Sri Lanka experience has been that it provided a baptism in fire for an army in which, to use soldiers' lexicon, subalterns had grown into colonels without ever hearing a shot fired in anger. "We've had great training. My boys are no longer afraid of the bullet," says Major-General Bhalla. Whether a thousand dead and 3,000 wounded was an affordable price for that or not is another matter altogether.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Jaffna, Trincomalee and Batticaloa

people were massacred in two days. This was in apparent retaliation to a rebel attack killing nine family members of soldiers. Kandy's ruthless police chief Premadasa Udgampola said an anti-JVP group, Eagles of Central Hills, claimed responsibility for the killings. But he added that though he opposed anyone taking the law into his own hands, the "end-result" was "good" as 80 per cent of those killed were JVP sympathisers. A day later, a powerful car-bomb blast in Gampaha left two dead and 25 wounded. Next morning 32 bodies, many with burning tyres still around their necks, were found in the district.

All this took away from the gains Premadasa could have expected from the all-party conference. In any case, the JVP did not attend, and Premadasa detractors likened the conference to a wedding sans the bride. The JVP in turn called for a civil disobedience campaign. It asked people not to pay taxes, buy bus and train tickets and postage stamps "in the national interest". Wijeratne admitted the JVP had burnt seven tea and rubber factories and 88 post offices since the call. He said the JVP was trying to strangle the economy.

Premadasa's hope that his security forces can compel the JVP to the negotiating table, as the IPKF did with the LTTE, may well boomerang. With Sri Lankan forces and pro-government vigilantes killing innocents, more people are driven to the JVP.

Also, a key question is: what will happen in the the north-east after the IPKF withdraws? LTTE sympathisers say the group is changing its ways and may now join the democratic process. Yet there are suspicions. Said North-Eastern Provincial Government Chief Minister Varatharaja Perumal: "The Tigers don't change their spots *(sic)*. They are fascists and won't accept a democratic dispensation." His suspicions arise from the fact that the LTTE has threatened to launch action against the EPRLF from October 1.

For several months EPRLF cadres have been trained and armed by the IPKF, which has used them to get intelligence about the LTTE. Clashes have already broken out between the two groups. The IPKF and other officials concede a showdown between the LTTE and the pro-India groups is inevitable. Says Iqbal, the Jaffna town organiser for the EPRLF: "We have no illusion about what will happen once the IPKF leaves."

EPRLF cadres: armed by IPKF

That is why even while talking of peace, all sides are preparing for the next round. The Tigers are indulging in a kind of tactical thrust-and-parry to gain positional advantage in the post-IPKF phase. And the IPKF is busy arming EPRLF cadres even as the group forcibly brings in scores of Tamil conscripts each day.

Indian intelligence agencies have for some time secretly run a major operation importing arms: mainly Kalashnikovs, rocket-launchers and grenades of Soviet/Chinese origin from Afghanistan to arm pro-Indian Tamil groups. That and the desire for vengeance will ensure that the real battle for supremacy in the Tamil belt will begin only after the last Indian soldier leaves for home.—SHEKHAR GUPTA with P. JAYARAM in Colombo

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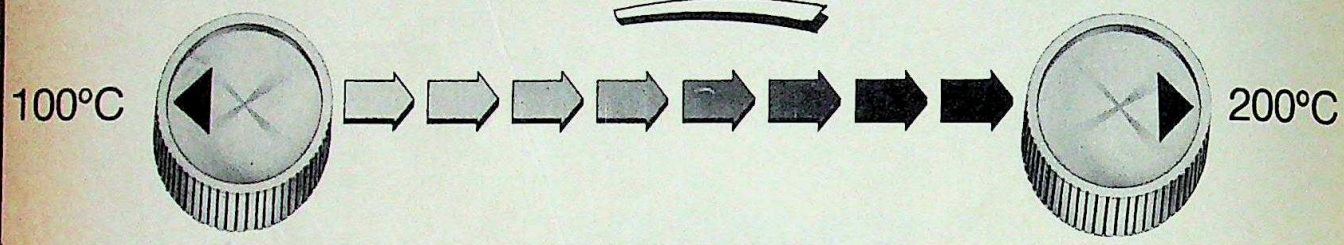

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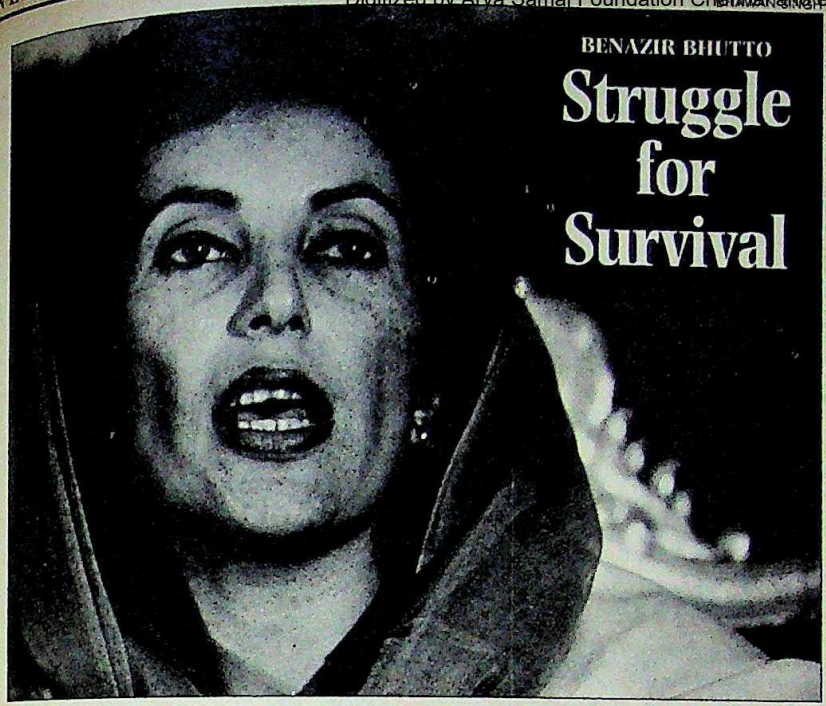

BENAZIR BHUTTO

Struggle for Survival

DESPITE nine months in power, Benazir Bhutto's battle for control seems far from over. Twice, in the last two months, there were panic signals as her government seemed on the brink of collapse. The first crisis was her tussle with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, an old hand in the power game, over the retirement of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Admiral Iftikhar Ahmed Sirohey. It almost resulted in a dissolution of the Assembly.

The constitutional conflict had hardly subsided when the nine-party opposition Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA) launched a major assault on her government. The Punjab provincial Government led by Nawaz Sharif, leader of the alliance and protege of the late general Zia-ul-Haq, issued warrants of arrest against Federal Minister for Labour Mukhtiar Awan in a murder case and threatened to throw out all federal employees from the province.

Meanwhile, the combined opposition requisitioned a National Assembly session in the last week of September to move a vote of no confidence against Bhutto at a stage when she appeared most vulnerable because of division within her own ranks. Boasted a prominent IDA member of the National Assembly: "The stage is set for a final assault."

With widespread speculation about an imminent mid-term poll, both the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the IDA have begun their battle of rallies. Bhutto addressed two rallies this month in Rawalpindi and Karachi, while the Opposition held a rally in Lahore. Significantly, while Bhutto has adopted a cool posture and refrained from attacking the Opposition, the IDA has launched an aggressive campaign, sometimes falling to a personal level.

With the Nawaz Sharif Government in Punjab intensifying its warfare with the Centre, Bhutto's Government appears to be teetering.

PRASHANT PANJIAR

Nawaz Sharif: fresh assault

The Centre-Punjab warfare further intensified last fortnight when the Punjab Police arrested three officers of the Federal Investigation Agency, sent to probe a tax evasion allegation against a cold drinks factory owned by sons of the late general Abdur Rehman, former ISI chief. Worse, a pamphlet, allegedly published by the information cell of the Punjab Government, accused Bhutto of making Pakistan a client-state of India and asked the army to play its "constitutional role" to protect Pakistan from "slavery".

These provocations led to a retaliation by the Federal Government, which charged the Punjab Government with sedition and warned it of "serious consequences". However, it did not specify what action was being taken against the Nawaz Sharif Government. Many observers believe it might recommend dismissal of the Punjab Government. But it is certain that the President will not allow such an action.

To counter Nawaz Sharif, Bhutto is trying to rally the old guards of the PPP, who were either expelled by her or who left because of differences. It now seems certain that Ghulam Mustafa Khar, a former governor of Punjab during the PPP's first term in power, will be taken back into the party. Khar, who has his own independent political base in the province, might be appointed governor. The PPP is optimistic that Khar, a master of palace intrigues, will be able to break the IDA majority in the Assembly.

Bhutto's problems seem to have been aggravated by rebellion in the Sind PPP. Ten PPP members of the National Assembly from Sind, led by Makhdoom Khaliquzzaman, have asked the National Assembly to allot them separate seats in the House. The members have accused the PPP leadership of backtracking on their commitment for greater provincial autonomy. Some of them have also levelled serious allegations of corruption against Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari. Although the dissidents have denied that they are quitting the party, observers feel it will weaken the PPP's fragile position in the Assembly.

Hectic behind-the-scene political horse-trading is going on in Islamabad as the National Assembly is in session. The success of the Opposition's no-confidence vote will largely depend on whether they are able to win over the support of smaller groups like the Mohajir Qaumi Movement and the Baluchistan National Alliance. The next few days could well make—or break—Bhutto's Government.

—ZAHID HUSSAIN in Islamabad.

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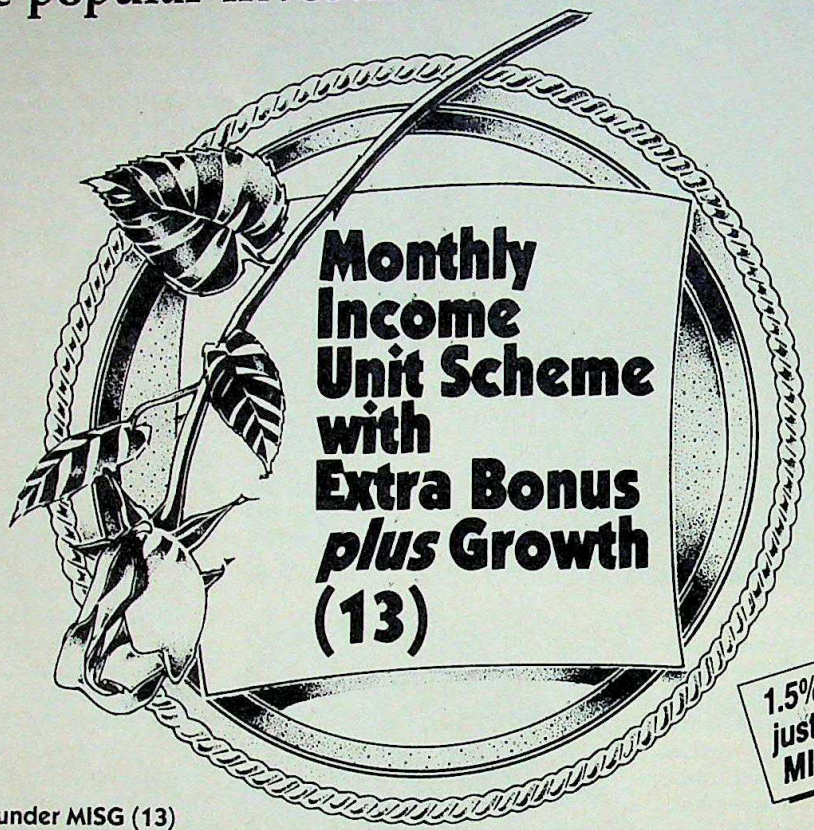

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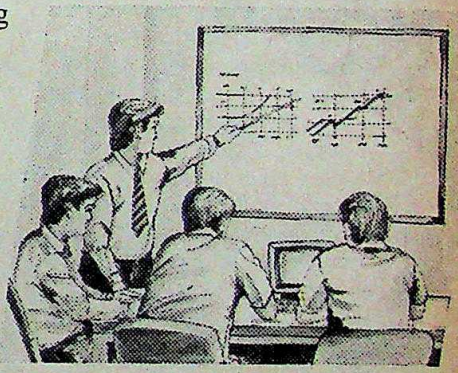

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OVERSEAS FUNDING

IS the Government thinking of allowing the financial institutions to fund corporate acquisitions overseas? The grape-vine suggests so. Certainly several official meetings have been held in this connection. The institutions are not barred from funding acquisitions overseas, but have not so far bought into the equity of foreign companies in any significant manner. If the reports doing the rounds are correct, what seems likely is that public sector concerns such as computer manufacturer CMC will be among the first beneficiaries of the institutional largesse. CMC has been scouting for a software company in the US. Also, other private sector groups such as the JK group, have expressed interest in establishing a manufacturing base in Europe. Such moves are meant to overcome the problems that the dropping of internal trade and other barriers in Europe by 1992 could pose to Indian exporters.

FABRIC TO FINANCE

THE low profile Arvind Mafatlal group—which includes the Rs 450-crore National Organic Chemical Industries Ltd (NOCIL)—is on an expansion drive. In the works is a financial services company, in partnership with one of the financial institutions or banks. The Mafatlals also hope to make a splash in the furnishings and apparel markets, drawing on their association with Tootals Coates of the UK (group company Mafatlal Fine exports upscale fabrics to the UK group). While that is a long way down the road, the financial services company lies could get going next year. The Mafatlals will hold under 25 per cent of the Rs 10-crore equity. To be headed by former Hindustan Lever chairman T. Thomas, the company will carry out merchant banking functions and finance new projects. Mafatlal companies like NOCIL are investing hefty sums in modernisation and in developing small chemical companies as suppliers, and this could provide business to the new enterprise.

HOTEL INFLUX

THE rush by international hotel chains seeking to establish a presence in India (INDIA TODAY, August 15) is assuming gargantuan proportions. Among the foreign chains scouting around for tie-ups is the Hong Kong-based Shangrila, according to Tourism Department sources. The US is represented by the Hilton group, by the Marriot group and by a consortium of non-resident Indians. The Hyatt and Kempinski chains, which already have marketing tie-ups with Indian hotels, are also said to have expressed interest in setting up hotels. The upscale Regent group has even offered to reclaim land from the sea for a hotel in Bombay. Precisely how many of these chains will eventually put up hotels, however, is the big question. Land is scarce in the cities. So will the great hotel hopes land with a thud?

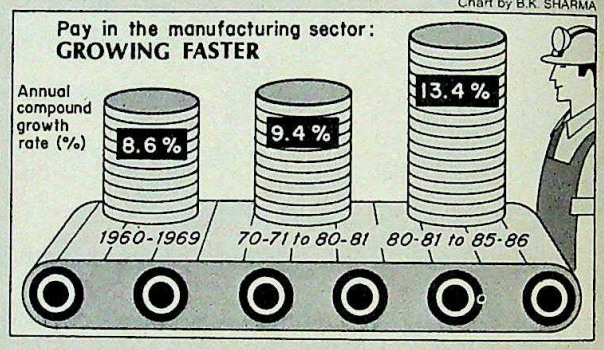
EXPANSION TIME

ICE-cream manufacturer Vadilal Enterprises is venturing into frozen foods and vegetables. After launching ice-creams in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the Gandhis who own Vadilal have a Rs 5-crore frozen foods project up their sleeves. Few details are available, but sources say they are looking at the export market and are considering raising funds from the public for the venture. Simultaneously, the Rs 25-crore Vadilal is expanding ice-cream production capacities and adding to its 55-flavour range of ice-creams. For Vadilals, variety is indeed the flavour of life.

GROWING WAGES

PER capita wages in the manufacturing sector seem to be growing faster than ever before. In the first six years of this decade, emoluments grew at an annual compound rate of 13.4 per cent (*see chart*), from Rs 7,896 to Rs 14,834. The rate in the '70s was 9.4 per cent (Rs 3,207 to Rs 7,896), while in the '60s it was a modest 8.6 per cent (Rs 1,662 to Rs 3,482). In most cases, these growth rates outpaced those of the national income per family unit of three persons. Clearly, factory and mining workers are a privileged lot.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



FRESH FORAYS

PIPELINE and construction group Dodsal is laying a line into the core sector: a fertiliser project is on the cards. It's also cocking an eye at the consumer goods market—specifically, inexpensive crockery and cutlery—and branching out into mass house building, and canal and highway construction. It will build houses all over the country, starting with New Bombay and Bangalore. The upshot: the pipeline division's contribution to total sales will dip from 50 per cent to about 20 per cent, and net sales will climb from Rs 200 crore to Rs 350 crore.

EXIT TALK

SINCE the Ambanis gained control over Larsen & Toubro (L&T), the engineering and construction giant has been in the news. Soon after its Rs 820-crore mega issue was announced, L&T bosses mooted a proposal to extend loans up to Rs 1,000 crore to any other company but had to hurriedly reconsider. Now it seems two senior executives are quitting. The two, dissatisfied with L&T's new style of functioning, are being wooed by their erstwhile employers to return.

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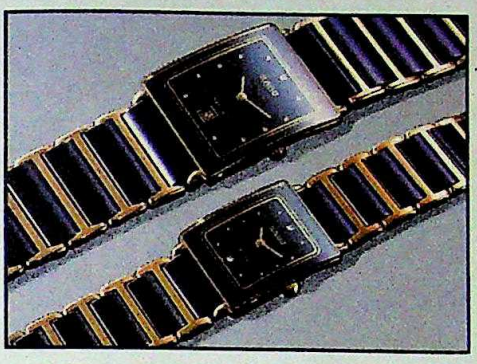

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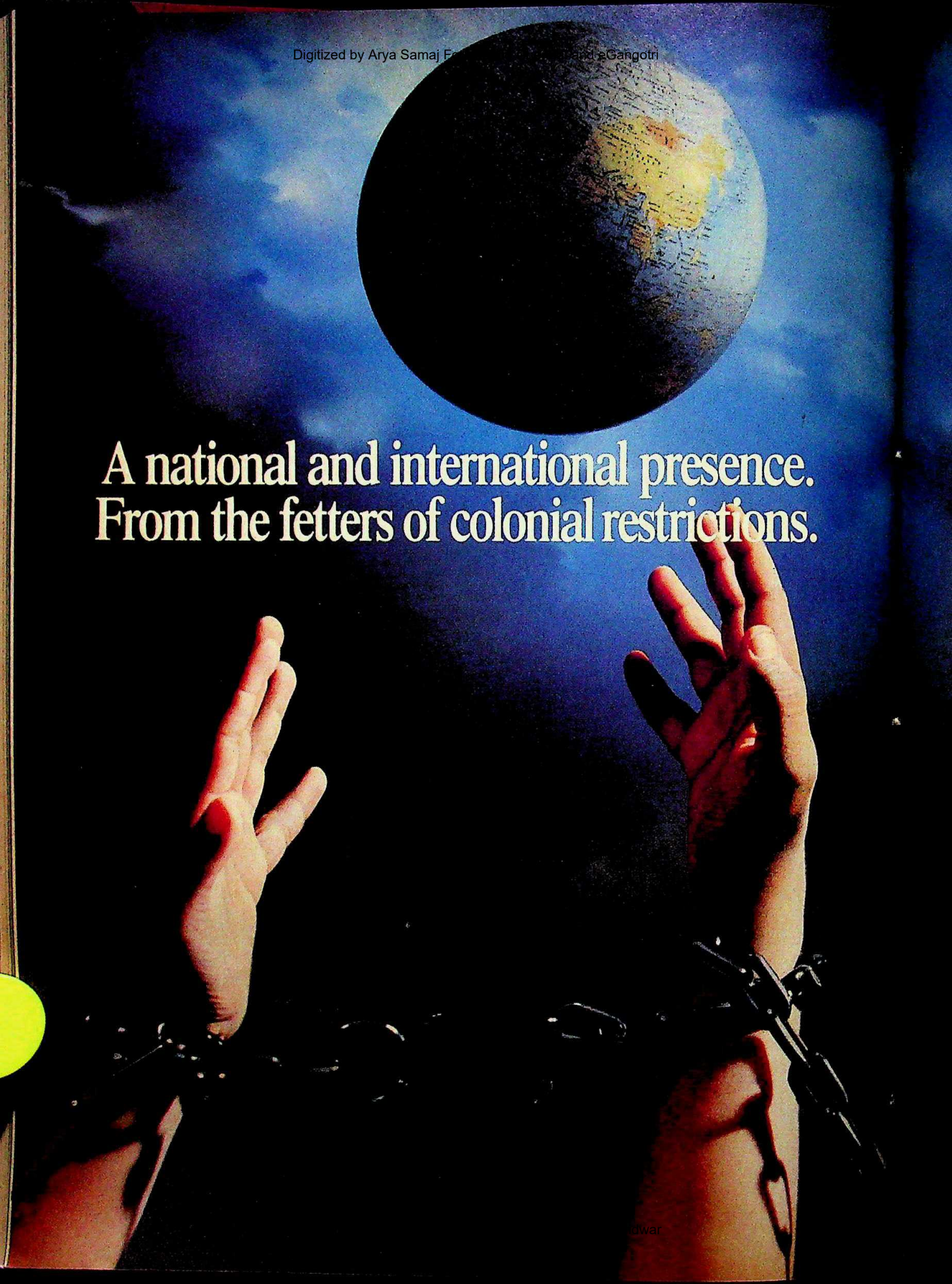

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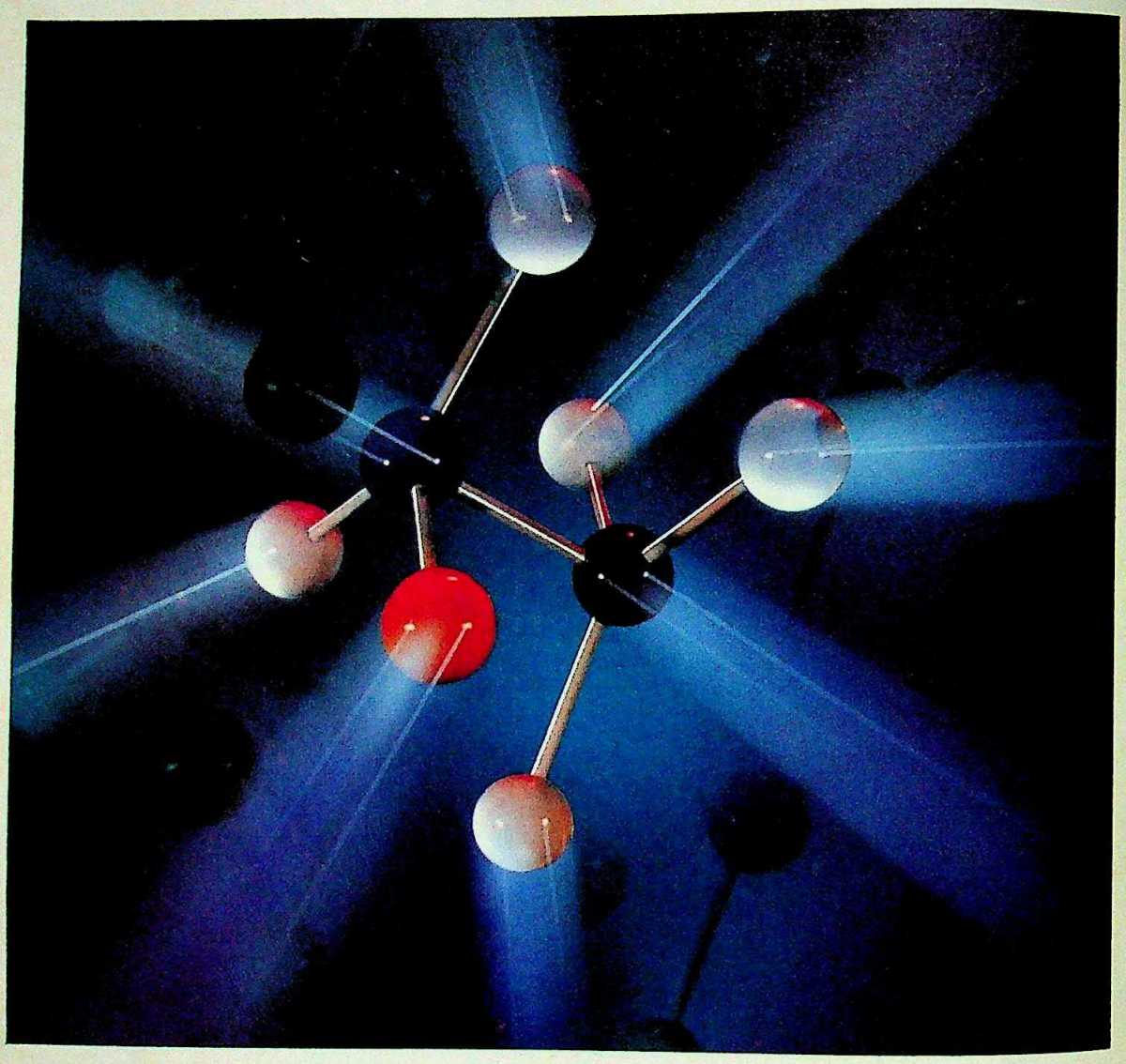

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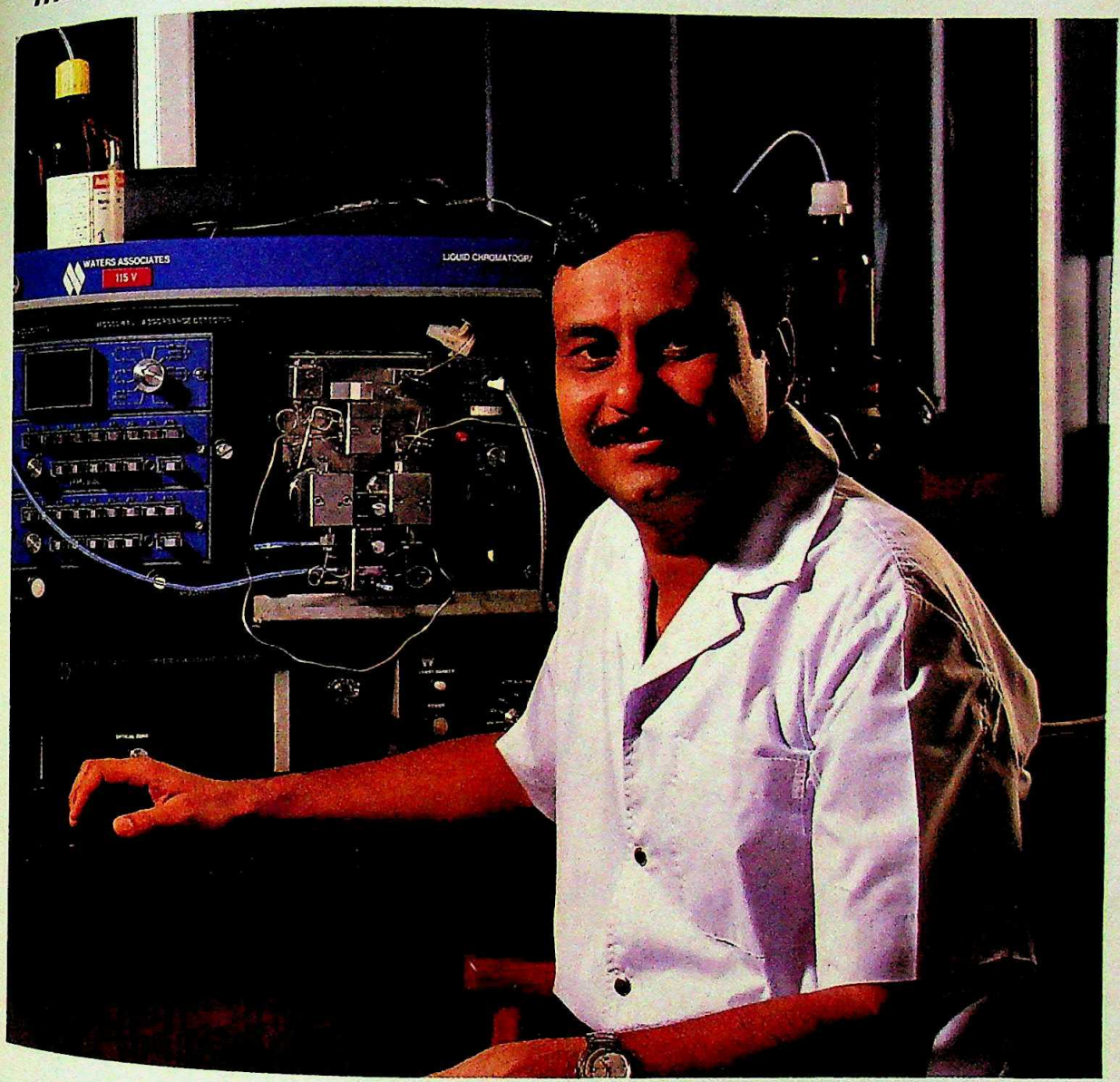

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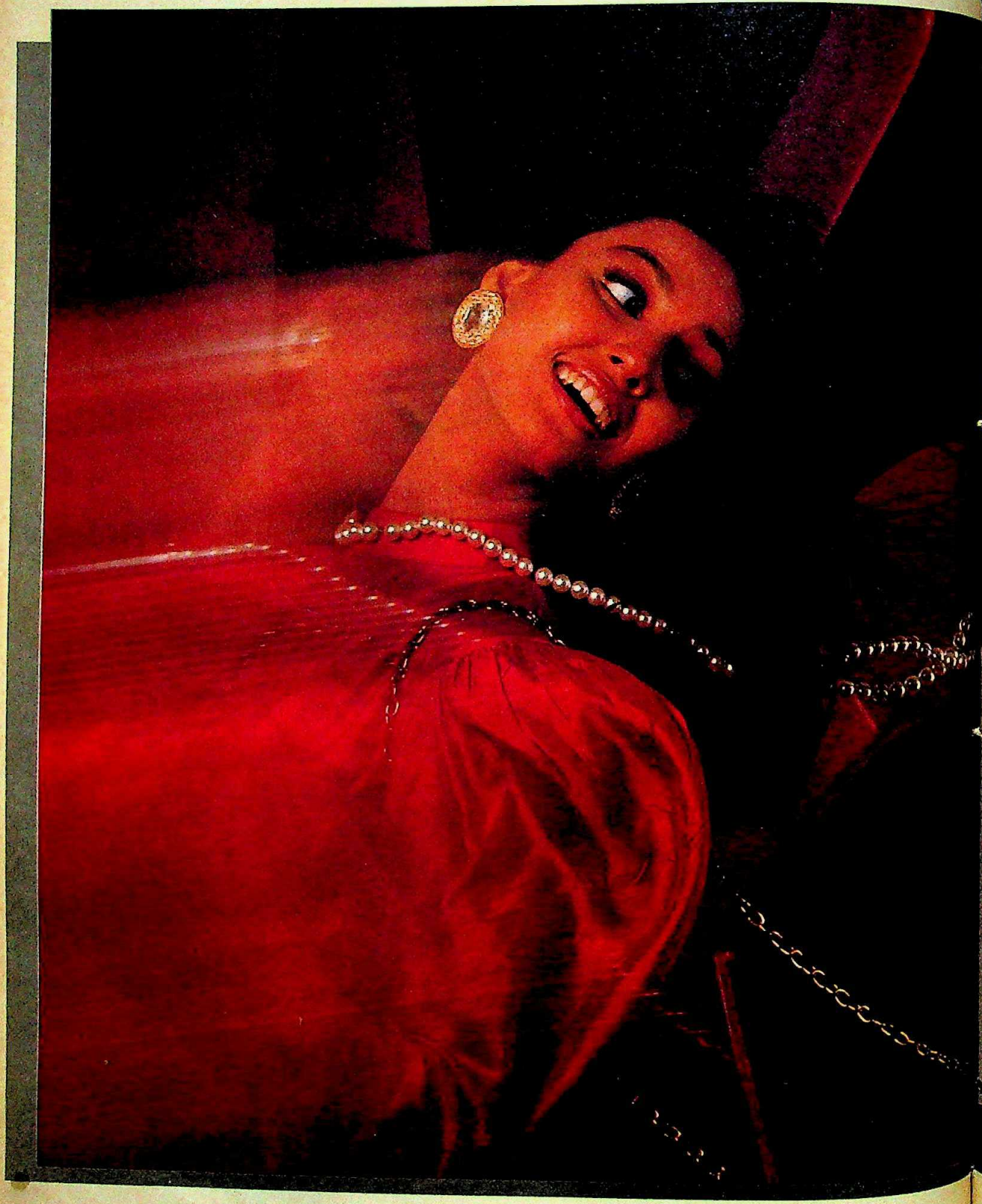
MODERN MAGNETISM



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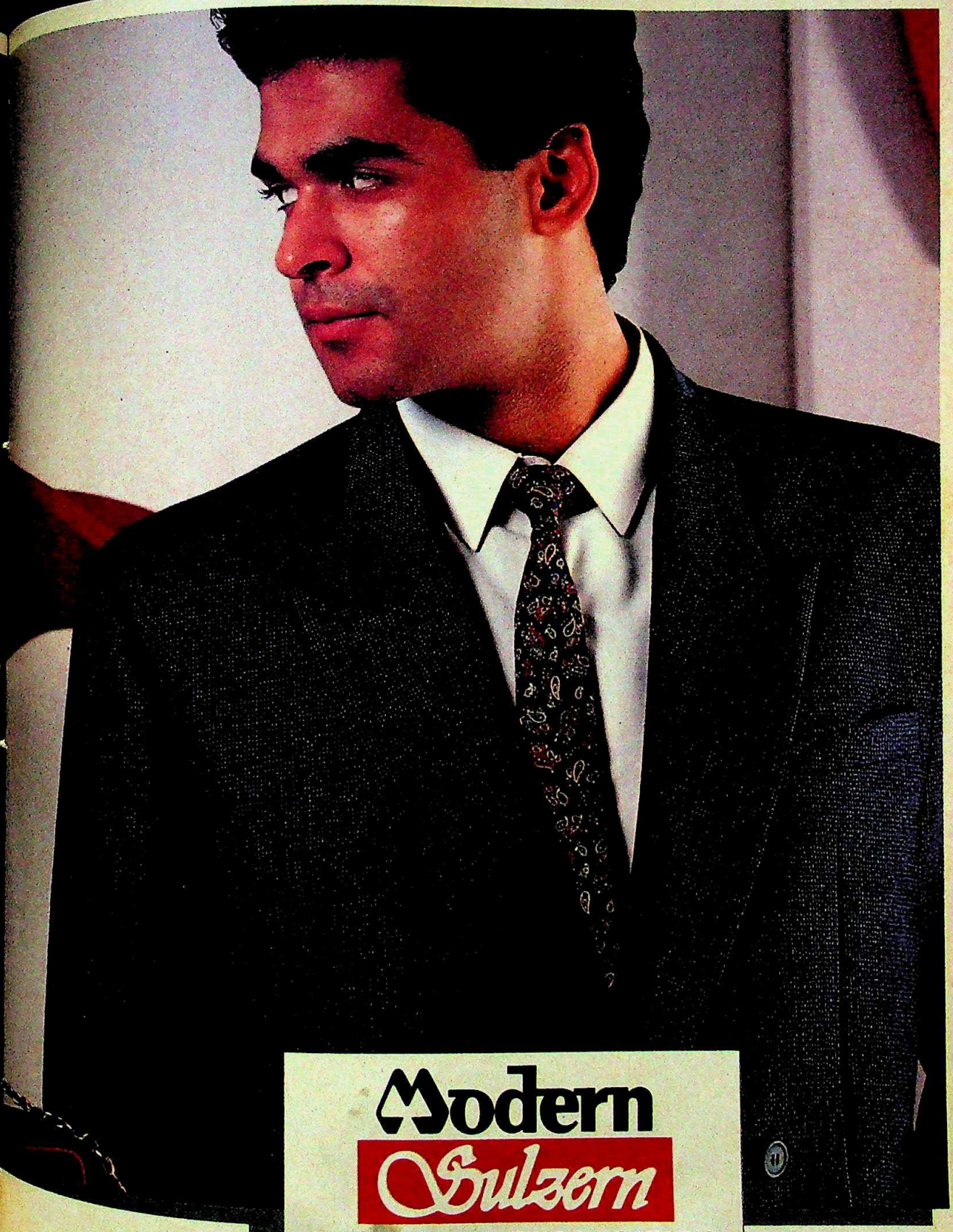

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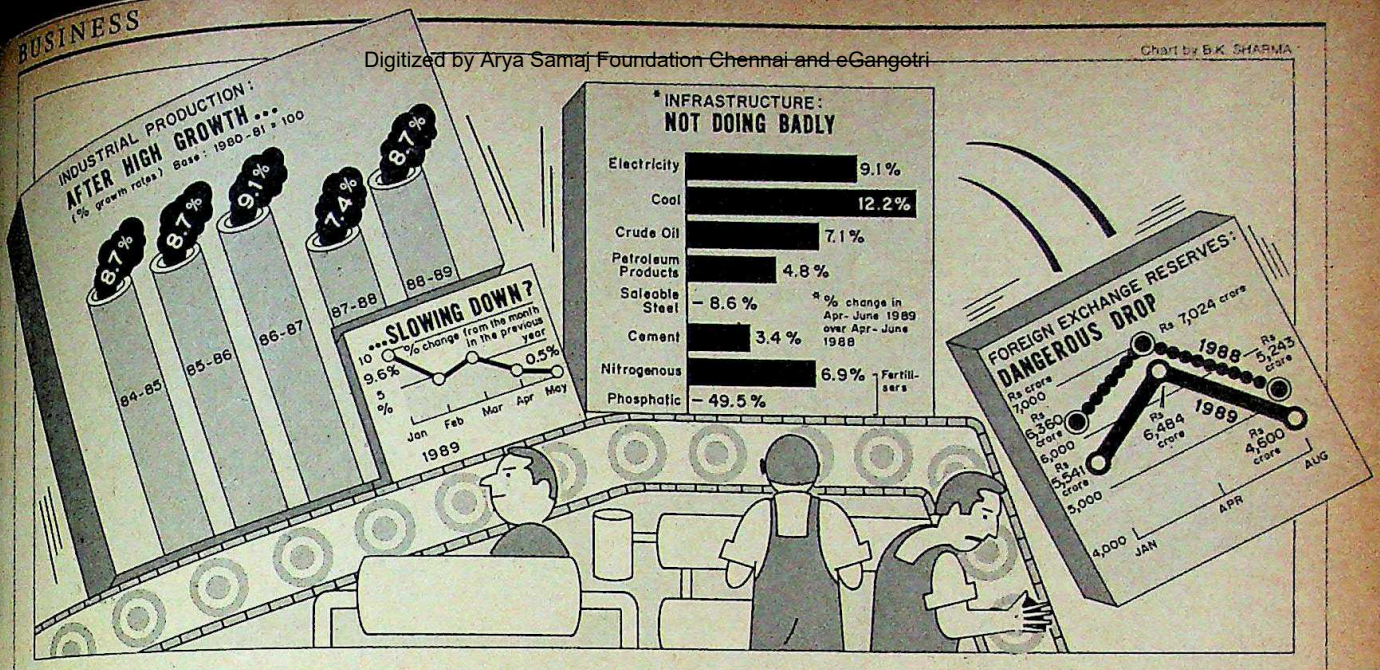

THE ECONOMY

Ambling Along

Steady but slow growth this year

THE paradoxes abound. Most businessmen express unflinching confidence in the economy. Companies are furiously logging higher profits, and the stock-market is flourishing.

But the statistics hint at a different picture, and the pundits don't quite know what to make of them. What's clear is that the economy is chugging along—at a slower pace than last year.

Not to worry: 1988-89 was an exceptional year, with the gross domestic product (GDP) growing by almost 10 per cent (past five-year average: 5.4 per cent). On a high statistical base, growth should be lower this year. The National Council of Applied Economic Research, the think tank, predicts the economy will burgeon by 5 per cent plus. Economist B.S. Minhas, a former Planning Commission member, is less optimistic. His forecast: under 5 per cent.

Whatever the forecasts, the preliminary numbers for April and May, reported recently, have upset a lot of calculations. They show production drops in a broad swathe of industries, compared with the position a year ago. Steel output dropped by 9 per cent, phosphatic fertiliser production by 51 per cent, that of sugar by 4.4 per cent. The story was repeated elsewhere: in a third of the engineering industry production slumped between January and March. Significantly, a bit of the bad news spilled over into June. The output of both steel and phosphatic fertiliser continued to drop, compared with the June 1988 levels.

So what's happening? Deepak Nayyar, professor of economics at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, argues that import curbs may have squeezed industrial growth. Then, companies are now legally required to end their accounting year in March. A lot of them did so—and preponed production to bolster last year's performance. So output dropped in April. The dip in phosphatic fertiliser production is due to problems in importing phosphoric acid, a raw material. Faced with raw material shortages, several phosphatic plants are lying closed.

Clearly, some of the fears may have been overpitched. Despite trouble spots, the engineering industry is bouncing back. The total production of 17 leading machine tool manufacturers in January-June 1989 is up by 16 per cent, versus production in the same period last year. "The first indicator of long-term investment problems is the machine tools industry," says a Confederation of Engineering Industries spokesman. "I don't see a slow down. There's always a decline in summer when steel plants close for maintenance."

A government economist cautions that it's early to draw conclusions from two months' figures.

NAMAS BHOJANI

The Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, C. Rangarajan, reckons that the economy will grow by 5 per cent this year, which he says is not bad at all.

YASHBANT NEGI

Former member of the Planning Commission, B.S. Minhas, says that while the Government's management of finances is poor, the economy is not in a bad shape.

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Concurs D.T. Lakdawala, former Planning Commission deputy chairman who now heads the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, the data centre: "There's no cause for anxiety. It's a passing phenomenon." In Bombay, a financial institution head said loan disbursals were up 33 per cent this year. In Delhi, a Planning Commission official observed: "I'll reserve judgement on industry, but the indicators don't point to a slump. Businessmen are singing a different song."

Indeed they are. Former Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry president Rohit C. Mehta says: "There are problems with select commodities. But the economy is doing well." Backing this, Siemens Managing Director Albert Hosur reports that orders have shot up by 32 per cent in 1989. "I've never seen such optimism in the last 10 years," exclaims Rajen A. Kilachand, Dodsal group head.

Still, there are any number of problems. Prices could get out of hand, partly because government deficits are pushing more money into the economy. Over the last four years, net RBI credit to the Government has grown at an annual compound rate of 19.2 per cent. Responding to price increases, the Government will import rice and sugar. That will chew into the precariously low—enough for under two months' imports—foreign exchange reserves. So the balance of payments could worsen.

Nevertheless, even economists worried by these trends concede that the economy is not doing poorly. Says Minhas: "The management of finances seems to be pretty bad. But the economy is not in a bad shape." That view is shared at the RBI. C. Rangarajan, RBI deputy governor, says that while prices and the balance of payments are problems, GDP should grow by 5 per cent this year: "This is reasonable coming on top of last year's 10 per cent." He adds that foreign exchange reserves usually drop in the first half of the year (as a large number of imports take place) and that money supply is growing slower this year.

The prospects for agriculture—which accounts for a third of the GDP—remain the main worry. The rains have been above normal in about 32 of the 35 meteorological subdivisions, but have been scanty in the granary belt of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Even so, the mood among economists, in industry and the stock-markets is hardly pessimistic. In an election year, that's good news for the Government.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI with SURAJEET DAS GUPTA and bureau reports

NYLON

Revival Path

Companies notch up profits

IT'S a yarn with a golden past. And a black future. Or so it was believed—until recently. In the '70s, nylon reigned supreme, riding roughshod over "king" cotton and jute. Then along came a cheaper, more versatile yarn—polyester. And nylon firms found the ground being cut from under their feet. Demand stagnated and losses soared.

Today, nylon is on the comeback trail. The two principal segments of the industry—nylon filament yarn (NFY) and nylon tyre cord—have had a new lease of life. With polyester yarn becoming expensive, NFY manufacturers have been able to raise prices. The nylon tyre cord market too grew last year and supply was short. Result: companies are notching up profits and increasing production capacities.

As prices soar, nylon companies are busy increasing production capacities and are raking in profits.

Garware Nylon, which reported a loss in 1987, is making a comeback. Baroda Rayon, 59 per cent of whose sales come from NFY and nylon tyre cord, posted a 250-per cent increase in net profits in 1988-89 (from Rs 4.31 crore to Rs 11.30 crore). The net profits of Century Enka, 40 per cent of whose sales are accounted for by nylon, zoomed from Rs 14 crore to Rs 35 crore during the same period.

Several NFY manufacturers—Baroda Rayon, JK Synthetics, Modipon, Shree Synthetics—are expanding capacities, many to twice the present levels. Production was 35,000 tonnes last year but is expected to touch 37,000 tonnes this year. And a new firm is leaping in: Gujarat Nylons, a 6,000-tonne, Rs 119-crore joint venture promoted by Gujarat State Fertiliser Corporation (GSFC).

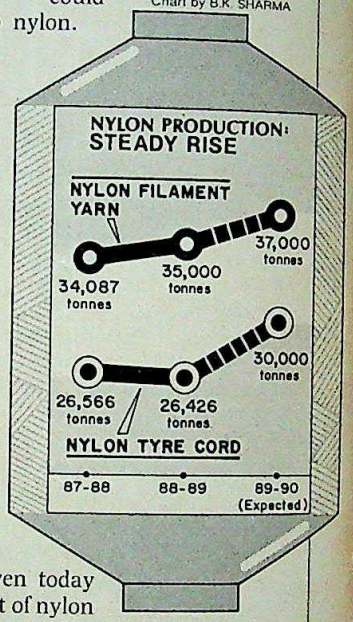
The principal reason for the revival: higher prices for NFY. In the 1988 budget, excise duties on NFY were cut considerably. Logically, NFY prices should have fallen. They did, initially, but shot up later. For instance, the price of 15 denier yarn fell from Rs 195 a kg in February 1988 to Rs 175 but is now Rs 210.

Nylon manufacturers are rejoicing. But weavers in Surat (who account for 75 per cent of NFY consumption) accuse nylon spinners of operating as a cartel fixing prices. Replies P.N. Maitra, secretary, Association of Synthetic Fibre Industry: "There's no cartel. Prices are higher as raw material costs have risen."

They have. The landed cost of caprolactum is now Rs 66 and steadily rising. GSFC sells caprolactum at Rs 44. But it is India's sole manufacturer, producing 20,000 tonnes annually, far short of the 100,000-tonne demand. The 50,000-tonne plant of Fertilisers and Chemicals Travancore Ltd, which was to start production in April, has been delayed.

Still, the rush to increase capacities makes it clear that higher prices have more than offset higher costs. Even better, with NFY prices still lower than prices of polyester filament yarn, sari weavers could switch to nylon.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



And as even today 80 per cent of nylon is used in saris, demand could surge.

Nylon tyre cord manufacturers, who comprise the other segment of the nylon industry, are not so sanguine. Right now, they're doing well. But tyre producers constitute 80 per cent of their market. And with many planning to switch to radial tyres, nylon cord consumption could fall sharply. Last year, the market grew by 15 per cent and there was a five-month strike at Shri Ram Fibres, one of the largest manufacturers.

This year will be different. Says Sri Ram Fibres' Arun Bharat Ram: "There's been a 25-per cent increase in capacity. An over-supply situation can't be ruled out." Tyre cord production is expected to reach 30,000 tonnes against 26,000 tonnes last year. Worse, many tyre manufacturers—Modi Rubber, Dunlop, Ceat, Ballarpur Industries—will be starting tyre cord units. Still, all this means the news of nylon's imminent death was greatly exaggerated. —S.N. VASUKI

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dinesh

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Photographs by NAMAS BHOJANI

Bombay Stock Exchange: unable to cope

THE STOCK-MARKETS

Changing Times

The stock exchanges are gearing up for dramatic change: a national share bazaar linked by computers, paperless share transactions, a separate market for small companies and the entry of private companies.

FROM 12 noon to 2 p.m. on every working day, it is virtual pandemonium in the ring. In the midst of a deafening cacophony, a sea of men—and the odd woman—jostle one another, raise their hands, and shout to be heard above the din.

Welcome to the world of bulls and bears. It's a world that's increasingly under pressure. As a rising tide of investors—an estimated eight million, at last count—put money into shares and debentures, and companies push bigger share issues, the stock exchanges are finding they can't cope. The paperwork has become horrendous, the systems are creaky. Says Nimesh Kampani, head of JM Financial, the Bombay investment and merchant banking firm: "Changes are overdue on the markets. Otherwise they will collapse."

For all this apocalyptical vision, there's some cause for whoopee. Look at what's in the works:

► Paperless share transactions. Stock holding corporations will record deals through a system of book entries, obviating the need for physically handing over share certificates.

► A national share bazaar, unified by a network of on-line computers. Typically, a broker in Bombay or Calcutta will be able to shop around in, say, Madras or Calcutta for the best price for shares. Brokers now pick up shares only from the local stock exchange.

► An over the counter (OTC) market, meant primarily—though not exclusively—for small companies not listed on the share markets. One outcome: more shares will be quoted.

► Private companies will be members of the stock exchanges. Already, two have been granted membership of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). This promises to usher bigger players into the market.

► More credit rating agencies. Right now, the only one is the 22-month-old Credit Rating Information Services of India Ltd (CRISIL—*see box*), but the state-owned Industrial Finance Corporation of India is setting up a me-too agency.

► An array of new instruments such as loyalty coupons and warrants attached to new share issues. Companies are now

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making a din about them (*see box*).

And this isn't all. Both the Bombay and Calcutta stock exchanges are conducting classes for sub-brokers. Then, brokers have been permitted to become members of more than one stock exchange. Also, the fortnightly settlement of business, on the BSE at least, will turn weekly, thus speeding up share deliveries. Confirms M.R. Mayya, executive director of the BSE: "We want to change to a weekly system within a year of automation." And amidst some controversy about its role, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the official policeman for the stock-markets, is waiting for the Government to pass a comprehensive law on its functioning.

WHAT is more, subsidiaries of the banks and the financial institutions have either become or are seeking to become members of the stock exchanges. For instance, subsidiaries of Punjab National Bank and Canara Bank and a leasing concern promoted by the institutions have become members of the Delhi Stock Exchange. Some hope to eventually enter the broking business. "We're training people who'll operate in the ring," says R. Kannan, executive director at Canbank Financial Services.

Many marketmen are confident that all this will dramatically transform the markets. Forecasts Hemendra M. Kothari, chairman of DSP Financial Consultants and BSE vice-president: "In two or three years, trading between brokers will take place on computers. Computers will link stock-markets. Procedures will be simpler and faster, and investors will receive payments more quickly." The result could be a more sophisticated market. BSE President G.B. Desai says simply: "We plan to make the BSE one of the best in the emerging markets, comparable to that in Tokyo or Taiwan."

Certainly, change is in order in a market that's growing by leaps and bounds. The monthly turnover at BSE, for instance, has almost trebled in the past five years, from Rs 494 crore in January 1984 to Rs 1,549 crore last July. Mayya says almost 60,000 deals are done every day on the BSE, roughly the same as on the New York and London stock exchanges—which are open for six hours, versus two hours for BSE. So BSE bears a heavier load. To compound such problems, insider trading and speculation are rampant. Says Roger Cottrell, director of Grindlays Bank's venture, capital division: "There's substantial manipulation in the market."

The Government hopes to bring order into the share bazaar by widespread computerisation and by changing the rules of the game. A few of the latest moves are, in fact, the outcome of the report of an official committee, which was submitted early this year.

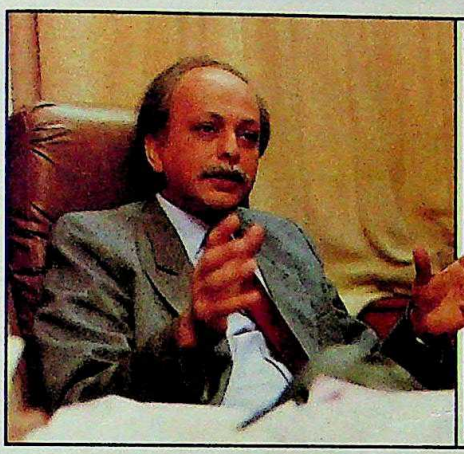
Some of the new institutions like the national share market lie in the distant future. But others are round the corner. The BSE's Bank of India Shareholding Corporation—in Bombay and Calcutta, the stock exchanges have joined hands with the banks to promote stock holding companies—will swing into operation in the next three or four months. And N. Vaghul, chairman of the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI), one of the institutions behind the OTC market, says the market could get going by November 1.

Certainly, the OTC is one of the more significant developments. It will, ICICI General Manager M.V. Shah points out, help small companies with a capital of under Rs 3 crore—many of them new enterprises—that are now debarred from the stock exchanges; the OTC market will offer them an alternative route to raising cash, and serve as an incubator till they graduate to the main stock-markets.

And it will play by different rules. "Think of it as an experiment," says Vaghul. "We're trying to move away from total regulation to self-regulation." The market won't have a trading ring: deals will be struck initially over the

"If small-value stocks can be sold easily in the over the counter market, trading volume will go up."

S.M. PARANDE
Executive Director, SBI Capital Markets

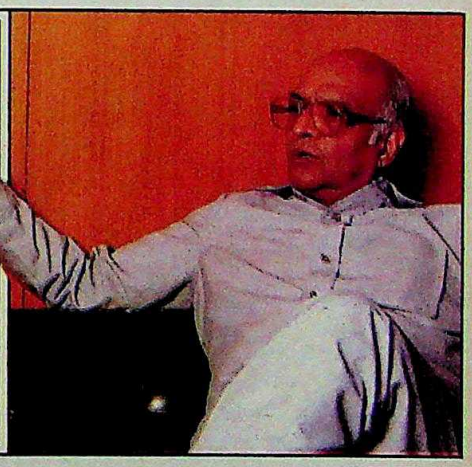


"In two or three years, trading will take place through computers. Procedures will be faster, and payments quicker."

HEMENDRA M. KOTHARI
Chairman, DSP Financial Consultants

"We plan to make the BSE one of the best in the emerging markets, comparable to that in Tokyo or Taiwan."

G.B. DESAI
President, Bombay Stock Exchange



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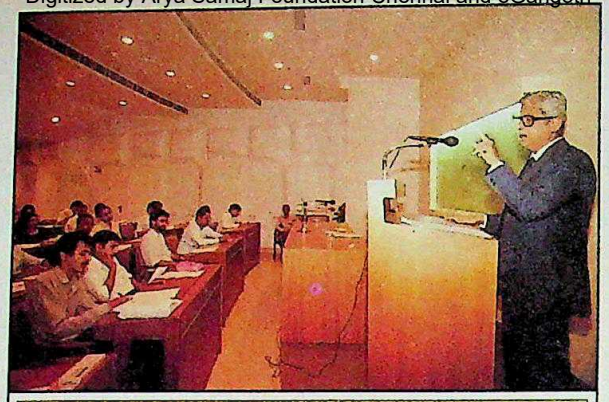
phone and later on computers. And the board of the new company—the OTC Exchange of India—which has just been set up, will be dominated not by brokers but by the institutions.

The procedures for new share issues could be different too. Any company that wants to make a public issue will have to be sponsored by a member of the new exchange. Strikingly, the sponsor will determine the price of a new share issue—with penalties for those who consistently overprice shares: the Finance Ministry will not determine the premium (the Government has already allowed venture capital companies to price equity as they wish). To ensure that investors aren't stuck with shares, the sponsor will have to rope in another broker or "market maker" who will quote daily buying and selling rates. "If small-value stocks can be sold easily in the OTC market, the volume of trading will go up," SBI Capital Markets Executive Director S.M. Parande points out.

Of significance too is the small but growing band of companies seeking entry to the stock exchanges: a financial services company in the National Insulated Cable Corporation group and VCK Stockbroking in Calcutta, and Twentieth Century Finance Corporation in Bombay. Two other Bombay companies have already been admitted: Prabhudas Lilladher, and JSB Securities Pvt Ltd.

Stock exchange members are now individual brokers who operate through partnership concerns, but a few—like the Sheths who run Prabhudas Lilladher—are setting up private companies even though their personal liability will be unlimited. Reason: the new companies will pack more financial power because they can more easily raise money from the public (JSB will be going public soon.) Result:



BSE Executive Director M.R. Mayya lecturing brokers

As part of the move to revamp the stock-markets, both the Bombay and Calcutta stock exchanges are holding classes for sub-brokers.

CRISIL

Highly Rated

"WE rate debt instruments, not companies or shares," says Pradip P. Shah, managing director of the Credit Rating Information Services of India Ltd (CRISIL).

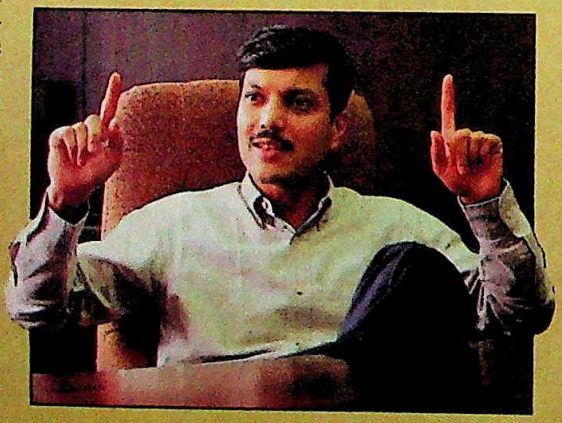
So why is CRISIL the Great New Hope of investors? Answer: over half the public issues that hit the capital markets are not equity, but debt instruments—convertible debentures and fixed deposits.

Promoted by the financial institutions and by Indian and foreign banks 22 months ago, CRISIL has rated 57 instruments floated by 45 companies, including Ashok Leyland and Bajaj Auto. The sum involved: Rs 1,574 crore.

Not all companies concur with the ratings (ranging from a high of AAA to a low of D): 22 declined to accept them. CRISIL official Sanjoy Bhattacharyya says: "Supposedly blue chip companies have chosen not to disclose their ratings." Which ones? Grins Shah: "I can't tell you. It would kill them."

Companies seeking a rating submit audited accounts for the past five years. CRISIL teams then visit plants, dealers, and talk to company functionaries. "A minimum of two teams is assigned to a job so that we're insulated against bias," says Shah. The teams then present their recommendations to a rating committee comprising non-institutional members of CRISIL's board. "Yes, there are differences of opinion. But there's a consensus on all rating decisions," says A.V. Rajwade, CRISIL board member.

Shah: upbeat mood



Ratings don't come cheap: for debentures, they range from Rs 25,000 to Rs 10 lakh. But apparently they pay off. The Madras-based Cholamandalam Investments says fixed deposits have risen from Rs 20 lakh before rating to Rs 70 lakh. "We've been able to save substantially on brokerage and other expenses," says Deputy General Manager M. Anandan.

Logically, companies with good ratings should be able to offer lower interest rates on deposits. None has, as yet. Also, in future, companies that receive poor ratings could approach other rating institutions—the state-owned Industrial Finance Corporation hopes to launch one—for fresh ratings.

Meanwhile, CRISIL will be hawking information on companies, industries and the payment records of dealers and retailers. "We'll have to have 9 to 10 million business entities in our books and an enormous staff. We may even spin off a separate company for the purpose," says Shah. For a new organisation, that's creditworthy.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI in Bombay

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Attn: Executives, Businessmen, Professionals, Students

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NEW ISSUES

Mega Lures

AT the Great Indian Share Bazaar, it's business as never before. In a market chock-a-block with mega issues—worth Rs 2,730 crore, on offer over four weeks—companies are offering investors a bevy of innovative incentives: warrants, loyalty coupons, scholarships to children of investors, bank loans, even a financial instrument called zero-interest bonds.

The warrant, introduced early this year by the Pune-based Deepak Fertilisers, was offered with the Rs 505-crore Essar debenture issue. The holder of an Essar warrant can buy a share within the next four years at a price not exceeding Rs 70 (current price: Rs 87). Ceat Tyres too proposes to issue them.

Another innovation is the loyalty coupon (also offered by Essar). It seeks to reward investors who retain their debentures for three years by paying them Rs 10 per debenture.

Yet another bait is scholarships for children of investors. Besides Essar which is offering 10 annual scholarships for study in India and two for study abroad, these are being offered by Usha Rectifier which has a Rs 444-crore issue.

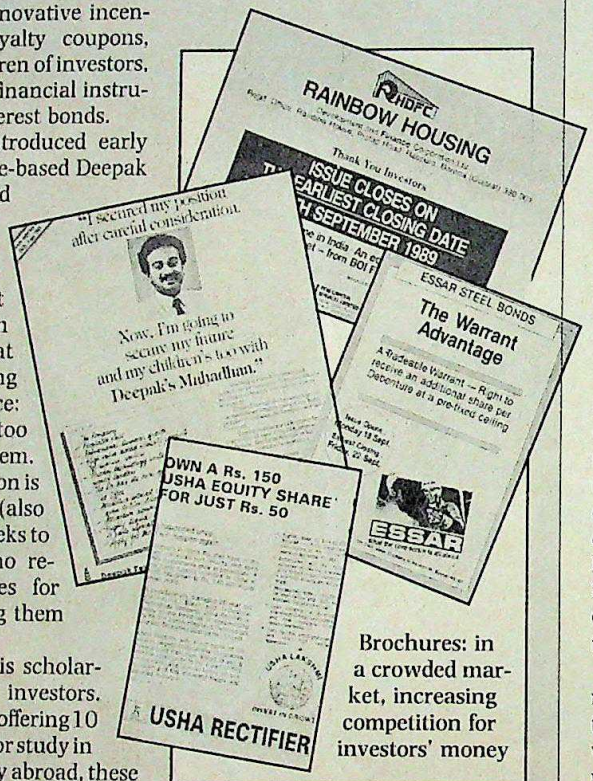
Finally, Essar—and possibly companies like Larsen & Toubro (L&T)—is teaming up with the banks to provide loans to investors.

Meanwhile, Deepak Fertilisers which does not have a share issue on hand will, starting October 2, insure its investors against accidents.

Rainbow Housing, a Calcutta firm, is following Reliance Petrochemicals' example by offering a safety net—a guarantee that scrips or bonds will be bought back if their price dips below a specified level.

The zero-interest bond will be introduced by Mahindra & Mahindra. Investors in its Rs 91-crore convertible debenture issue can choose to receive 12.5 interest or none at all. At the time of conversion into equity, zero-interest bond holders get the share at a price Rs 10 less than others. The other advantage: they don't have to pay tax on interest.

Behind most of these lures are the competition for the investor's cash—and the desire to ensure investor loyalty. Many punters tend to hawk shares obtained at below the market price. And this can trigger off a selling wave, so depressing prices. Investor loyalty can prevent this.



Brochures: in a crowded market, increasing competition for investors' money

To attract more investors, companies are offering a range of new incentives.

Will these incentives work? Not in themselves, merchant bankers say. Says one: "Investors look at the company's financial performance and the quality of management. Only after that will they be swayed by the fringe benefits."

One thing is certain. As the market gets crowded, innovations like the ones on view this month will become the rule rather the exception.

—S.N. VASUKI

bigger players, with the resources to establish branches and service clients more efficiently. In the long run, predicts Vijay Mehta, head of the Delhi-based Mehta Financial and Consultancy Services: "Small firms will have to merge."

But change won't come easy. Rumblings persist about SEBI, about the institutions and banks becoming stock exchange members, and about the multiplicity of stock holding corporations.

The institutions promoted the Stock Holding Corporation of India Ltd (SHCIL) in August 1988 to deal with inter-institutional share transactions. It's now gearing up to handle deals by the public. Says R. Chandrasekaran, SHCIL managing director: "A stock holding corporation is necessary—but only one. If multiple corporations are created without standardising systems, we're going to have problems." Merger with similar agencies the stock exchanges set up could be one solution. Mayya says: "We've no problem in merging with them later."

More contentious is SEBI's proposed role. The new agency urged sweeping changes in the laws to permit it to regulate the markets. Among other things, it wanted powers to appoint directors to the governing boards of exchanges, sparking off ire among brokers. "We feel this will lead to day-to-day interference," says Desai. As a result, the Government has yet to clear legislation to formally launch SEBI.

Brokers worry about institutional membership of exchanges too, fearing they'll lose business to bank subsidiaries, which have financial muscle and a network of branches to service clients. A member of BSE's governing board says angrily: "Their use of bank offices is not acceptable. They should compete on a fair basis." The BSE formed a committee to sort out the tangle. It recently submitted a report to the Government recommending that the institutions operate outside city limits. "We're not agreeable to that," retorts Kannan of Canbank.

Finally, a national market will call for an expensive computerisation programme. Exactly how expensive is still not clear. ICICI officials intend talking to companies in the US and Singapore, as well as local concerns, on a software and hardware package. The bill could run to well over Rs 100 crore. Where will the cash come from? No one quite knows.

Nonetheless, time is running out and there are just two options left: change or perish. Thankfully, the signals so far herald transformation.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI in Bombay

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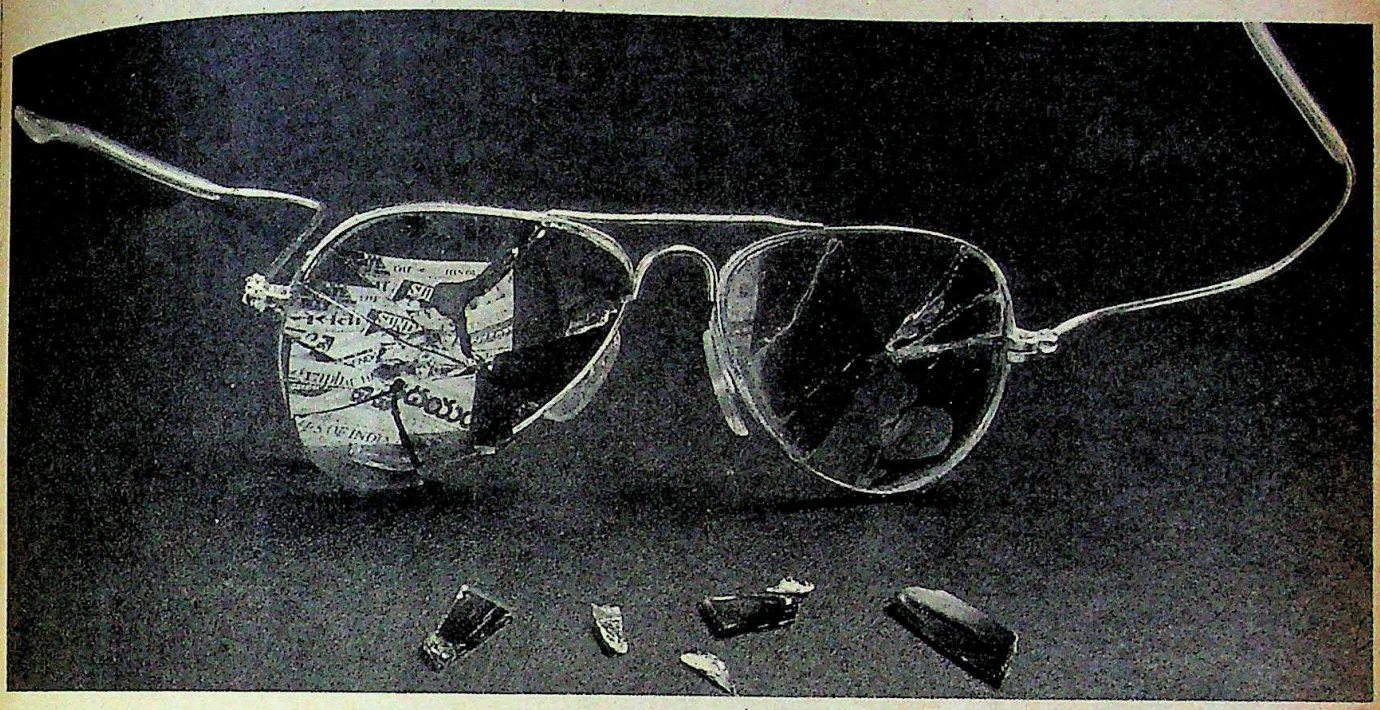
When You Are Taxed For Being Literate-



Literacy Must Be Harmful To The Nation.

It is "an imposition on knowledge and would virtually amount to a burden imposed on a man for being literate and for being conscious of his duty as a citizen to inform himself about the world around."

That is what the Supreme Court said in 1984 as it reduced a Rs. 850 per tonne duty levied on the import of newsprint by the Government to Rs. 550 per tonne.

Now the Government newsprint mills have hiked newsprint prices by as much as 40 per cent, and the duty on glazed newsprint has been increased by 7-fold.

While some welcome concessions have been granted to small and medium newspapers, the rest who account for more than 80% of newsprint consumption still bear the crippling burden.

The implications spell themselves out : increased cost, increased prices of publications, increased advertising tariffs, mounting financial pressure on the newspaper industry. A pressure that retards growth, curtailing coverage and reach. Doubtless, the burden for being literate is becoming heavier.

Every citizen has the right to 'free' knowledge, information, stimulation and entertainment. The press is their only independent and affordable source. It is the heart of a democracy, the life-blood of political and social intercourse. In a country like India, with its multifarious cultures, religions and languages, it is the press which reflects the diversity. It is the symbol of freedom, the voice of the people, the safety valve for bottled-up emotions. As long as it is neither state-controlled, nor muzzled.

Now the Government has put it under severe financial strain, even as it has unleashed resources to expand the official media.

All this will extract a heavy cost. And it is not the newspaper industry that will suffer the final cut. It is the democratic spirit of the country that will fray; the tenets of our founding fathers that will flounder. That price will be paid by the people.

The Nation's Loss Cannot Be The Government's Gain.

Issued in the interest of the Nation by the Indian Newspaper Society

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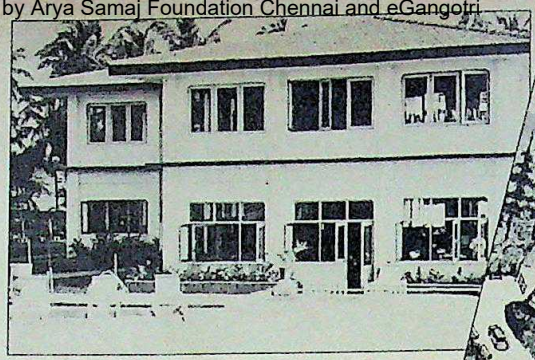
RESORTS

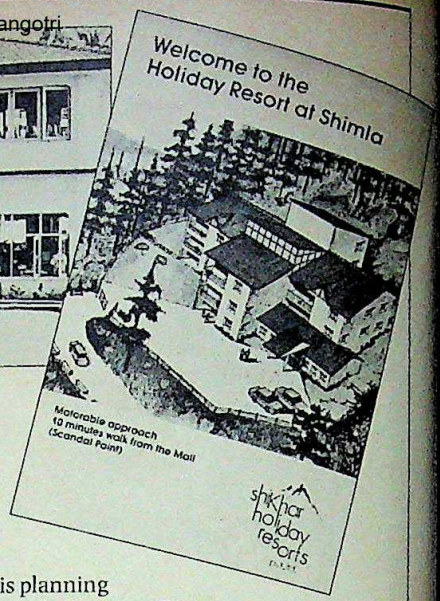
Wrong Time

Holiday ventures in the red

GOLDEN beaches. Swaying palms. And a week of lazing under an azure sky. Those were the dreams the Delhi-based Sudha Gupta had two years ago, when she bought a stake in a time-sharing holiday resort in Goa. Today, the dreams have crashed. The proposed resort hasn't got off the ground, the promoters have vanished with the money and Gupta has no way of recovering her cash.

She is not the only one to fall victim to the lure of time-sharing holiday resorts. For the idea of time-sharing was enticingly simple. You acquired a stake in an apartment in the holiday resort. And then for a week or more, you were entitled to a holiday at the resort. Year after year. Forever. The stake could be sold or exchanged. And passed on to your heirs. And at least one of the resorts had plans to tie up with international companies to permit time-sharing in resorts abroad.





Dalmia resort and a brochure

Today, of the dozen or so companies which offered the time-sharing schemes, only four survive. The Ansals—who set up Ansal Resorts and Hotels—have wound up. The Delhi-based M.S. Resorts is planning to close shop. Some, finding their resorts unutilised for most of the year, are converting them into hotels. And small timers like Shikar

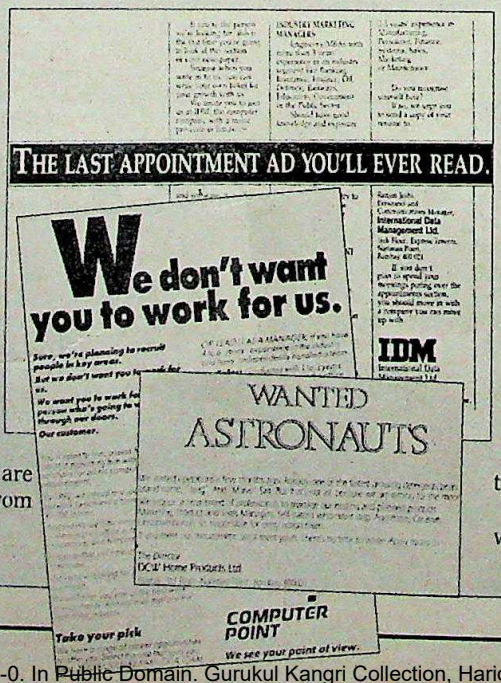
APPOINTMENT ADS

New Look

IT'S 7.30 a.m.
A shrill alarm heralds yet another long, tiring day
It's time to get ready for work
Time for the rat race
Rush, Rush, Rush
Can you spare a moment?
Just a few moments to review your career.
Your growth. Your future.

NO, these are not excerpts from Vikram Seth's sequel to *The Golden Gate*. They are lines from an HCL appointment advertisement. The Delhi-based computer manufacturer is not alone in resorting to zany ads. Around the country, advertising agencies, multinationals, foreign banks, even small family enterprises are putting out attention-grabbing advertisements. DCW Home Products, the Bombay-based manufacturer of salts and detergents, thought up an outlandish one: "Wanted Astronauts". Reason: the company was "aiming for the moon".

Slickly designed and guaranteed to attract attention, the new ads are gradually replacing the staid old "wanted" ads. The reason is simple: talented employees are scarce, and companies are vying to attract them—away from one another. As a Bombay-based recruitment consultant puts it: "You can't hire good talent by just inserting an ad. They have to be seduced into sending in a resume." Says Noshir Desai, managing director of Karishma Advertising, an agency that deals in recruitment ads: "In a competitive market, companies are demanding well-designed appointment ads."



Wanted ads: slickly designed

And getting them. Computer Point, the computer retail chain, came up with one saying saucily: "We don't want you to work for us." It went on to explain in smaller print that it wanted people to work for the company's customers. IDM, the computer firm now part of the HCL group, came up with another that was as arresting: "If you need a job, don't read this ad." Reason: the person it needed was "well established at a successful organisation" and the last thing he was looking for was "a career change".

Says Ravi Gupta, chairman of Trikaya Grey, who designed the HCL advertisement: "There is intense competition in the market-place and a severe shortage of talent. Any appointment ad will get a response. The challenge is in attracting only good talent to respond to your ad."

In corporate circles, that's known as the 10-per cent syndrome. To put it simply, only 10 per cent of the people applying for jobs are really worth looking at. Says Gupta: "The 'ten percenters' are people who're probably happy in their existing jobs. But a well-crafted appointment ad can shake them out of their complacency."

They've certainly shaken the world of appointment advertising.

—S.N. VASUKI

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VCK

VARJIVAN
KAMPANI

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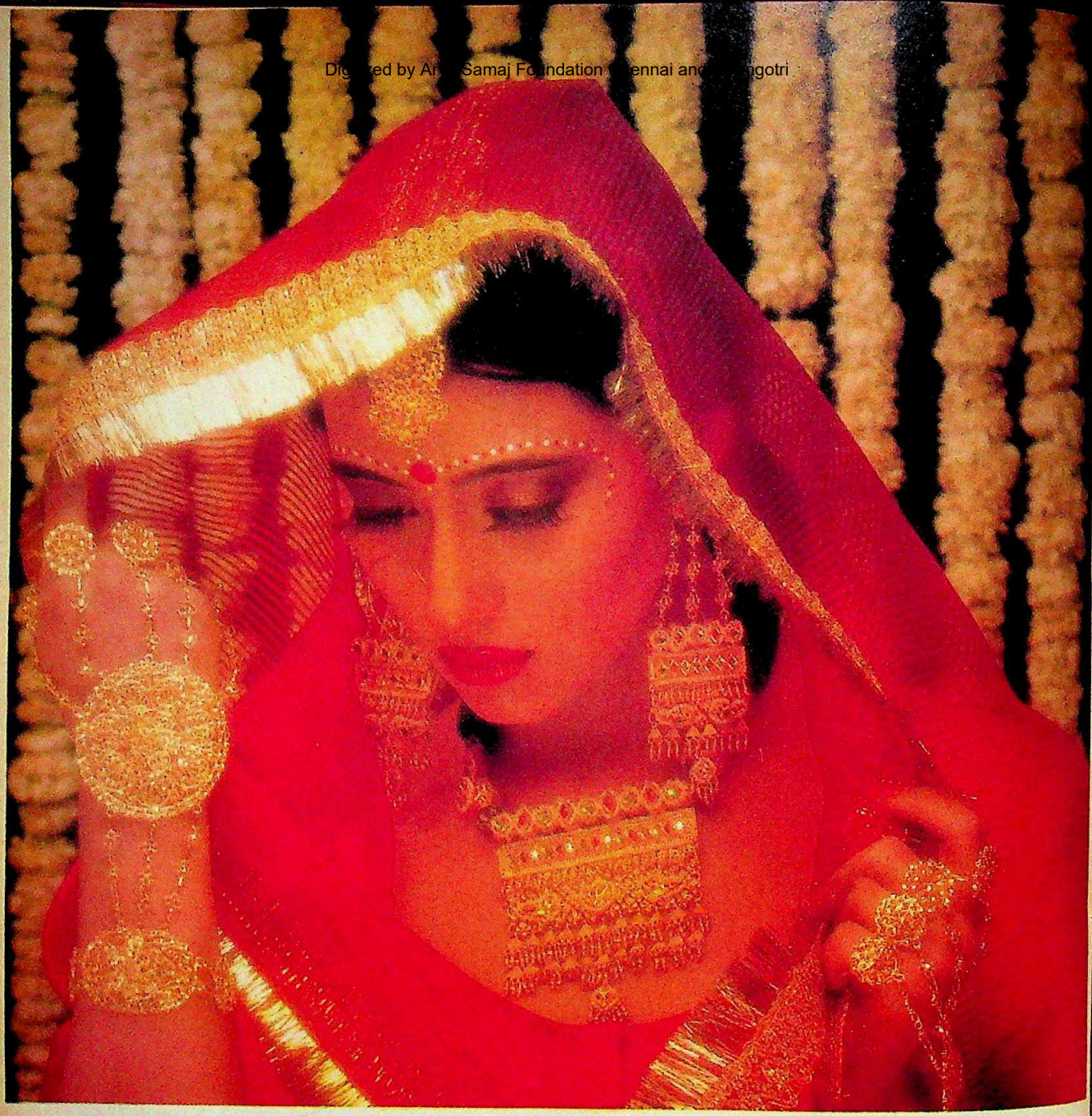

Created to reveal the bride in you.

Introducing "Jewel Card"... pricelessly yours !

Kapur Bhai Jewellers are introducing an exciting and exclusive **Jewel Card** scheme. For more details, please fill up and mail this coupon today.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

_____

MARRIED ☐ UNMARRIED ☐

ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME : Rs. _____

KAPUR BHAI

JEWELLERS

PROPRIETOR K.K. EXPORTS

B-45/ 47,CONNAUGHT PLACE,

NEW DELHI-110001 PHONE : 3321478

lly ads/KBJ-8911

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What did the Thinking Man at Paris say to the Skypak Man?

"Come to think of it, you're the first man-of-action I met... since Rodin."

We'll deliver. Wherever on earth. SKYPAK The worldwide couriers.

Skypak House, Off M. Vassanji Road, Marol, Andheri (E), Bombay 400 059.

Avenues:SC:496:89

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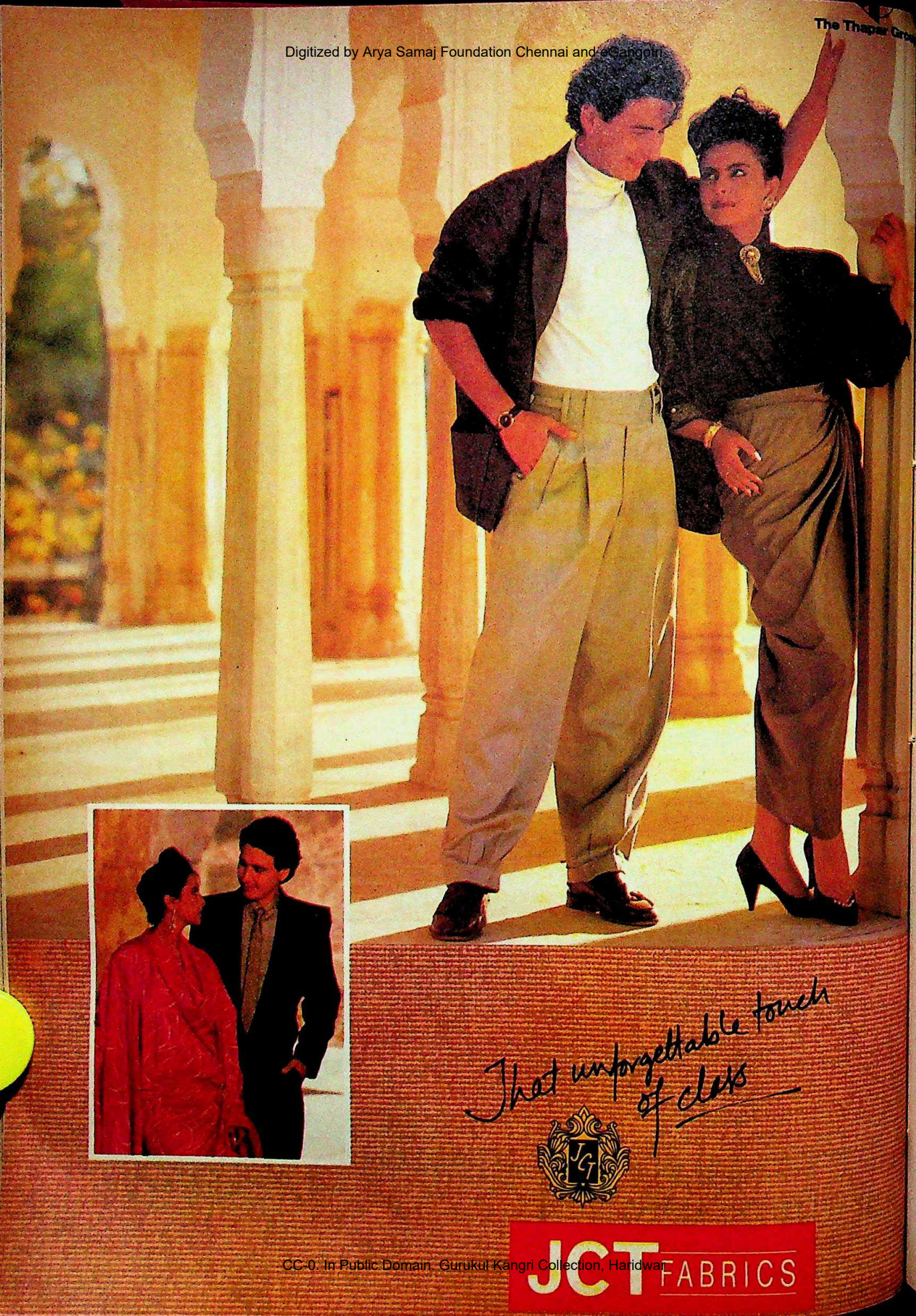

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Holiday Resorts still haven't enough cash to build a single resort. Says V.K. Mago of M.S. Resorts which had a resort in Mussoorie: "It's a difficult business. None of us understood it at all."

So what went wrong? Says Deepak Shivpuri of Shikar Holiday Resorts: "We are still not a holiday-minded society. People take vacations only in summer or winter. The resorts are unutilised all through the rest of the year, which is unviable."

Equally important, unlike in Europe, there are no clear time-sharing laws. Dalmia Resorts found that clients would not buy units without clear-cut laws—and the company spent more than a year in formulating the legal framework. Says Director B.V.S.A.N. Murthy: "It took international chains as much as 10 years to develop software to provide their customers flexible rather than fixed weeks. Yet in India, everyone was offering these without understanding the implications."

Perhaps most important, the companies pitched their expectations too high. The Bombay-based Ornate Club was able to sell only 1,000 units, whereas it expected to sell 5,000. And Shikar Travels sold a mere hundred units for Rs 5 lakh, just one-fifth of its target.

And all the companies underestimated the problems involved. As R.K. Rao, vice-president of the Madras-based Sterling Resorts, points out: "There is a lead time between taking the money and building the hotel where a lot of things can go wrong. You might not get clearance from the Government, for instance."

So the Dalmias who had plans to set up 32 resorts all over the country have set up only two. Palace Holiday Resorts intended to set up 35 hotels—it has yet to build one.

Predictably most are in the red. M.S. Resorts has suffered a loss of nearly Rs 60 lakh. And Dalmia does not expect to break even in the next two years.

So companies are trying to make the best of a worst situation. Sterling for instance is using half its resort room space as a hotel. And the Dalmias are following suit.

Time-sharers are also having to bear the burden of the resorts' failing fortunes. B.S. Kalra, a retired air force officer in Delhi, who bought a unit from the Dalmias says: "Today they are charging Rs 75 a day per person as service charges. This was not a part of the agreement."

Clearly, time-sharing in holiday resorts is an idea whose time has not yet come.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

BUSINESSPEAK

H.P. NANDA

Japanese Collaborations

Several Indian companies have struck financial and technical collaboration deals with Japanese industrial conglomerates to produce an array of items, from television sets to two-wheelers. However some Indian manufacturers have mixed feelings about their experience with the Japanese. H.P. Nanda, 71, chairman of Escorts Ltd—which has a technical collaboration agreement with Yamaha of Japan for the manufacture of 100 cc motor-cycles—last fortnight told Assistant Editor PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI *that the experience of Indian industry with Japan has not been as happy as that with other countries. The Japanese, says Nanda, wish to profit by continuing the supply of components to their joint ventures.*

INDIAN industry's experience with Japanese collaborations has not been as happy as that with West German, US and British collaborations. The Japanese are interested in making profits by supplying completely knocked down (CKD) packs. They've not taken the Government-approved phased manufacturing programmes (PMPS) seriously.

In the US, Japanese motor-cycle manufacturers invested heavily in setting up plants, but continue to send CKD packs from Japan. But Indian industry has to stick to PMPS and reduce CKD pack imports from 40 per cent to 5 per cent over five to seven years. This probably is a disappointment to Japanese collaborators. They're also disappointed that their gains are limited to transfer-of-technology fees—usually about $1 million (Rs 1.65 crore) for two wheelers—and the 3 to 4 per cent royalty for seven or eight years from the date of commercial production. Their stake is confined to these. And while European and US collaborators want more than a 40 per cent stake in joint ventures, the Japanese have limited theirs to 15 to 25 per cent, except in Maruti Udyog.

Moreover, the Japanese collaborator is not inclined to accept components other than those made with Japanese know-how. The Indian auto-ancillary industry has developed, and assimilated US and European technology but the Japanese won't accept these components. Instead, they've brought in technology from ancillary suppliers in Japan.

And the imports of technology have been repetitive. Apart from Escorts, which has a technical collaboration with Yamaha, four more companies have collaborations for 100 cc motor-cycles under different brand names. And all two-wheeler manufacturers with Japanese collaborations have imported similar equipment. Most of the capital equipment, including the painting and chrome plating shops, have been brought from Japan at very high costs. Coupled with the yen's appreciation against the rupee, this has made the cost of these projects prohibitive. So, many of them are incurring heavy losses. These losses are being minimised by quicker indigenisation—which is unpalatable to the Japanese collaborator.

The same thing has happened in light commercial vehicles and colour television sets. They're supplying television kits which are assembled here.

The Americans, Germans and British have identified India as a low-cost production base. They've set up joint ventures here to cater to the world market. Somehow, Japanese manufacturers have not followed this pattern. They don't want to share their supremacy of the world automotive market. The exception, again, is Suzuki. It has a large stake in Maruti and is encouraging it to export to East Bloc countries.

So what's the answer? Well, we've got to be more careful. Also, the positive thing is that both sides, the Indians and the Japanese, have matured. Japan has a big trade surplus. Industry and the Government work very closely in Japan. Japanese companies are now being pushed to shift abroad. The Japanese will now make genuine investments here. I believe that Japanese companies will now ask for equity stakes of 40 per cent or more.

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THE MARKETS

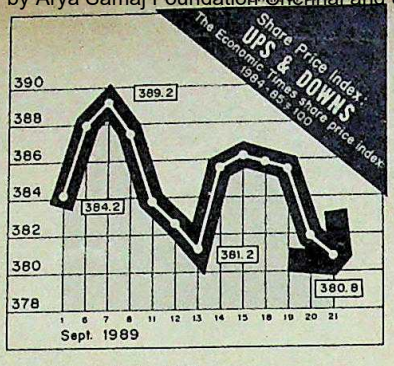
Prices See-saw

A mood of uncertainty

SHARE prices have been see-sawing again. As in the first half of September, prices first gradually climbed and then gently slid last fortnight. Over the month, the picture was that of a series of ups and downs (*see chart*).

That probably mirrored the political and economic uncertainties in the country. Reports that growth in key areas as steel, fertilisers and railway freight had slowed down in April and May may have cast a shadow. Also, investors have reportedly been selling scrips to subscribe to the spate of mega issues. The Reserve Bank of India, though, said in its annual report that the economy would be fairly buoyant this year, despite the possibility of inflation and a worsening balance of payments position.

To be sure, there was some revival of buying early in the fortnight despite the fact that the institutions hadn't done much buying last fortnight. In other words, the ordinary punter sallied forth on the market. As a result, the markets were initially bullish.



The bullish tone, first visible in the shares of synthetic textiles, fertiliser and tea companies, soon covered a range of scrips in the textiles, cement, leasing, shipping and pharmaceutical industries. Over the fortnight, shares of companies such as Baroda Rayon which posted sizeable profits last year shot up.

The glamour scrips were, however, excluded from the price upturn. And the shares of such companies as Larsen & Toubro, Bindal Agro and Essar Gujarat—which are waiting to hawk convertible debentures to the public or are already doing so—stagnated. The scrips of Apollo Tyres and Usha Rectifiers took a beating. Prices of their shares had earlier shot up unusually.

As the fortnight progressed, the bulls yielded ground to the bears. *The Economic Times* share price index dipped, from 381.2 on September 15 to 380.8 on September 21.

Yet the indices can be slightly misleading. In this case, they do not seem to have taken into account the price increases in the so-called non-specified section of shares. So although prices did see-saw, the fluctuations may not have been as wide in reality.

The big question is: what happens to the stock-markets next? Will they be dogged by more uncertainty? Companies are flourishing, many are making hefty profits. Yet the economic news is still uncertain. Is industrial production on a downslide? Right now, no one really knows. The official figures for more recent months have still to come in. These will certainly influence the mood of the markets.

One reason why an upswing can occur: as the elections approach, the Government will not wish share prices to drop precipitously. That would seem like a blot on its economic performance. So it could ask the institutions to step in and buy shares. But barring this possibility, the outlook seems uncertain.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1989 HIGH	LOW	CLOSE 21.9.89	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	84.00	61.00	74.00	2.00 +
Associated Cement	345.00	230.00	264.00	19.00 +
Asian Paints	226.25	165.00	200.00	10.00 –
Atlas Copco	53.00	32.00	38.50	4.50 –
Bajaj Auto	450.00	305.25	306.25	20.00 –
Baroda Rayon	755.00	285.00	730.00	65.00 +
Bata India	89.00	60.00	65.50	2.50 –
Bayer	910.00	580.00	740.00	nil
Bharat Forge	202.50	70.00	77.50	2.50 –
Birla Jute	73.75	41.50	50.50	5.50 –
Bombay Dyeing	162.00	104.00	126.00	2.00 +
Britannia Ind.	120.00	89.00	110.00	2.00 –*
Brooke Bond	155.00	75.00	86.00	2.00 +
Century Spinning	2240.00	1230.00	2180.00	25.00 +
Chloride India	88.50	72.00	83.00	1.50 +
Colgate Palmolive	371.25	162.50	172.50	6.25 –
Cyanamid	92.00	55.00	78.00	6.00 –*
DCM	85.00	31.00	55.00	2.00 +
Dunlop	95.50	70.00	75.00	4.50 –
E.I. Hotels	68.00	50.00	58.50	2.50 +
Escorts	84.00	58.00	81.50	0.50 +
Finolex Cables	430.00	290.00	300.00	27.50 –
Food Specialities	224.00	154.00	160.00	3.00 –
Garware Nylon	55.50	36.00	49.50	5.00 –
G.E. Shipping	46.50	33.75	40.00	0.75 –
G.S.F.C.	177.50	123.75	165.00	nil
Grasim Ind.	137.00	75.00	105.00	4.50 –
Hind. Aluminium	327.50	155.00	255.00	12.50 –
Hind. Ciba	1090.00	600.00	860.00	20.00 –
Hind. Cocoa	141.25	98.75	135.00	5.00 +
Hindustan Lever	101.50	69.50	99.50	nil
Hindustan Motors	52.50	26.75	31.50	0.50 –
ICI India Ltd.	68.00	39.00	53.00	3.00 –
Indian Organic	49.50	23.00	46.00	0.50 –
Indian Rayon	106.00	75.75	83.50	1.00 +
Indrol	335.00	218.75	242.50	21.25 –
Ingersoll-Rand	423.75	267.50	407.50	7.50 –
ITC	129.00	46.25	69.00	6.0 +
J.K. Synthetics	92.00	66.00	76.00	4.00 –
Kinetic Engineering	395.00	130.00	150.00	5.00 –
Kirloskar Cummins	88.75	54.50	68.00	2.00 –
KSB Pumps	445.00	190.00	195.00	185.00 –**
Larsen & Toubro	128.00	81.50	101.50	0.50 –
Lipton	85.00	65.00	77.50	3.00 +
LML Ltd.	28.00	12.50	18.00	1.50 –
Madura Coats	104.00	92.25	100.00	3.75 +
Mahindra & Mahindra	113.50	76.50	93.00	2.00 +
Milk Food	300.00	180.00	222.50	17.50 +
Motor Industries	695.00	560.00	620.00	10.00 –
Mukand Ltd.	140.50	75.00	130.50	0.50 +
National Organic	1180.00	710.00	1080.00	20.00 +
Nirlon	17.00	8.00	11.25	nil
Orkay Silk Mills	29.00	13.50	15.50	nil
Peico Electronics	30.50	16.50	24.00	2.75 +
Pfizer	80.00	58.00	65.00	1.00 –
Ponds	212.50	151.25	166.00	4.00 –
Premier Auto	65.00	40.00	59.00	1.00 –
Raymond	85.00	65.50	76.25	4.75 –
Reliance Industries	158.00	99.50	101.00	4.00 –
Siemens India	95.00	65.00	77.00	6.00 +
Shaw Wallace	103.25	62.00	94.50	1.50 –
Shriram Fibres	94.00	58.00	58.00	23.00 –
SKF Bearings	3020.00	1140.00	1230.00	40.00 –
SPIC	67.00	39.00	47.75	5.50 –
Tata Steel	1580.00	1062.50	1201.25	17.50 –
Telco	1075.00	657.50	1030.00	12.50 –
Vam Organic	178.00	136.00	165.00	nil
Videocon Int.	172.50	55.00	152.50	17.50 –*
Voltas	1000.00	470.00	950.00	100.00 +
Wimco	32.00	15.00	16.25	0.50 –

*Ex-dividend **Ex-bonus

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	12.9536	12.8131
Austria	Schilling	100	1.2365	1.2232
Bahrain	Dinar	1	44.2916	44.1522
Bangladesh	Taka	100	52.9122	52.8526
Canada	Dollar	1	14.2776	14.1284
Denmark	Kroner	1	2.2370	2.2137
Egypt	Pound	1	6.12	6.09
France	Franc	1	2.6110	2.5445
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.1639	2.1418
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.0920	0.0900
Iran	Rial	100	22.2126	22.1620
Italy	Lira	100	1.2074	1.1944
Japan	Yen	100	11.33	11.62
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7690	0.7400
Kuwait	Dinar	1	55.0296	54.9110
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.2667	6.2022
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.0360	1.0000
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6540	0.6192
Netherlands	Guilder	1	7.7167	7.6357
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7916	0.7780
Singapore	Dollar	1	8.5312	
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1350	0.1100
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4396	0.4128
Sweden	Kroner	1	2.5679	2.5413
Switzerland	Franc	1	10.0379	9.9313
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.1150	0.1000
Thailand	Baht	100	62.3980	62.2561
UK	Pound	1	26.6064	26.4131
USA	Dollar	1	16.8919	16.7241
UAE	Dirham	1	4.5000	4.4568
USSR	Rouble	1	25.4528	25.3526
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	8.8261	8.6059

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 22.9.89.

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"My wife loves doing things in style.
When she wanted a refrigerator
to match the kitchen tiles,
I laughed. But she had her way."

Whatever the reason, make sure it's a Godrej.

SPECTRUM

A never-before range of **exclusive** colours. Desert sand. Dusky blue. Electric red. Spring green. Cool blue, Classic white, Imperial ivory and Misty grey. All in **epoxy powder coated** finish that is durable, attractive and long-lasting.

Other superior features include:
Megaforce—the robust, energy-efficient compressor.
Coolguard—100% polyurethane insulation—the international standard.
Ultraspace—Ingeniously designed interior for greater storage space.

A widespread dealer network that ensures prompt and dependable service.

Godrej. A name that people have trusted for years. Where every day is spent in updating technology. Today, our modern, automated plant has developed a truly international class refrigerator. Because we want you to have the best.

TRUST Godrej®

HTA 1666

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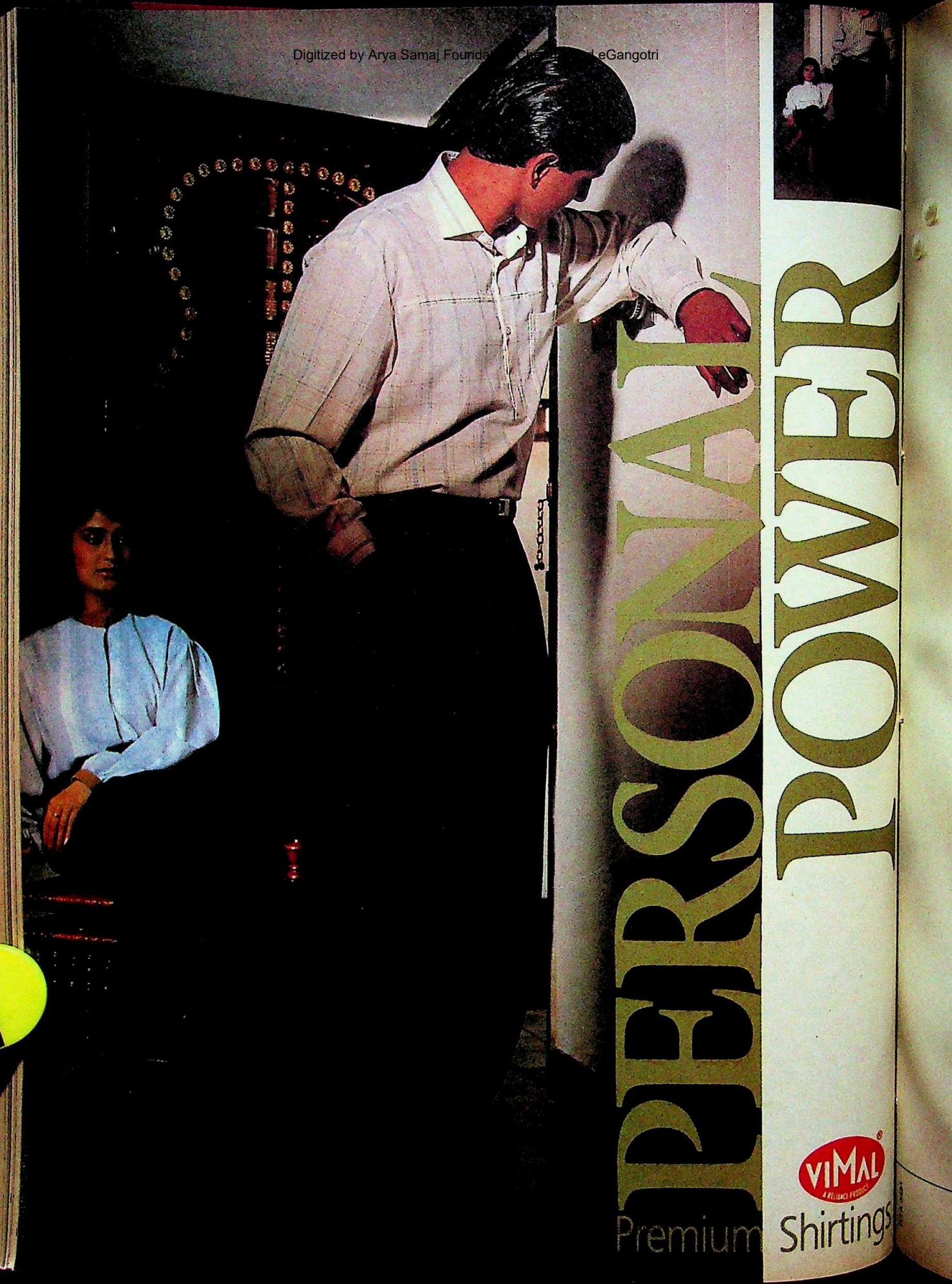

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Living with a velvet touch

Luxurious living that's as smooth as velvet.
Rooms lined with velvet. Lined with the luxury of Velvet
Touch, the unique wall finish that glows with
the lustre and delicate sheen of the perfect pearl. In 23 elegant
shades plus 6 soft whites with just a hint of colour to
give you the perfect finishing touch
that your lifestyle demands. The Velvet Touch!

ICI Dulux

Velvet Touch

For those who have everything, something more.

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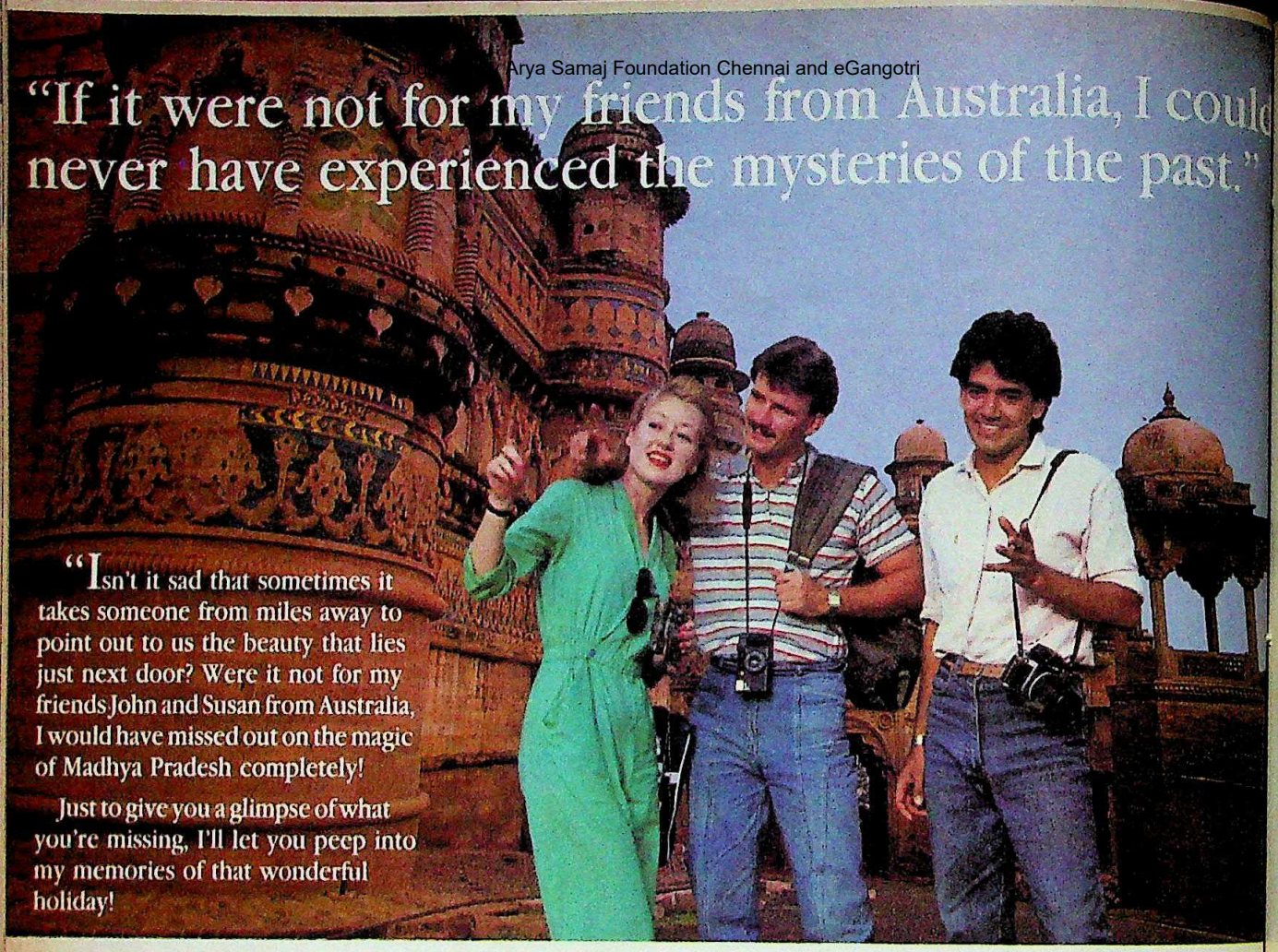
"If it were not for my friends from Australia, I could never have experienced the mysteries of the past."



"Isn't it sad that sometimes it takes someone from miles away to point out to us the beauty that lies just next door? Were it not for my friends John and Susan from Australia, I would have missed out on the magic of Madhya Pradesh completely!

Just to give you a glimpse of what you're missing, I'll let you peep into my memories of that wonderful holiday!

"When John and Susan suggested a holiday in Madhya Pradesh, I was surprised. But I was still more surprised when I discovered all that Madhya Pradesh had to offer. Monuments. Temples. Sanctuaries. Even a hill station! In Madhya Pradesh I have had the most fascinating experience.

Right from day one, new wonders unfolded. **Mandu**—the 'City of Joy' with its tragic love story of Roopmati and Baz Bahadur.

And **Orchha**, the well preserved medieval city which made the 20th century seem light years away.

History came alive at **Gwalior** too, with its massive fort chronicling the rise and fall of dynasties.

At **Khajuraho**, the mastery of the craftsmen who translated mere stone into beauty and grace left us spellbound.

John and Susan couldn't wait to meet a tiger face to face. They did at **Kanha and Bandhavgarh**. We also met deer, bison, nilgai and colourful birds.

At **Sanchi**, one could almost hear the peace... I had great fun explaining the Jataka Tales depicted on the Stupa gates to John and Susan.

And the prehistoric rock paintings at **Bhimbetka** have been executed by different artists of several different civilisations over several centuries!

The confluence of faith, devotion and prayer at **Ujjain, Omkareshwar and Maheshwar** overwhelmed us.

Back in **Bhopal**, we saw the lakes, museums, safari park, and of course, the Bharat Bhavan.

Everywhere we went, lovely log huts, tourist bungalows and prompt transport awaited us—and we didn't even overstep our budget!

But there's lots I haven't seen yet. **Pachmarhi**—the verdant hill station. **Marble Rocks, Amarkantak** and **Chitrakoot.** The exquisite chhatries at **Shivpuri.** And to think that I might never have discovered Madhya Pradesh but for John and Susan!

Thank you John. Thank you Susan. And most of all, thank you Madhya Pradesh! I'm proud to have met you."

Come to Madhya Pradesh... It's surprising a lot of people like you.

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MILESTONES/MPT/153aR

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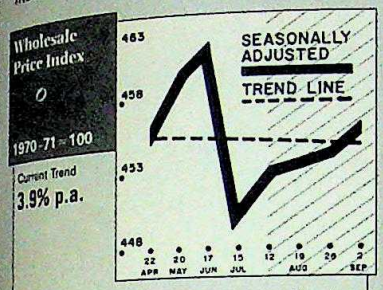
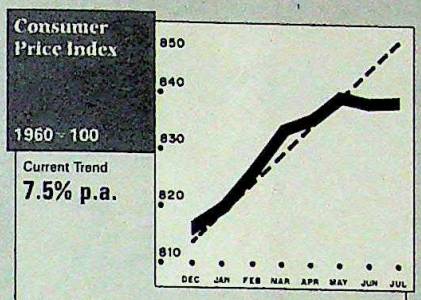
Inflation dominates the news on the economic front this fortnight. Despite two successive good monsoons, prices continue to rise sharply and the Government's economic management has a lot of explanation to do. There was one positive sign—the drop in imports which comes as a relief after a period of relentless upward spiralling. But that good news went hand in hand with a big disappointment—the stagnation in export earnings.

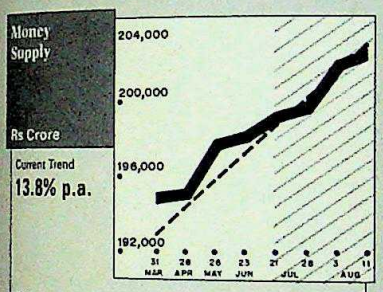
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



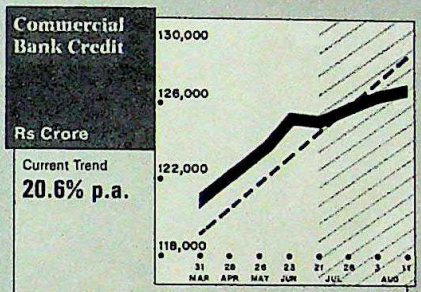
Wholesale prices shot up during the last fortnight. The annualised rate of increase worked out to 17 per cent.



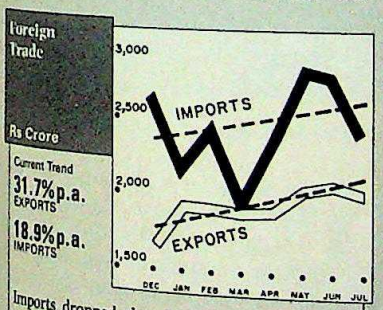
Consumer prices remained stable in July—but since then the prices of both sugar and edible oil have spurted.



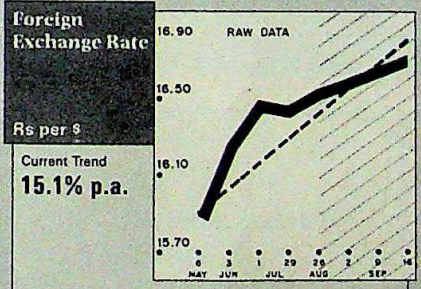
The supply of money in the economy increased sharply over the last fortnight—an ominous portent for inflation.



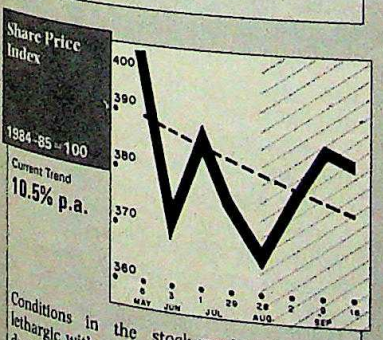
Commercial credit conditions remained easy during the last fortnight causing no constraint to industrial growth.



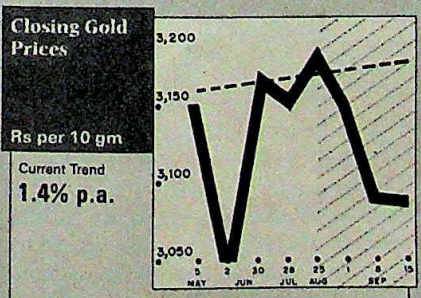
Imports dropped sharply by 14 per cent last month but at the same time exports too fell, though only by 2 per cent.



The devaluation of the rupee against the dollar continues and should aid the growth of exports in the next year.



Conditions in the stock-market remained lethargic with only a few positive signs of life during the last fortnight.



Once again the price of gold dropped—continuing the trend of a year of stagnation in the bullion market.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 2nd fortnight of August 1989

	% Growth
Sewing Machine	6.67
Gram	6.58
Rape & Mustard Seeds	6.14
Onions	5.46
Linseed Oil	5.19
Mustard Oilcake	5.07
Linseed	4.91
Mining Machinery	4.86
Ghee	4.86
Solvent Extracted Oil	4.77
Fish	4.72
Groundnut Oil	4.62
Urad	4.45
Art Silk & Artificial Fabrics	4.32
Atta	4.12
Barley	4.06
Gur	3.87
Cotton Seeds	3.71
Masoor	3.42
Mustard Oil	3.22
Gingelly Oil	2.83
Sugar	2.81
Silk-Raw	2.80
Cotton Yarn	2.66
Dairy Products	1.98
Eggs	1.97
Cashew-Nut	1.89
Cotton Raw	1.82
Diesel Engines	1.78
Cycles	1.49
Copper & Alloys	1.31
Cars	1.24
Bajra	1.15
Groundnut Seeds	1.12
Ball Bearing	1.12
Boilers	1.11
Wheat	1.00
Milk	0.95
Caustic Soda	0.91
Internal Combustion Engines	0.91
Tea	0.90
Hides Raw	0.87
Caxbles & Wires	0.84
Ragi	0.80
Khandsari	0.72
Cotton Cloth	0.63
Butter	0.61

Of the 137 series considered, 56 of them with a total weight of 43.921 had a positive growth and 11 of them with a total weight of 5.298 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1989	1988
Coal		
Thousand Tonnes, August	13390	12890
Saleable Steel		
Thousand Tonnes, August	747.4	737.5
Cement		
Thousand Tonnes, August	3283	3386
Petroleum Crude		
Thousand Tonnes, August	2828	2650
Petroleum Refinery Products		
Thousand Tonnes, August	4177	3749

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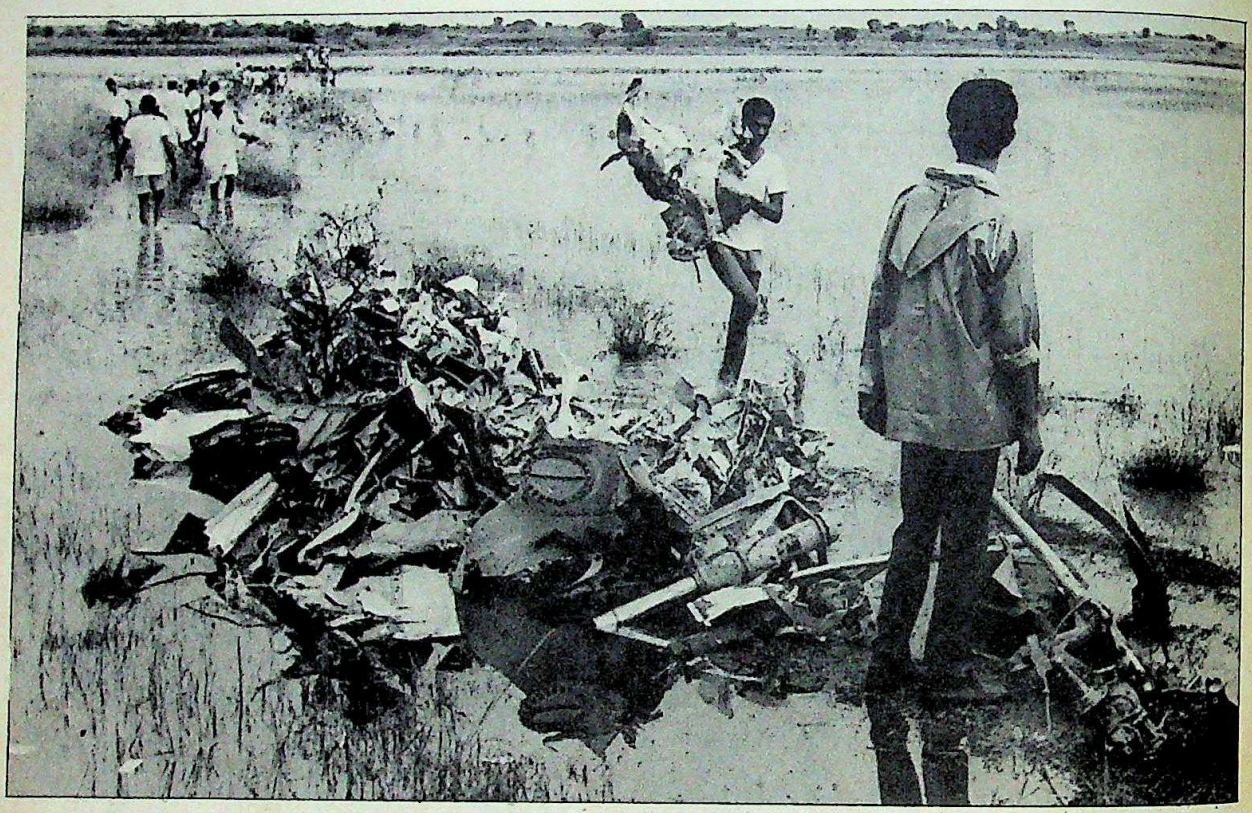
AVIATION

Heading for a Crisis

A year after domestic aviation's darkest hour, the situation remains grim



The September 23 Vayudoot crash debris

DENSE thunderclouds had gathered over Pune airport when Vayudoot Flight Number PF-624 with 11 people aboard took off at 7.20 p.m. on September 23. Fifteen minutes later, Captain I.A. Khan, the flight's commander, radioed Bombay control tower and said: "Cruising at level 95 (9,500 ft). Arrival at Hyderabad at 2100 hours." That was the last contact.

It is still not clear what happened to Flight PF-624. What is known is that 20 minutes later the Dornier aircraft nose-dived steeply and plunged into the shallow backwaters of Ujani Dam, 135 km from Pune, killing all 11 people aboard.

Last week's fatal crash was only the most recent manifestation of the problems that continue to plague domestic air travel. Almost a year after Indian civil aviation's darkest hour that saw two crashes in Ahmedabad and Guwahati leave 167 people dead on October 19, the country's civil aviation agencies are again heading dangerously towards a collapse.

> **The recent Vayudoot crash comes after a series of near-misses which indicate that the factors responsible for last year's crashes continue unchanged.**

Just three weeks earlier, Indian Airlines Flight IC403 with 240 passengers on board came perilously close to what could have been another major air disaster when a National Airports Authority (NAA) aircraft slid past just a wingspan away. For Indian Airlines, it was the fourth such "near miss" in three months.

► In Guwahati, on January 11 this year, an Indian Airlines Boeing 737 flight taking off for Calcutta rammed into a bull on the runway damaging the aircraft.

► On August 28, while landing at Bombay, pilots manning an Avro flight discovered a serious malfunction in the aerodrome's glide slope, an instrument that guides the aircraft's angle of descent while landing. It was beaming a faulty signal that would have made them land on nearby slums instead of the runway.

► On August 21, just after take-off from Silchar airport, Flight IC238 started banking uncontrollably to the left. After an emergency landing, engineers found that one of the slats, that control aircraft stability, was broken. After repairs, they cleared the aircraft. Three days later, the problem recurred and the aircraft had to make an unscheduled landing.

► To cap the dismal record, Indian Airlines' new fly-by-wire Airbus A320 flew into serious problems. On August 10, when Flight IC806 was coming in to land

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at Delhi, a bird collided against the cockpit triggering off totally unrelated snags. Pilots found that both their vital cockpit display panels had been knocked off and that the aircraft's left engine had flamed out. They managed to bring the aircraft down safely. Now the Civil Aviation Department threatens to ground all the eight A320s unless major design modifications are made.

The "incidents" have set alarm bells ringing in aviation circles. As Captain B.K. Bhasin, member, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the country's new watchdog body, points out: "Major air disasters never have a single cause. It is usually a failure of several aviation agencies that leads to a crash. And incidents, however minor, are indications of the dangerous trends."

The two courts of inquiry investigating last year's crashes revealed a tale of chilling lapses. Of inexperienced pilots ignoring safety procedures. Of raw control tower officials wrongly directing air traffic. Of careless meteorological officers ignoring crucial weather trends. Of shocking delays in commissioning vital aids at airports. As a member of the Ahmedabad crash inquiry said: "We were confronted with evidence of a system rotten to the core" *(see following story)*.

Almost a year after the crash, the core continues to be rotten. It is not as if the various agencies have been inactive. The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has shaken off years of neglect and tried to rectify the shortage of manpower. The NAA is making a determined bid to upgrade airport facilities. Indian Airlines has filled up its long vacant post of director of air safety and beefed up surveillance of pilots and engineers. And the NTSB has been occasionally baring its teeth. As Sen says: "We have done a lot in the past year but it is still an uphill task."

Despite these measures, the years of apathy and anarchy that characterised civil aviation are now coming home with ferocious intensity. The problem of inexperienced pilots manning flights, one of the causes of the two crashes, has only escalated. That's because Indian Airlines had earlier neglected to recruit pilots regularly. And with 27 senior pilots resigning recently there is a crippling shortage of trained cockpit crew.

Apart from forcing the airline to overwork its pilots, the shortage has led to further problems. With the airline desperately upgrading co-pilots to take command in Boeing 737s, the average age and experience levels of captains have been dropping dramatically. Just five years ago, the average age of commanders was 35 and each had put in over 8,000 hours of flying, 2,000 of these on the same aircraft. Today, the new batches being recruited as captains are around 25 to 28 years of age and have barely 1,000 hours of flying 737s under their belts.

ALL this can only accentuate problems. The inquiry into the Ahmedabad crash had showed up the lack of co-ordination between the two pilots. That, aviation experts point out, is because of inadequate training of pilots. An expert committee appointed by the Aviation Ministry to go into the problem has found several serious lacunae in the training programme. Among them was lack of training in cockpit team-work and management. As NTSB's Bhasin, who chaired the committee, says: "Team work in the cockpit is missing."

In aircraft maintenance as well, serious problems have cropped up. The shortage of engineers has seen the maintenance of fleets put under tremendous strain. As Indian Airlines Managing Director R. Prasad candidly admits: "We are only now getting down to cleaning up the mess left behind for us."

In navigational aids, the situation continues to be as grim. Though domestic airlines possess highly sophisticated aircraft, navigational landing aids are obsolete. Almost 90 per cent of landings in the country are done without using instrument landing systems despite the fact that jet aircraft require advanced ground aids to make safe landings.

The NAA's record on maintenance is dismal. The court of inquiry had severely reprimanded it for not making the instrument landing systems at Ahmedabad airport functional though these had been installed in 1986. A year after the crash, the instrument is still not operational because, officials claim, some of the parts have been found defective.

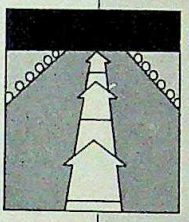
In Lucknow, the airport's landing system though installed in 1986 is yet to be made operational. Reason: the localiser, a crucial instrument in the system, has repeatedly developed snags which airport authorities are unable to set right. In Bombay, the problem is theft of bulbs. And most NAA officials admit that the landing equipment is rarely checked for accuracy at scheduled intervals.

However, many of NAA's problems, as its Chairman Air Marshal C.K.S. Raje points out, are due to "a shortage of

Alarming Facts

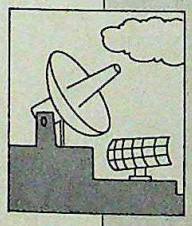
Shortage of trained pilots:
Indian Airlines failed to recruit pilots regularly. With 27 senior pilots resigning recently, there is a crippling shortage of crew.

Inexperienced pilots manning flights:
Five years ago, the average age of commanders was 35 years, each with over 8,000 hours of flying time under his belt. Today, the average age of captains is between 25 and 28 and these have barely 1,000 hours of flying 737s.



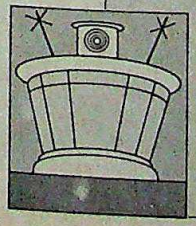
Lack of advanced landing aids at airports:
Almost 90 per cent of landings in the country are done without instrument landing systems. Jet aircraft need these to make safe landings.

Inadequate training programme for cockpit crew:
An expert committee of the Aviation Ministry reported serious lacunae in the training programme for cockpit crew. Among them, lack of training in cockpit team-work and management.



Lack of radar facilities:
In most airports, controllers still mark charts manually to direct traffic. Barely 20 per cent of Indian airspace is under radar surveillance.

Money and manpower shortage in National Airports Authority:
Overall manpower shortage at NAA is running at a high 30 per cent. Its annual budget of Rs 76 crore is barely enough for maintenance, let alone upgrading airport landing facilities.



Control towers are heavily shortstaffed:
The Bombay airport control tower has a sanctioned strength of 17. Only nine have been appointed.

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manpower and funds". Although it has 86 airports under its control, it is saddled with some of the most uneconomical routes. In the past two years alone, it has opened 42 new airports, 37 of these for Vayudoot. It needs to add 3,000 new hands to man them. It has added 700. Overall manpower shortage is now running at a high 30 per cent. NAA's annual budget of less than Rs 76 crore is barely sufficient to carry out maintenance, leave alone upgrade airport landing facilities.

There has been no improvement in air traffic control too, one of the causes of last year's Vayudoot crash at Guwahati. While the world over, air traffic control has moved to computers and radars, in India facilities remain primitive. In most airports, controllers continue to manually mark out charts to direct traffic. And barely 20 per cent of Indian airspace is under radar surveillance.

Besides, most control towers are heavily shortstaffed. The Bombay tower, for instance, has a sanctioned strength of 17 per shift. But only nine people have been appointed. Advanced training courses are unheard of. Worse, there are only four instructors, who double as examiners. Result: proficiency checks are shoddy and professional errors rarely corrected. As D.D. Sardana, secretary-general, Air Traffic Controllers Guild, warns: "The situation is so desperate that we expect a mid-air collision any day now."

Though the DGCA has been vested with several crucial tasks—licensing of pilots and engineers and certifying aircraft for air-worthiness—it faces a tremendous manpower shortage and lack of qualified hands. In fact, when the two crashes occurred, 20 per cent of the DGCA's sanctioned staff had not been hired. Worse, it had no regular pilots on its rolls and used pilots from the airlines to perform the crucial tasks of licensing and carrying out proficiency checks. The DGCA now intends to set up an independent flight inspection directorate and plans to have 15 examiner pilots on its rolls.

All this calls for, as Prakash Narain, the safety board chairman, puts it, "a battle to be fought on a number of fronts". Says he: "There needs to be greater discipline in working, intensified surveillance, better licensing and training and tougher safety measures." But with domestic airlines under severe stress, airport navigational aids remaining obsolete and regulations still lax, domestic air travel seems to be again heading for a major breakdown. Warns an aviation expert: "Indian civil aviation may soon see a darker hour."

—RAJ CHENGAPPA with bureau reports

OCTOBER '88 CRASHES

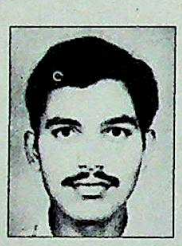
Shocking Truths

A deadly tale of irregularities and frightening lapses

THE deep roar of twin jet engines is frequently interrupted by staccato bursts of voices. Suddenly there is a loud thud followed by a piercing scream. Then silence.

For the four-member court of inquiry in Delhi headed by Justice A.K. Mathur, investigating the Indian Airlines crash at Ahmedabad airport last year, that series of sounds was crucial evidence. It was part of the audio-cassette recording of the cockpit conversation between Flight IC 113's commander O.M. Dalaya and co-pilot Deepak Nagpal as they headed for disaster that foggy October morning. As one member said later: "For us it was the moment of truth."

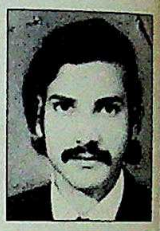
In Calcutta, the three-member court of inquiry headed by Justice U.C. Banerjee probing the crash of Vayudoot Flight 704 in Guwahati the same day was experiencing similar moments of truth. And as the two courts sifted through reams of evidence and cross-examined scores of officials, they were independently getting a stunning picture of what had caused the



IC 113'S COCKPIT CONVERSATION

"He will put us in a fix."
NAGPAL, *co-pilot*

"You mean kill us?"
DALAYA, *flight commander*



6.34 a.m.

Nagpal: I told Captain Vaidya about your son's remark. He laughed a lot.

Dalaya: Which one?

Nagpal: Saying Daddy, quickly celebrate your birthday, otherwise you may not have any hair left on your head.

6.36 a.m.

Nagpal to Tower: Ahmedabad India 113, approaching 150 (15,000 feet).

Tower: Further descent to transition 55 (descend to 5,500 feet).

6.38 a.m.

Nagpal: Boss, Jodhpur *se paintings khareed kar laaya hoon. Bahut sasti.* (I bought paintings from Jodhpur. Very cheap.)

Dalaya: *Agar aap frame karo tabhi dikhti hai show barabar.* (Only if you frame them will they look good.)

6.39 a.m.

Dalaya: Rate of descent *kam kar le apna.* (Reduce the rate of descent.)

Nagpal: 10,000 feet. O.K., reducing it.

Dalaya: *Waise,* I am not well *aur zyada lagta hai.* (I am not well and it seems quite bad.)

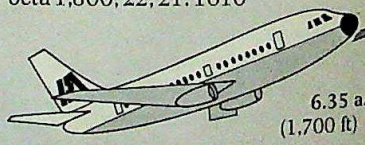
Nagpal: Oh, yeah.

Dalaya: *Raat ko* I was sweating and suddenly got cold. *Neend aa rahee thee, jaa rahee thee. Hota hai na? Theek hai, badh gaya to kuch kar loonga.* (At night I slept fitfully. It happens, doesn't it? If it increases, I'll do something about it.)

(Although the court of inquiry did not take cognizance of this conversation, the National Transportation Safety Board pointed that it indicated Dalaya was "physically unwell".)

6.42 a.m.

Tower: Copy India, Special Ahmedabad 0110, Calm, 2,000 metre haze, one octa 1,800, 22, 21, 1010



6.35 a.m.
(1,700 ft)

No sig. (The special weather report taken at 6.40 a.m. indicating visibility is 2,000 metre, winds calm, haze, clouds at 1,800 feet. No change for the next two hours)

Nagpal: Roger.

Nagpal to Dalaya: Boss, *ye kuch karvayega.* (He will put us in a fix.)

Dalaya: *Marvayega yane ki?* (You mean kill us?)

Nagpal: *Marvayega nahin, matlab kuch karvayega.* (Not kill. I mean make us do something.)

Dalaya: What?

Nagpal: *Ek octa cloud bhi de diya bande ne.* (Our friend gave us cloud cover in only one region.)

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The Ahmedabad crash: chain of errors

two crashes—in the darkest hour in Indian civil aviation history—that had left 167 people dead on October 19, 1988.

The mistakes, the court of inquiry into the Ahmedabad crash found, were beginning to mount even before Flight IC 113 took off from Bombay at 6.05 a.m. Thirty minutes before take-off, Flight Despatch Officer A.K. Banerjee handed a typewritten sheet to Dalaya and Nagpal in the airport's briefing room. Called 'notam' or 'notice to airmen', the bulletin contained crisp briefs about the condition of landing aids in several airports. It stated that the Ahmedabad airport's approach lights and several vital navigational landing aids were non-functional. But from their cockpit conversations, Dalaya and Nagpal appear not to have read the notam. That

RAMESH DAVE

Dalaya: *Yahan to 2 km hain na. Aaram se, aaram se ho jayega.* (Visibility is 2 km. We can do it easily.)

(The court found that the actual weather was deteriorating and the faulty meteorology report lulled the pilots into a sense of complacency.)

6.43 a.m.

Dalaya: Cabin crew to your landing stations. Will be landing in another five minutes.

Then tells Nagpal: *Neeche nazar aa jaye to bata dena.* (If you see the ground let me know.)

Air Hostess: Captain, temperature?

Dalaya to Nagpal: *Kya hai?* (What is it?)

Nagpal: 22 (degrees Celsius)

6.45 a.m.

Nagpal: Solid bad, sir.

Dalaya: *Bada hi bekaar weather hai.* (It's really bad weather.)

(This conversation indicated clearly that the weather had deteriorated and visibility was dropping.)

6.47 a.m.

Nagpal: I can see the runway.

Dalaya: *Khair, abhi tum runway baad me dekhna.* (You can see the runway later.)

6.50 a.m.

Dalaya: Approach mode. Turning inbound *boliye.* (Meaning: the aircraft has made its procedure turn and is now aligning itself with the runway.)

Nagpal to Tower: Ahmedabad India 113, turning inbound, will call you runway in sight sir.

Tower: Roger.

(The Safety Board felt that Dalaya had mistakenly chosen the 'approach mode' for landing—a procedure used only if the airport instrument landing systems are working. The notam had indicated that these were not operational and Dalaya may have been relying on faulty signals.)

6.51 a.m.

Nagpal: *Wahan neeche dekho.* (Look down there.)

Dalaya: Huts *hain.* Landing check list. *Gear down karke phir jayengay.* (Let's do the landing check list and then go.)

6.52 a.m.

Nagpal: 1,000 feet above aerodrome elevation.

Dalaya: Checked.

Dalaya: *Kya dikh raha hai? Saaf dikh raha hai?* (What do you see? Is it clear?)

Nagpal: *Nazar aa raha hai* sir. (I can see something.)

(The court found that after 1,000 feet no altitude checks were done—a violation of standard operating procedure.)

6.52.45 a.m.

Nagpal: *Approach aa rahee hai, sir, 30 40 de.* (I can see the approach, sir, let down the 30-40, the landing flaps.)

Dalaya: 30-40. (Sound of lever movement.)

(The court felt the pilots had violated another procedure—putting down their landing flaps fully without first sighting the runway.)

6.52.54 a.m.

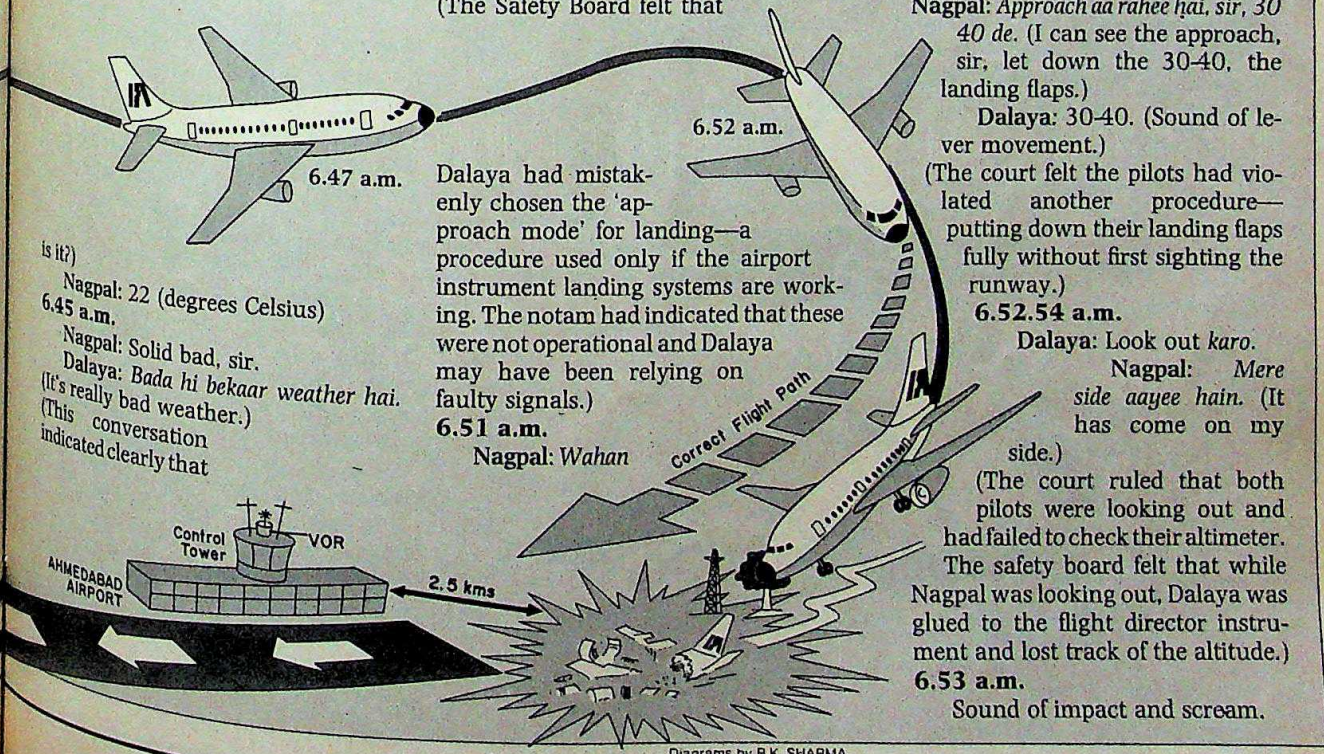
Dalaya: Look out *karo.*

Nagpal: *Mere side aayee hain.* (It has come on my side.)

(The court ruled that both pilots were looking out and had failed to check their altimeter. The safety board felt that while Nagpal was looking out, Dalaya was glued to the flight director instrument and lost track of the altitude.)

6.53 a.m.

Sound of impact and scream.



Diagrams by B.K. SHARMA

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turned out to be their first error.

At 26, Nagpal was among the new recruits who went directly to jets, skipping the usual flying on turbo-props such as Avros and Fokkers. Just five months before the crash, he was cleared to fly as co-pilot on a Boeing 737 and had logged barely 179 hours of flying. Dalaya, 37, though an experienced flyer, was comparatively new as commander of a Boeing 737, having passed his examination on his second attempt in September 1987. Ideally, the court pointed out, Nagpal should have been flying with a more senior commander. The combination of two pilots, both inexperienced, was to prove deadly.

The court of inquiry investigating the Guwahati crash was coming up with disturbing facts too. Co-pilot Raghava Reddy, 29, had been inducted a year ago to fly Fokkers. Captain B.S. Bhogal had been promoted as commander two months before the crash. As the court found, Bhogal, 46, a former Indian Air Force transport pilot, seemed unaware of several key landing procedures—a major cause of the crash.

As the court probed deeper, it uncovered a series of irregularities. Bhogal had been checked and passed by M.P. Singh, a Vayudoot examiner. That, the court pointed out, was "highly unsatisfac-

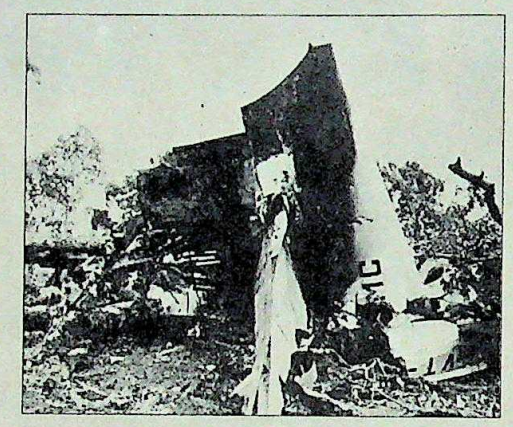
GUWAHATI CRASH

Fatal Lapses

IN the Guwahati crash, a deadly combination of factors had built up. Since Vayudoot's Fokkers are not equipped with cockpit voice recorders (a lack the court disapproved of) the recorded conversation between Guwahati air traffic control and the aircraft became crucial in determining the cause of the crash.

At 8.42 a.m., Captain B.S. Bhogal called the tower and said they had locked on to the VOR, an instrument that tells them they are right above the runway. He also requested permission to carry out his procedure turn that would align him with the runway. "Roger," said air traffic control.

Bhogal did not know that he was speaking not to Vineet Gulati, the air traffic controller but to his assistant, Mohandasan. It was here that the court stumbled on a dangerous practice that was reportedly being followed in most control towers. Mohandasan's job was to prepare bills, maintain records and "assist" in handling air traffic. He was neither authorised to direct air traffic nor competent to do so. Still, he independently directed 704's flight path. Probing further, the court found that not only was Gulati not present in the tower but Mohandasan had given mistaken commands. That factor proved to be one of the causes of the crash.



Wreckage: series of irregularities

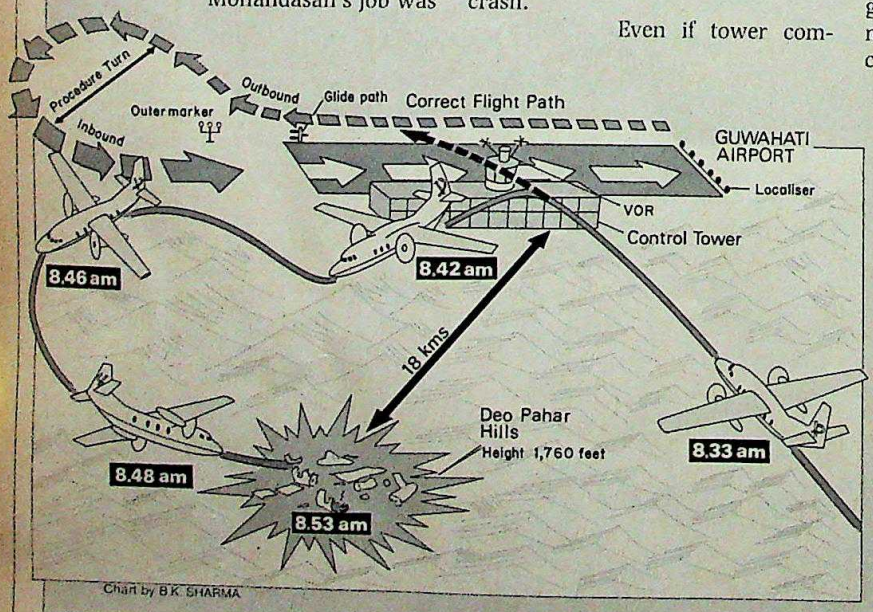
Even if tower commands were confusing, that was not sufficient reason for the crash. But Bhogal and Co-pilot Raghava Reddy too were making terrible mistakes. As a replay of the flight data recorder (the black box) indicated, Bhogal had actually turned much before he had spotted the VOR—his first error. He then inexplicably veered some 15 miles off course, right over the hills of Guwahati.

Even then, the court of inquiry observed, he could have got out of trouble had he not violated elementary descent precautions. At Guwahati airport, pilots are to begin their descent from 4,000 feet only when they spot navigational aids like the glide path, which indicates the aircraft's angle of descent to the runway.

At 8.47 a.m. Bhogal radioed the tower that they were not getting the glide path. A minute later, the tower asked: "704, confirm you are getting glide path." Bhogal replied: "Aah, negative, sir. 704 negative. We have completed procedure turn and turning inbound now." Meaning he had completed the loop that should have brought the aircraft on line with the runway.

It was here that fatal mistakes were made. Instead of requesting him to "state your intention" Mohandasan radioed: "Report outer marker inbound"—a command which indirectly meant he was cleared for descent. Even so, the pilots should not have descended since they had not locked onto the glide path. But they dropped to a dangerous 1,760 feet. Through the cloud cover they probably never saw the hill which they rammed into, killing all 34 people on board.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA



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tory" because, ideally, the examination should be conducted by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the authority which issues pilot licences. But the DGCA pleaded that it was short-staffed and did not have competent pilots to conduct examinations.

IC 113 had proceeded normally towards Ahmedabad, got in touch with the tower and at 6.32 a.m. was given clearance to descend from 2,100 feet to 1,500 feet—the initial manoeuvre for landing. The tower then radioed the Speci or special meteorological report taken a minute earlier which stated: visibility 2,000 metres, calm winds, haze with cloud formation at 1,800 feet. The report added crucially: 'No sig' meaning no significant change in weather conditions expected in the next two hours. Meanwhile 1,500 feet below, near the control tower, the meteorological office was, as the court opined, committing serious errors.

As with most Indian airports, visibility at Ahmedabad is measured arbitrarily. For determining that visibility was 2,000 metres on that fateful morning, B.J. Alika, the senior observer on duty, depended on the fact that he could spot a cinema theatre 2.2 km away from the tower. Under cross examination he admitted that visibility had been decreasing.

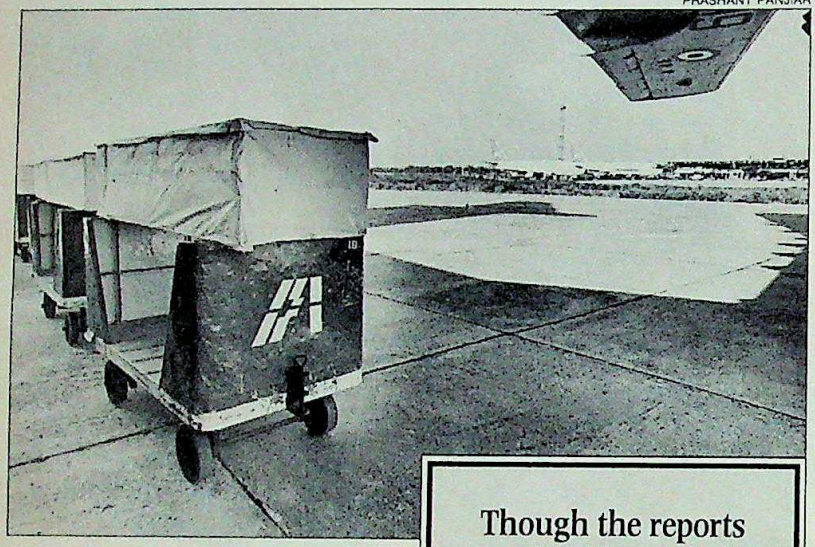
Then, as the court discovered, came the strangest of explanations for no action being taken to report the deteriorating visibility. If the visibility was less than 2,000 metres, then the meteorological staff would have had to go to the other end of the runway and report the true visibility conditions. To do that they would have had to requisition a vehicle from the controller and the whole procedure would have taken over 20 minutes.

A study of the actual weather during that time showed that visibility had rapidly dropped below 2,000 metres and instead of haze, a mist had developed.

There were also other indirect contributory factors.

Although the instrument landing systems, a set of navigational aids, at Ahmedabad airport had been installed in 1986 they had yet to be made functional. Reason: the outer-marker, an instrument indicating the distance from the airport, had not been given power connection for two years.

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Coffins of victims at Ahmedabad

Though the reports on the Ahmedabad and Guwahati crashes were submitted early this year, they have not yet been made public.

Worse, the National Airports Authority, the agency responsible for maintaining domestic aerodromes, admitted under questioning that it had not checked the accuracy of other crucial navigational aids for over two years. This despite a statutory requirement that it be done once in three months. The authority trotted out the excuse that it did not have enough aircraft to carry out these checks. The court pointed out that even simple aids like approach lights, which indicate the beginning of the runway, had not been working for two months. The authority's excuse: frequent pilferage of bulbs.

Despite that, the pilots could still have avoided the crash. But they too had begun making irrevocable blunders. Nagpal was supposed to read out the altitude at intervals—a standard procedure while descending. He didn't. They then violated another procedure by descending below the safety height of 500 feet before spotting the runway. That height is needed in case they are unable to see the runway and have to overfly it. They then compounded the error by putting down their landing flaps without spotting the runway. The subsequent crash left 135 people dead. Of the five who survived, three died later in hospital.

While the two courts of inquiry have exhaustively sifted through the evidence and pointed out several glaring errors, their reports rely on standard terminology to describe the causes of the crash. The court inquiring into the Guwahati crash states that "it was caused by an error of judgement of the pilot-in-command" that resulted in his not "adhering" to landing procedures. It also points out that the "wrong clearance" given by the control tower "contributed to the accident".

Using almost similar language, the court of inquiry into the Ahmedabad crash concludes that it was caused by "error of judgement on the part of the pilot-in-command as well as the co-pilot". It added: "It was associated with poor visibility which (information) was not passed to the aircraft."

The National Transportation Safety Board, formed two years ago, has objected to this. In a strongly worded brief to the Civil Aviation Ministry last month, it said: "The words 'error of judgement' give the impression that there was unavoidable failure of the human element and there is nothing more to be done." It felt that in the Vayudoot crash the correct description should have been "a series of serious mistakes on the part of the pilot at the time of approach and landing". And in the Ahmedabad crash the cause should have been described as "non-adherence to prescribed flight procedures by the pilots".

While the report on the Ahmedabad crash was submitted to the ministry on January 31 and that on the Guwahati crash on March 30, these are yet to be made public. Meanwhile, the ministry is still waffling over the other major recommendations they have made. In doing so, the ministry is only following the trail of neglect that is becoming a hallmark of civil aviation in the country.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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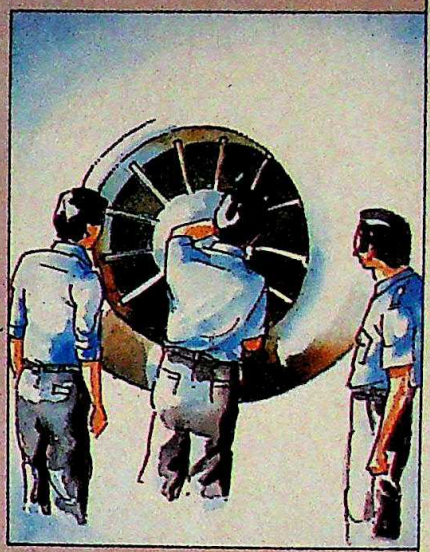

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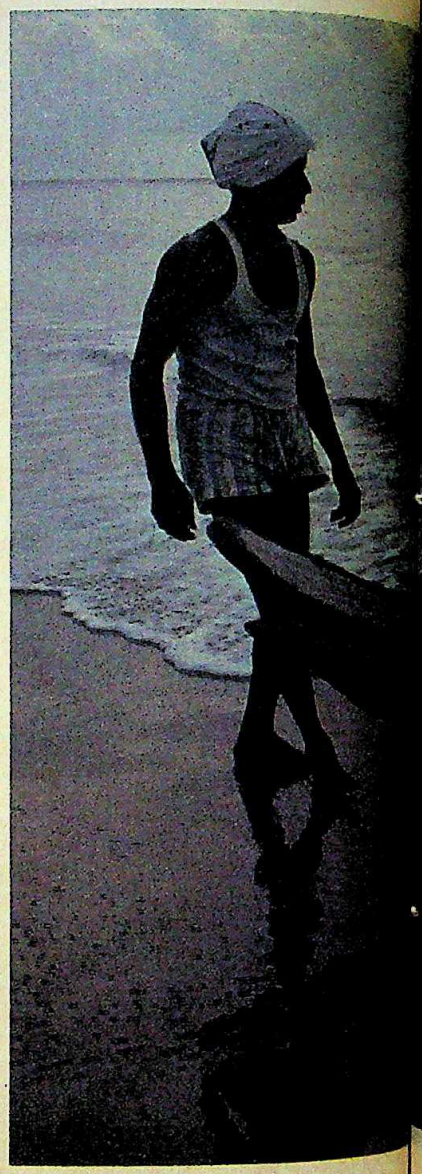
Voltas' Business Associates Are Not Always Rs.400-Crore Companies.



Cold storage plants from Voltas have contributed significantly to the development of the marine products industry, and opened up a steady new source of income for lakhs of fisherme

Just one example of how a Voltas

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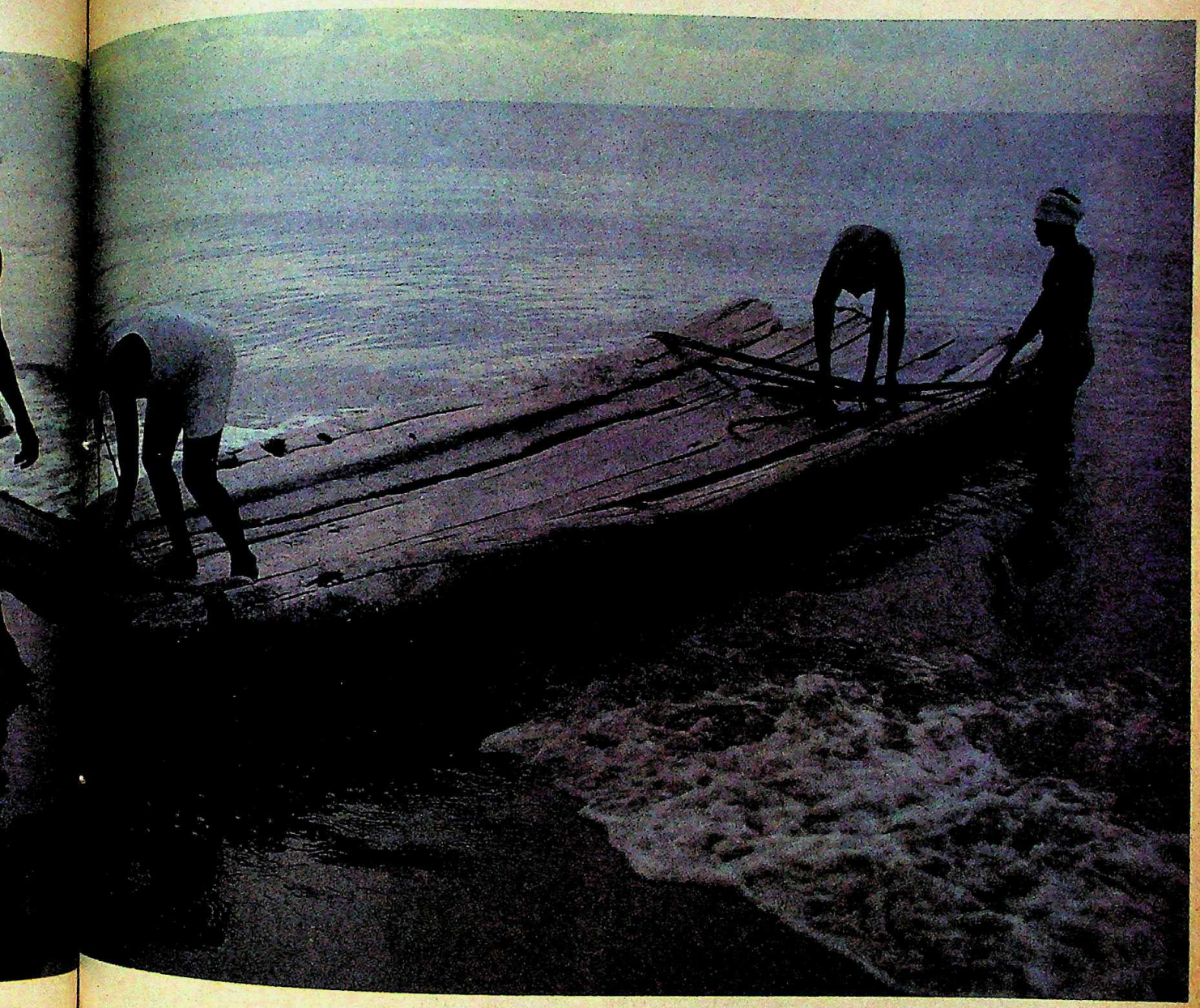

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product has created downstream business opportunities and generated economic growth.

There are numerous other examples in Voltas' 800-plus product lines. You'll find the story repeated with machine tools, textile machinery, construction equipment and dozens of other lines.

.New projects – such as the joint venture with Punjab Agro and Pepsico – will continue to be in pioneering areas, and will continue to generate significant economic growth through a ripple effect.

And, incidentally, will continue to create many more 'business associates' for Voltas.

VOLTAS LIMITED The Results Are Showing.

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Enterprise/VL/53 F

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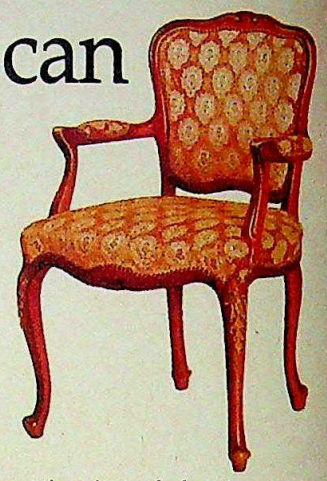
How TouchWood protects your beautiful wooden furniture in ways no polish can



Introducing TouchWood Polyurethane Clear Wood Finish. It forms a tough layer over wooden furniture — a layer that resists scratches and stains many times better than polish.

Polish is just not tough enough

Immediately after you apply it, polish makes wooden furniture look beautiful. But, the first spill leaves a stain — one that remains until you polish your furniture again.

That's because polish can only form a weak and thin coat: a coat that just can't stand up to spills and scratches.

So within a few months, your furniture starts looking stained and scratched.

It starts looking ugly.

TouchWood: polyurethane strength

TouchWood contains polyurethane: a tough plastic. It forms a thick transparent layer that clings tenaciously on to wood.

A layer which resists hot spills, cold spills and scratches for a very long time.

And it lets the natural beauty of wood shine through, years after the average polish is not even a memory.

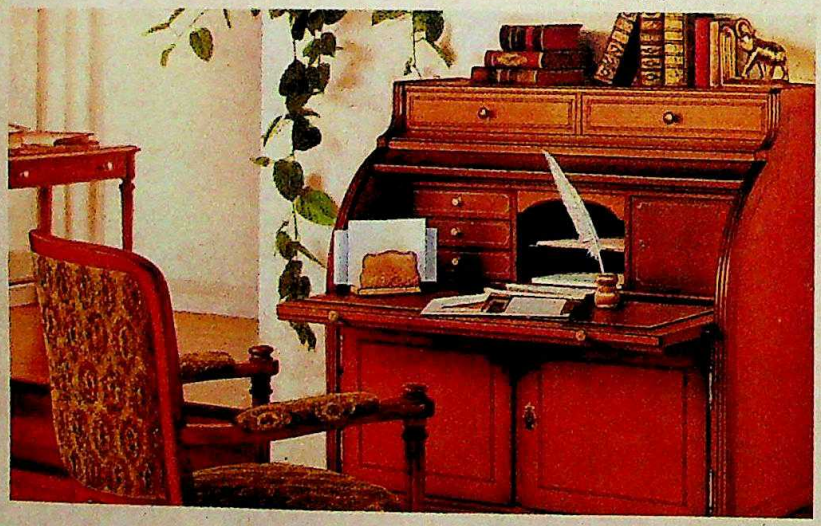
Brush on. Takes longer to dry to protect better

Like paint, TouchWood can be brushed on; a job any painter can do. So the next time, instead of getting your furniture polished, try TouchWood.

And because it forms a tough, thick, protective layer, unlike polish, it takes longer to dry. But no longer than the paint on doors and windows.

What's more TouchWood protection spreads to every intricate carving, reaches every hidden corner.

And though TouchWood costs a little more than polish, it more than pays its way by the protection it gives your beautiful wooden furniture: many times longer than polish.



Glossy or matt finish

TouchWood is available in two finishes glossy and matt — unlike polish. And unique TouchWood stainer can make even ordinary wood look special.

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TouchWood. You need to try it just once and you'll see how well it preserves your furniture's beauty.

TOUCH WOOD

Brush on. And keep wood looking new.

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MARRIED WOMEN

Changing Sexuality

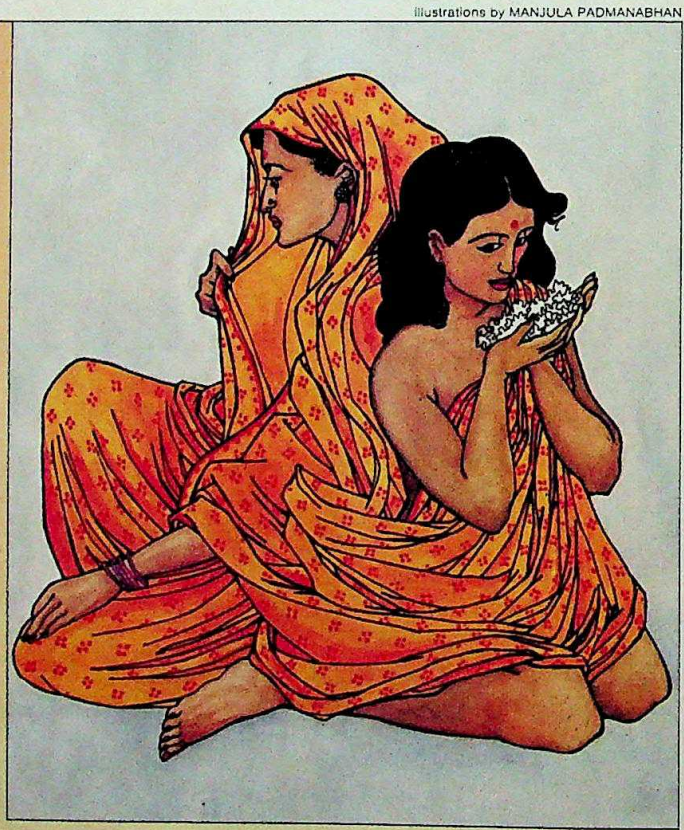
Over the last decade there has occurred a palpable transition in the attitude of the urban middle class woman towards herself, her career and her place in society. Perhaps the most dramatic change is the way she has begun to come to terms with her own sexuality, and become more sexually assertive within and outside marriage.

PARVATI Krishnan, 59, from a well-off, conservative Mysore business family was married off at the age of 17. Her household has been her only context—the reference point of her existence. Her life, a pendulum between the *kovil* (temple) and the *kacheri* (music concerts). In the mornings, the grain came in; in the evenings, the women of the house collected jasmine and strung it with little orange flowers for the evening *aarti* (prayer). She programmed herself to the needs of her husband and his family—she never questioned him once in their 42 years of married life. And marital sex? A duty? A chore? Enjoyable? Repulsive? The secret will probably die with her. Women like Parvati never talk about the subject. Says she: "When we took our seven *pheras* it was for ever. There could never be any other man. Not even in thought. Firstly, there was no opportunity. Secondly, what would people say."

Parvati may not have changed. But she realises that the world has. Her daughter, Srilatha, 34, married and a bank executive in Delhi earning good money, not only discusses her relationship with her husband but also freely admits to fantasising about an affair. "My relationship with my husband is very important to me but I am seeing extra-marital relationships happening around me and, frankly, who knows one day?"

This attitudinal metamorphosis is nothing short of dramatic. What has changed between the mother who said never and the daughter who can say maybe? The answer is, the Indian woman. Increasingly she wants equality in her marriage, good sex from her husband and perhaps most striking of all, when she doesn't find either in marriage, satisfaction through extra-marital affairs. The educated, middle class married woman is making new demands on her husband: she wants tenderness, romance, compliments, foreplay, not merely lust in fast forward. Says a 34-year-old university lecturer from Delhi: "I want excitement, all that life has to offer. Marriage is a nice institution, but biological needs and urges and attractions go on throughout."

Illustrations by MANJULA PADMANABHAN



This attitudinal metamorphosis is nothing short of dramatic. What has changed between the mother who said never and the daughter who can say maybe? The answer: the Indian woman.

Today, the Indian female is becoming a multiple choice woman. She is in the job market to stay as a breadwinner, in the universities to teach, in the home if she wants to mother, on the road if she wants to travel, or, in bed enjoying sex as she had never dared to do a generation ago. Going by data gathered from their work experience, lawyers, marriage counsellors, social scientists and analysts believe that in the last decade, there has been a sea change in the attitude of urban, middle class women towards themselves, their careers and sexual relationships.

Says Dr Jyoti Parikh, gynaecologist: "I see infidelity in women far more during the last decade. The husband fulfils some needs, the boyfriend others. A single man can't do it all."

Arguably, Dr Parikh's view may be a little extreme, and applicable perhaps to a small segment of highly-westernised Indian women with avant garde, self-indulgent lifestyles. But it is an indicator of a changing sexual climate which is part of

(Names of some people have been changed to protect identity.)

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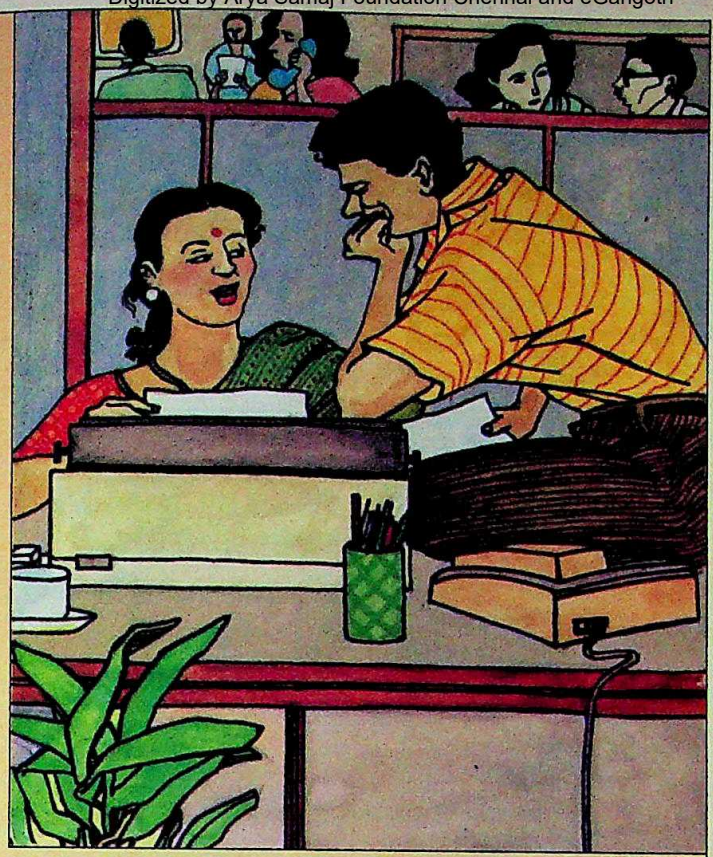
the sociological dimension of the phenomenal growth of middle class India—a society bumping off old traditions in its hurry to harvest the consumer boom—the break-up of the joint family, the huge influx of women into the work-force, and their increased mobility.

Analysts believe that with women beginning to earn their own money, there has come a possibility of a whole new range of relationships that push through the frontiers of family: office colleagues, independent women friends, and male companions. This new woman has begun the process of pogo-leaping from the "us" notion of the joint family marriage to the "we" notion of the nuclear couple. Some of them have even arrived at the "me" notion of self. Says Rupa Bhandari, 39, a vivacious housewife, who is married to a sales executive: "All my friends look so confident and sexy. I'm always on a diet. I know I overspend on clothes, but I enjoy the attention I get."



Their increased presence in the work force enables women to compare their husbands with other men. If they have a loveless marriage they now have the opportunity of fixing it without guilt.

Well-known writer Krishna Sobti, 64, whose *Mitro Marjani*, a story about the yearnings of a married woman, created a sensation in the '60s, says: "My mother spent her life looking at her watch—time for his coming home, his dinner, his bed. At the end of her life she asked, what have I done for myself? For her generation this realisation came too late. For younger girls, it's now."

SARLA Mudgal, president of Kalyani, a women's organisation providing counselling and legal aid to lower and middle class women, describes the change in the middle class in this way: "Twenty years ago, women simply kept quiet. Ten years ago, they would cry about their husbands going to prostitutes. Five years ago they started coming with their own complaints. They had started feeling angry. Now we have men coming and crying that their wives are having relationships."

And the physical evidence, sometimes brazen, of the country's changing sexual mores is flaunted in seductive dress codes, video, movies, pulp fiction, sex clinics not just in big cities but even in small towns like Dehra Dun, tantalising new sexual aids, and a mushrooming of faceless hotels.

Video, especially the easy availability of soft and hard porn, even to lower-middle class India, has brought sweeping changes into the Indian bedroom, leading to an explorative sexuality. "In India people did not even take their clothes off," said David Jacob, a journalist. "Now you've got Scandinavian erotica close-up." A significant outcome is that the Indian male has become more aware of his wife's sexuality, and she of her own, in a manner unknown a decade ago. Says Bombay sexologist Prakash Kothari: "Many couples read erotic passages as one of the variations on foreplay and report it had a wonderful effect."

According to Bayeshwari Parikh, a marriage counsellor based in Bombay city: "Many traditional women are at first astonished by new demands like oral sex that their husbands have begun making." Often, this in turn, awakens in many women the deeply repressed nature of their own sexual desires. And the husband is not the only stimulus in this sexual awakening. The confessional school of writing—*Savvy*, *Society*, film magazines with their kiss-and-tell culture—also give the woman guts to think sex. She is able to acknowledge her sexual urges—or "turn on" as the colloquialism goes—with less shame. Says Neeraja Trivedi, 23, from Moradabad, daughter of a PWD junior engineer, unhesitatingly: "If my husband enjoys sex, why can't I? I am not some passive kind of person. In fact, we see blue films together, read Playboy letters, try out different things: French kissing, oral sex, new postures."

And even some of the older generation of women are learning not to be guilt-laden when visited by a new flush of sexuality before menopause. Women past their 40s, even middle-aged widows, no longer want to resign themselves to being viewed as premature grandmothers with nothing more than the rocking chair on the horizon.

Women at mid-life are perhaps even more acutely sensitive about the way they look. The paradox has always been that at this stage of life—even though they are coming face to face with

"My mother spent her life looking at her watch—time for his return, bed. At the end she asked, what have I done for myself?"

—KRISHNA SOBTI, *Writer*

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"Twenty years ago, women kept quiet; then they began complaining. Now men cry that their wives are having affairs." —SARLA MUDGAL, *Counsellor*

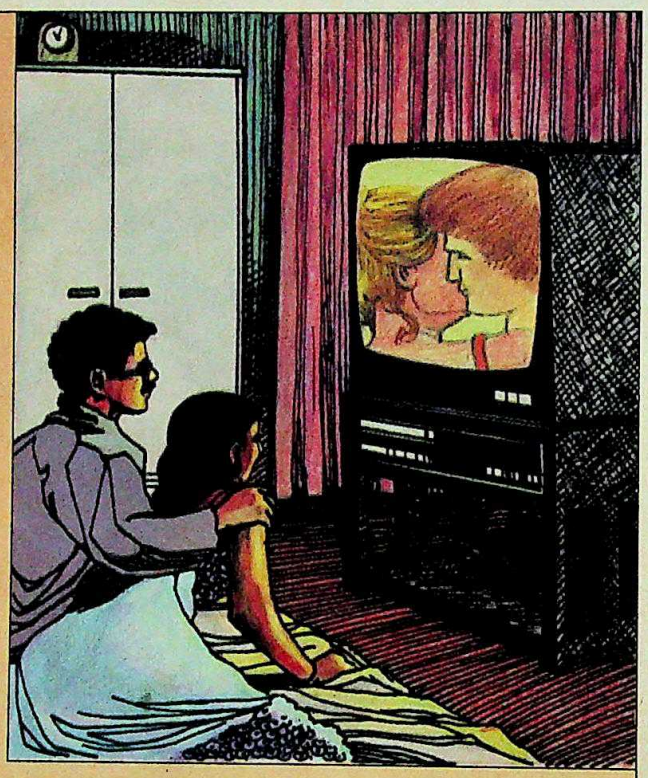
mortality, their children don't need them as much, husbands sometimes stop thinking about them as sexual beings, their nests are emptying—their sexual drives are often revivified. The age-old Indian prescription for this stage of life was for the woman to play coy, and to intensify her relationship with society and family by involving herself more deeply in rituals and ceremonies and religion. That, too, is changing.

Says psychoanalyst Udayan Patel: "The old belief that sex goes out with menopause is out." Not completely, perhaps, but noticeably. Adds Parikh: "I know of many instances when a woman in her 40s has gone to men in their 20s. Sometimes it's the son's friends—they come over often and no one would know."

Even healthy marriages develop excruciating phases of loneliness after some years. So many middle class women live lives of quiet desperation, that a brief affair—with its attention, adoration, and snatches of stolen time—comes as a heady reprieve. "Within a marriage people stop reacting to each other sexually, but with another person you get recharged," says Manjit Arora, 34, a housewife who runs a small garments boutique. "Every new body has a new current. It's the fear, the challenge—the charge is very strong sexually. Because it's forbidden, something you cannot have."

Once an affair actually takes off, sex becomes the single most important factor. Anu Sachdev, 29, a journalist describes it this way: "You're doing something wrong anyway. So you're doing it with wild abandon, trying out new postures, working out your wildest fantasies." And this often snowballs into another sexual problem. As Anu puts it: "Because you go home to your husband you have to consciously underplay all that you've learnt. One wrong move and your husband will say, hey, where did you learn that?"

And because, unlike in the past, there is less guilt associated with this new self-awareness—whether it manifests itself in the occasional extra-marital fling or in the quest for more pleasurable sex within marriage—women accordingly make extravagant sexual demands of their husbands, sometimes to the utter confusion of the male. That this change is real, that it is palpable, is measurable by a simple yardstick. While a decade ago women would be loathe to discuss their sexual habits even with close friends, today they are ready to talk about their sexual behaviour openly to experts.



Video, especially the easy availability of porn, has brought sweeping changes into the bedroom. The male has become aware of his wife's sexuality, and she of her own, in a way unknown a decade ago.

In fact, Kothari, in a survey of 3,000 women, says that 70 per cent admitted that they did not enjoy "the missionary position as much as being on top". The significance of this is not just that married women are demanding different and varied sex, but that they are willing to discuss it more easily. Perhaps, five years ago, a survey like this would not even have been possible because women would have thought twice before discussing their sex lives with a sexologist. And that, is a change.

Also, because of heightened sexual awareness, these women will not tolerate having to live with the traumatic wedding nights their mothers often experienced at the hands of their often unlettered fathers. No foreplay. No afterglow. Not expected. Not given.

A woman, now 38, remembers the first few gauche years of her married life: "Sex lasted for only a few uncomfortable seconds. And afterwards my husband would always ask me: 'Are you satisfied?'" Radical feminists characterise this as male insensitivity or marital rape. This is probably facile because the sexual tragedy of this cuts both ways. Males of that generation had little experience of sex except in its crudest

"In India people did not even take their clothes off, now you've got Scandinavian erotica close-up." —DAVID JACOB, *Journalist*

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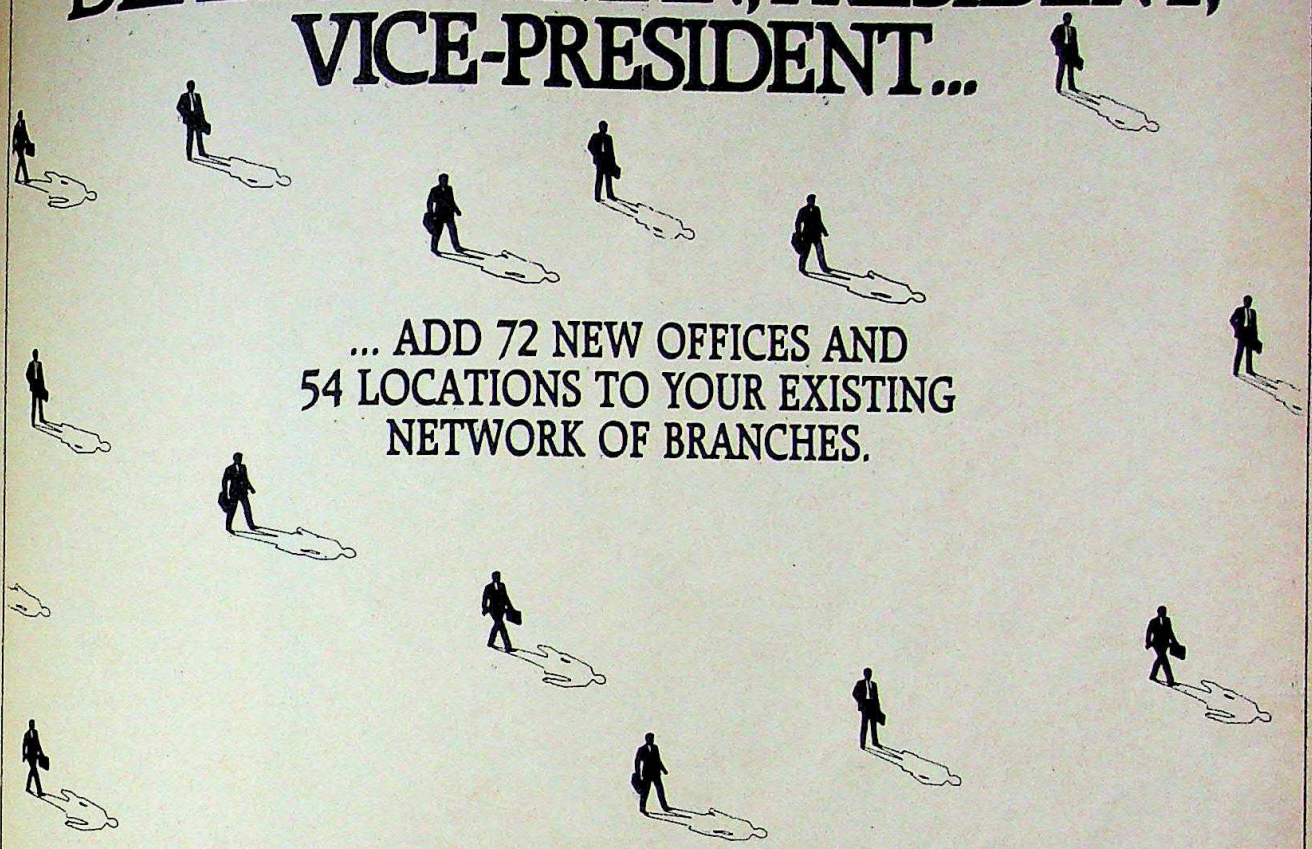

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"Every body has a new current. It's the fear, the challenge—the charge is very strong sexually. Because it's forbidden." —MANJIT ARORA, *Housewife*

variety—masturbation or prostitutes. And premature ejaculation—for which males can now receive counselling in the nation's burgeoning clinics—was a private shame men had to live with. And if the women of yesteryears were afraid to confront their own sexuality, men too were not conditioned to view their female partners as orgasmic. Also, most women experienced what could be described as their first sexual shock on their wedding night.

But in the new generation, as sexual liberality has spread, both men and women have experienced at least some form of premarital sex, and have some expectations from their marital partners. Doctors admit that in the last few years there has been a significant increase in teenage pregnancies. Says Dr Parikh: "Schoolgirls from the 9th and 10th classes have been coming to me—they're either pregnant or want to know if their future husbands will find out about their loss of virginity."

Problems arise, particularly in arranged marriages, which are still the most common, in which the female has been sexually active with boy friends before her marriage and the male is a virgin or simply has experienced quick and casual sex with prostitutes. But even in these dead-end situations, the Indian female, rather than the male, has begun to seek solutions. Professional counsellors also see a distinct change in their older patients who now openly talk about their sexual relations with their husband and their levels of satisfaction. Many women express their anxiety about pain, orgasm and frequency, and curiosity about new methods of contraception.

Another significant change in this decade lies in the subtle shifts in the institution of marriage. Frustrations of marriage—like male impotence and brutality—were rarely talked about outside the joint family. In the most conservative scenario, coitus was all about guilt and shame—except when it had to do with producing children.

Dolly Thakore, media personality, 46, describes the unhappy ebbs in her marriage: "I cried on my wedding day. He never told me I look beautiful. Here was I brought up on the image of candle light and soft music. He'd ask me to kick his mobike and start it. It destroyed my confidence completely." Adds Prabeen Grewal, a social worker formerly with Saheli, a women's counselling centre: "The real change today is the quest for basic, sensory excitement. Romance has to be creative, an adventure. Sexuality is the *shakti* in you." And the frustration of these growing urges can manifest itself either in divorce, which is on the increase in India. Or, in many cases, infidelity.

Even healthy marriages develop excruciating phases of loneliness. So many women live lives of quiet desperation that a brief affair—with all its attention—comes as a heady reprieve.

More and more Indian women find that tensions and conflicts can have a sexual outlet. Some cases of infidelity, for instance, are being born out of a sense of revenge—getting-even affairs. And there is discernible, a pattern among some middle class women tormented by demands for dowry. "This woman deliberately takes steps to get involved in an affair," says Mudgal. "She is taking revenge on her husband and her in-laws."

And these changes could hardly have occurred without one crucial factor—opportunity. Many more women are out of the house, working in closer proximity to men than ever before. The workplace has become a meeting ground and friendship at work can easily trip into a 9 to 5 romance. "There are little things you do in a work situation that bring you close," says Mohit Khanna, 39, a chartered accountant. "You spend two-thirds of your conscious life at work. A woman colleague does little things for you. First, you

"People ask me whether there is a method to avoid guilt. There isn't. You just can't hack off the guilt and throw it away." —SAILESH KAPADIA, *Analyst*

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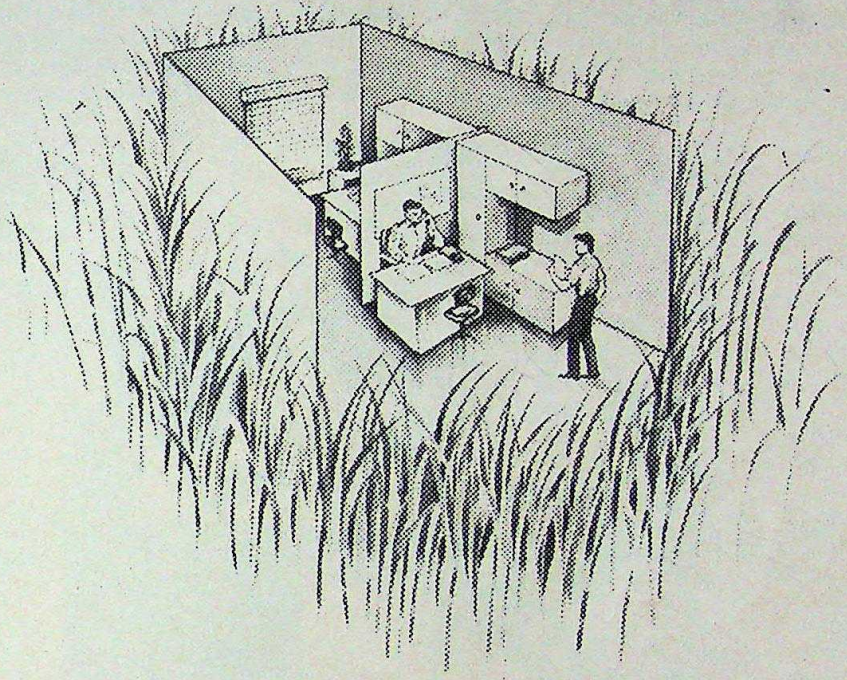

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"I have a nice home, food, servants. Why give it up? A woman can keep her marriage alive by outside stimulation." —KAVITA APTE, *Private Consultant*

don't notice, then you notice. Gratitude turns to sharing confidences. Soon you have dinner after work. It can start with a small touch—or holding hands."

For most women, the first time it often just happens—unprepared. It could be an old friend, a work colleague, or someone from her social circle. Radhika Nair, 32, from a conservative middle income family was at a particularly vulnerable stage in life when she slipped into an extra-marital relationship: her mother had died recently. Her husband was sympathetic but didn't understand the depth of her loss. She found herself turning more and more to an old family friend.

She says: "I got carried away by the sheer closeness of another man. I allowed myself the kissing and touching, but I thought I would stop there." She couldn't.

Then the questioning began: was it worth it? Am I a bad wife? Does the lover think I'm a loose woman? When she actually faced the everyday reality of her child, husband, home—and how much all this meant to her—the enormity of what she had done got to her. There was no second time.

Psychoanalysts feel that women seldom rationalise before the first time—only after. Initially, the sheer sensations pole-vault the guilt. But later it can hit with double force. It can be triggered by something innocent your child may say or do, such as kissing both his parents. "Most women tend to see-saw between the euphoria and the 'my god what have I got into?'" says Indrani Sinha, 44, who runs a small bakery in Delhi. Explains Kiran Bhatia, a counsellor now with Sumaitri, a suicide prevention cell in Delhi: "Women who have a reason find it easier to be unfaithful: an alcoholic or impotent husband, a tyrannical mother-in-law, family tensions. But if she wants to satisfy her personal needs—creative, intellectual, sexual—it's that much harder."

Yet it's not the act of infidelity, but what it signifies, that is important. Says Veena Das, sociologist: "It can mean a redefinition of marriage, an insight into the self, a void being filled. It can also be the done thing in a certain society."

New indicators of the woman crossing the *Lakshman-rekha* of her own volition come from Indian films that have begun increasingly to deal with female infidelity, and have been doing it sensitively: *Paroma, Silsila, Arth, Ek Pal, Ek Baar Phir, Antarjali Yatra.* In fact, old censorship rules said that the sanctity of marriage could not be violated. Now that rule has been scrapped. "The act of infidelity is being presented with some amount of understanding, if not approval," says National Film Development Corporation Chairman B.K. Karanjia. "We are getting many more scripts on this subject."

The Indian female, rather than the male, has begun to seek solutions. Counsellors see a distinct change: women now readily express their anxiety about pain, intercourse and orgasm.

A script depicting the transformation in the sexual responses of women to changes in their lives in modern India could well be based on this real life account of Meera Raj, 32, a writer, for whom the turning point came after 11 years of marriage, when her child was born. She had developed hepatitis and almost died. She had also begun to feel frumpy and listless. And boring. She met a married man at a seminar. "He made me feel I was fascinating," she says. "He asked me to take a sip from a glass of wine. We sat all night holding hands. I was crying and he kept kissing me. I felt I had only one life to live. Suddenly I was saying I want this for me."

In similar vein, asserts Kavita Apte, 35, a private consultant who has had one extra-marital relationship: "Life is too exciting and short. I have a nice home, good food, efficient

"The real change is the quest for sensory excitement. Romance has to be an adventure. Sexuality is the shakti in you." —PRABEEN GREWAL, *Social Worker*

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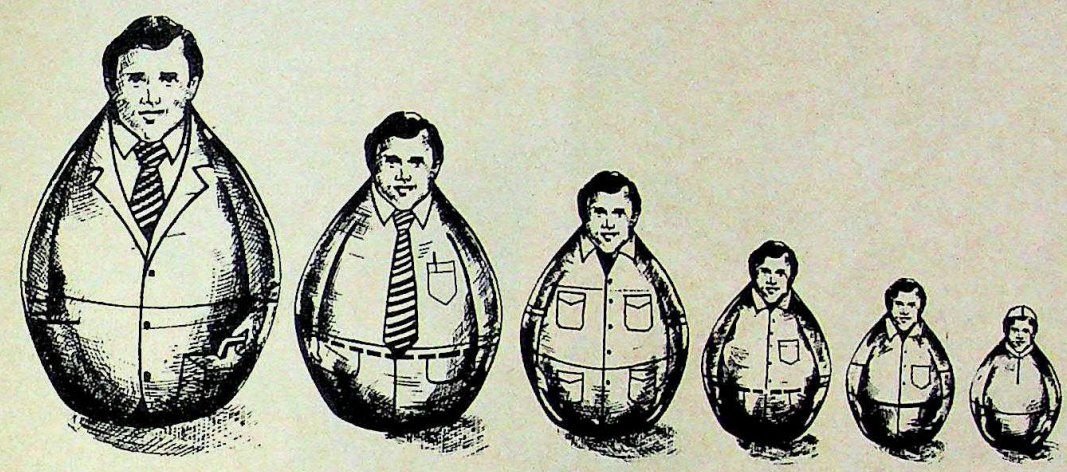

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> ***"In India, a woman's infidelity is usually a one-shot affair—after which she stops it on her own, realising it was worthless."*** —DR R.L. KAPUR, *Psychiatrist*

servants, fine cutglass. Why would I want to give that up? A woman can keep her marriage alive by outside stimulation." What of the guilt? "One by one, like an onion skin, everything has peeled off: the shame, the guilt, the fear of what people will say. Only the sense of risk is left," she says.

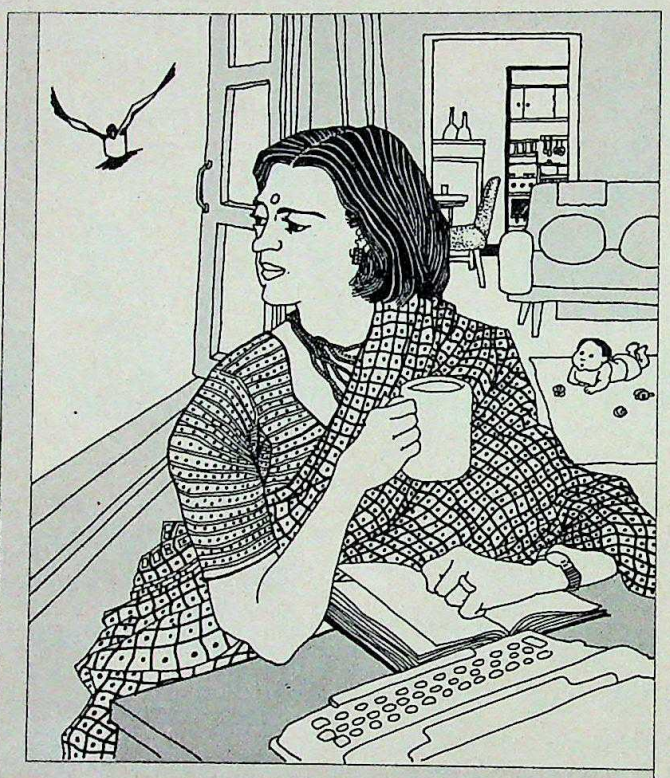
Film director Govind Nihalani, who is working on *Drishti*, a film on infidelity, says: "It's quite possible that a change of location, state of mind or a new landscape can stimulate the mind and lead one to the moment of desire." Says Thakore: "It's come to be accepted that biologically one strays, but no one is giving up marriage."

Yet despite Apte's avowals, in infidelity, as in marriage, there are few couples who live happily ever after. Guilt hangs, like an albatross. And jealousy. "People ask me whether there is a method to avoid guilt. There isn't. You just can't hack off the guilt and throw it away," says analyst Sailesh Kapadia.

Radhika Menon, 35, a sociologist who has spent half her life abroad, fell in love with a film maker. Initially, the intensity of her feelings for him kept her blissful. But she could not understand the migraines which began. When the strain of the pirouette between her unsuspecting husband and her lover became too much for her, she stopped. And so did the headaches. "I feel that the reason was this double, schizoid life I led. I had to be one person to my husband and another to my friend."

According to Dr R.L. Kapur, former head of the Department of Psychiatry in NIMHANS in Bangalore: "In India, a woman's infidelity is usually a one-shot affair—after which she stops it on her own, realising it was worthless." After the first time, many women freeze, and the doubts begin.

Doubts are part of the sexual transition. The next generation of women will have it easier as this one tries to answer the questions: is this right? Is this wrong? Clearly, the Indian woman is at the crossroads as she confronts her sexual dilemmas. This is a far cry from not so long ago when in some joint families there was not even a bed for the woman. She entered her husband's room with a glass of hot milk as an excuse—and crept back after hasty nocturnal trysts to share a bed with sister-in-law or child.



> **Existential doubts are part of the sexual transition. The next generation of women will clearly have it easier as this one tries to answer the questions: is this right? Is this wrong?**

Today, apart from the media, other factors such as the birth control campaign, the availability of condoms, and the pill have opened the pressure cooker repressed sensuality which is escaping like steam. Parents are more willing to accept a daughter walking out on an impotent husband.

Moreover, their newfound mobility has opened up a new world of men which the women had only known secondhand. They now have the opportunity of being able to compare their husbands with other men. And if they have a loveless or tired marriage, they now have the opportunity of fixing it without guilt, or at least dreaming of romance outside it.

Of course, the dilemmas continue to multiply, springing perhaps from the peculiar status of the Indian woman. "Women are in a very hybrid position. On the one hand, 5,000 years of Indian culture, and on the other, the massive exposure to the West," says Kiran Sharma Bhatia.

Perhaps the time has come when this ancient land, which absorbs and synthesises races, philosophies and religion, has evolved a new hybrid—the modern Indian woman: one sari-draped foot rooted in the Indian marital tradition, the other, bare and sensual, jutting out as an aggressive expression of her new independence.

—MADHU JAIN and SIMRAN BHARGAVA

> ***"Women are in a hybrid position. On the one hand 5,000 years of Indian culture; on the other massive exposure to the West."*** —KIRAN SHARMA BHATIA, *Counsellor*

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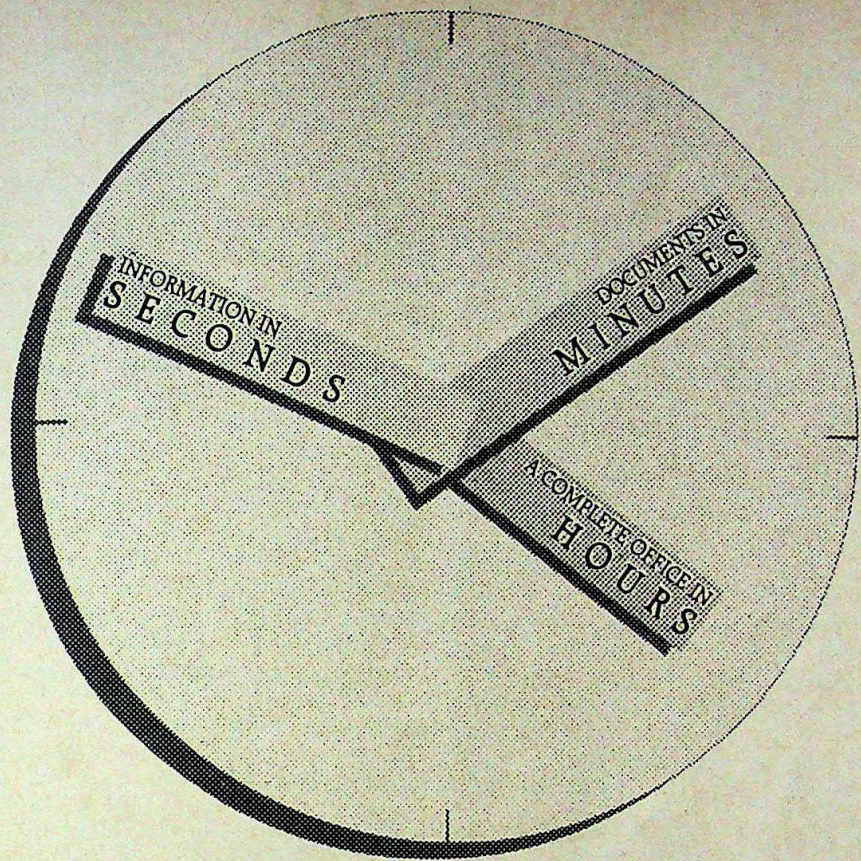

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THAR DESERT

Moving Menacingly

Desert advances as the Aravallis suffer denudation

THE forebodings are ominous. Like a menacing leviathan the Great Indian Desert is crawling towards other parts of north India, including Delhi. There have been unmistakable signs of this phenomenon: droughts and famine are becoming more frequent.

In fact, this century's worst famines were recorded in the past two years. Never before have eight droughts occurred in a decade, like from 1978-1988. The Palam observatory in Delhi recorded 153 mm of rain this year, which is 487 mm less than the normal. Increasingly, the capital and nearby regions are being shrouded by dust.

The reason: the once-green 692-km-long Aravalli ranges, stretching from the Delhi ridge to Banaskantha in north Gujarat, have been denuded of their forest cover in a short span of 40 years. Worse, the core of the Thar desert region has shifted from the central to the northern fringe of the Aravallis and is now centred in Delhi. The Aravallis, the last bastion between the encroaching desert and the north Indian bread basket, is gradually withering away.

Now even the Bhil, Meena and Damor tribes find it difficult to survive in the ranges. The onslaught on forests began after Independence when the nationalisation of forests and the privatisation of community pastures were completed. The Forest Department went a step further and cut down the forests for commercial purposes. In the process, the Aravalli forest range has shrunk from 40,000 sq km in 1947 to a mere 6,000 sq km now.

Due to the consequent reduction in rainfall in the region, crop yields have slumped. "The number of rainy days have gone down from 101 days in 1973 to 58 in 1989," says Dr S.S. Dhabriya of the Jaipur-based Birla Institute of Scientific Research. And conditions are not even congenial for growing grass.

What is, however, alarming is that such dismal weather might soon be seen in the 'Granary of India' in eastern Rajasthan, south-west Punjab, south-west Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh, Malwa and Kutch, which lie on the eastern part of the Aravallis. "To check desertification in the west, solutions have to be applied in the east of the Aravalli ranges especially in Rajasthan," explains Anil Agarwal, director of the Centre for Science and Environment in New Delhi.

The Aravallis are the eastern boundary of the Thar desert. "Till it remained densely forested, the Aravalli hills checked the expansion of the sandy desert towards the Indo-Gangetic plain. Now, there is no effective green barrier," asserts Laxmi Narain Modi of the Rajasthan Catalyst Foundation.

Dust storms blow into Delhi through Singhana-Digrota, the longest gap of 22 kms—there are 12 gaps in the ranges totalling 93 kms. The gaps have been recorded by satellite pictures and verified on the ground. Digital processing of the Sambhar Gap and Pushkar Gap by the Computer Compatible Tape and field verification have confirmed that the desert is spreading.

Planning Commission officials, however, assert that efforts are underway to get the Aravallis into the Hill Area Development Programme, at least in the Eighth Plan. But even that is small consolation. "The Government pumps in drought relief, which, for the most part is used to employ people in *kutcha* road construction and fodder subsidies," explains Kishore Saint, who has been working to green the Aravallis in Udaipur district for the past decade.

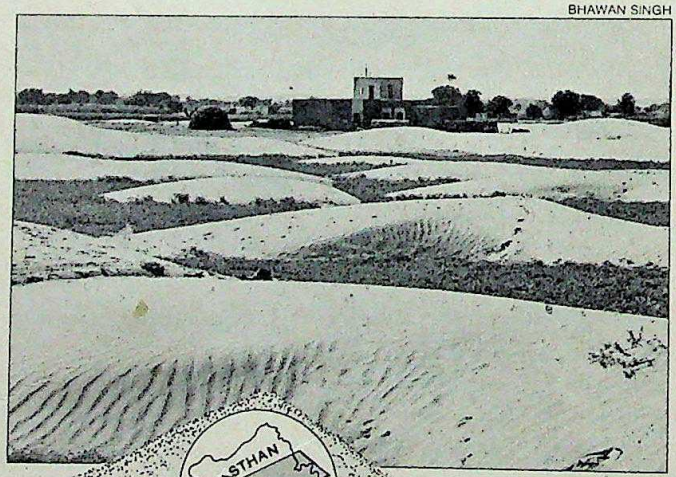
Such superficial measures are repeated. The roads are built and rebuilt. There's large-scale corruption. Warns Saint: "When the future in their own region is bleak, people will go out in search of fresh pastures—inflicting damage on neighbouring regions. It will open the doors for the desertification of the Indian subcontinent."

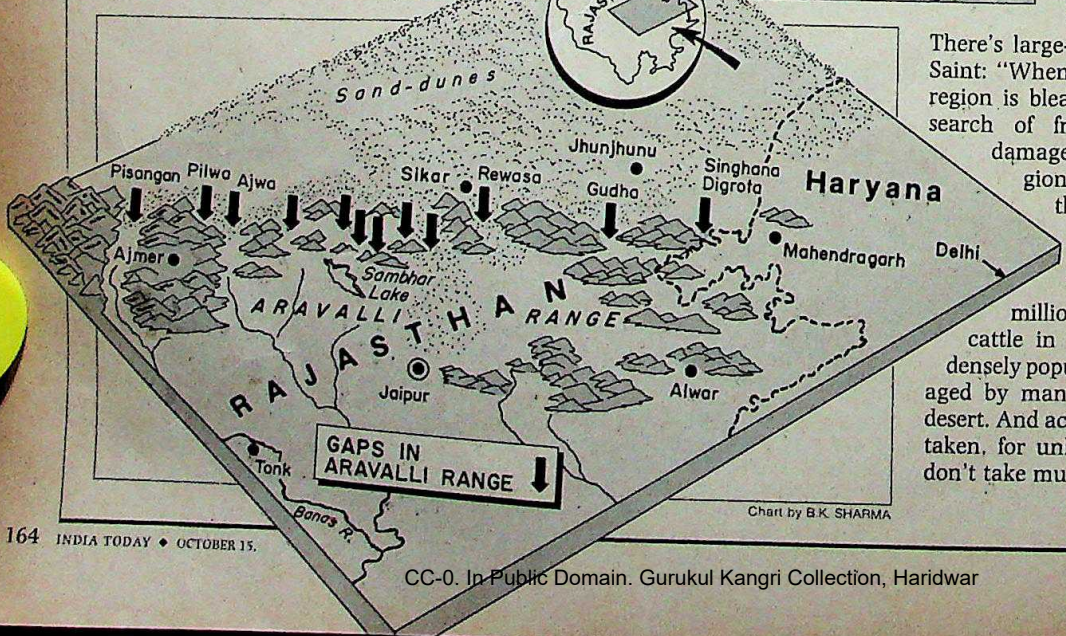
The Aravallis, the lifeline for not only 14 million people and 24 million cattle in the desert but also the densely populated north, is being ravaged by man and smothered by the desert. And action ought to be urgently taken, for unlike bureaucrats, deserts don't take much time to move.

—SUDHIRENDAR SHARMA

The Thar desert: spreading quickly

BHAWAN SINGH





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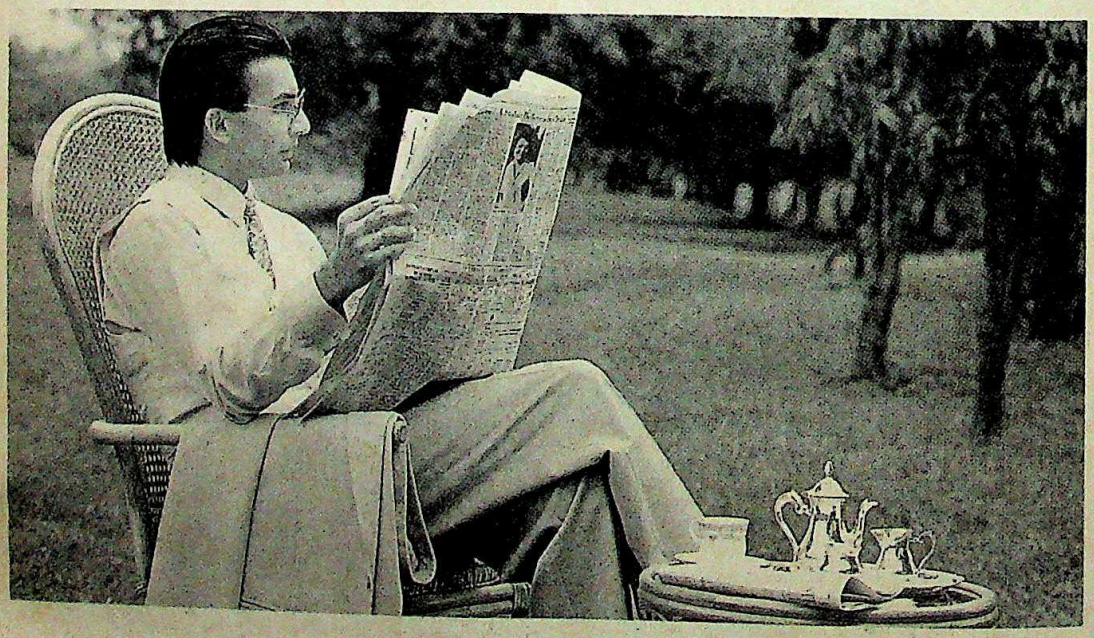

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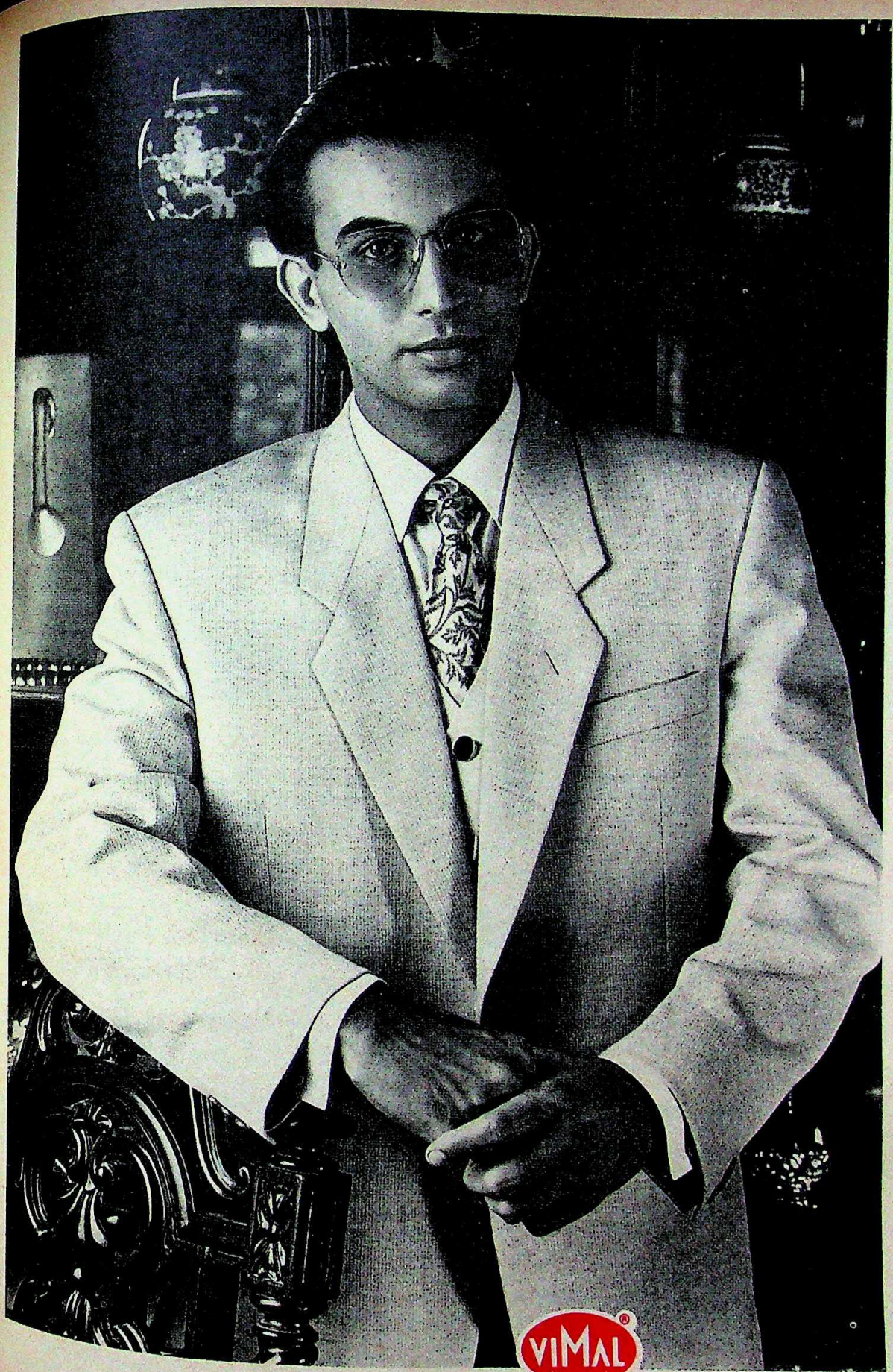

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RAGHU RAI

MOTHER TERESA

Hope and Anxiety

Worldwide concern as the Mother struggles for life

NORMALLY, it is Mother Teresa who prays for the world. Last month, in a reversal of roles, there was a silent prayer on lips the world over as the frail little 'messenger of God' struggled for her life in Calcutta's Woodlands Nursing Home, where she was admitted on September 5, suffering from high fever and exhaustion.

Three days later her condition became dangerous. The Mother is a heart patient and as a senior sister from the Missionaries of Charity said: "Her life that day hung on a thin thread." Though her condition improved over the next few days, it was obvious that constant hard work and selfless sacrifice had started taking its toll. In 1983, the Mother had suffered a heart attack while in Rome. But she ignored her health, lived on a simple diet and continued to spread her message of compassion and love in the world's trouble spots.

Now, it appeared that a shining saga of modern-day sainthood was slowly coming to an end. Initially, her personal physician, Rajen Wats, and a team of doctors headed by cardiologist, A.K. Bardhan, detected ischaemia, a heart ailment which she has suffered from earlier. Her heart beat was irregular and she developed nausea and high fever. Dr Bardhan later found that she was suffering from a cardiac problem known as 'transient left bundle branch block'. She was then fitted with a pacemaker.

Meanwhile, Dr Vincenzo Bilotii of Rome's Salvator Mundi Hospital rushed to Calcutta and was soon joined by Dr Charles Lambardy of the US. What worried them were the intermittent chest pains, fever, breathlessness and inability to swallow enough liquids. Last week, she still lay in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), with a ban on all visitors, indicating that her condition was still serious.

The powerful of the world or their emissaries quickly rushed to her side. Rajiv Gandhi and wife Sonia visited her for a quarter of an hour. Putting her arms round him, the Mother said: "I have seen you as a boy and now you have grown up into a big man." President Bush sent a telegram through his consul-general in Calcutta, as did the Soviet Prime Minister, Nikholai Ryshokov. From the Vatican, Pope John Paul II, to whom she was deeply attached, sent "assurance of his prayers and spiritual participation" in her sufferings and called on the Virgin Mary to intercede on her behalf.

As the world waited in fretful anxiety, the sisters of the Missionaries of Charity, founded by the Mother exactly 43 years ago, continued their round-the-clock prayer vigil. Inside the ICU, the Mother was like the still-centre of the storm. Next to her bed in a little box on the table was the holy sacrament of Jesus—bread consecrated during mass. "She has God with her," said a glowing Sister Paule, waiting outside the corridor. "You see, God is in Jesus. Jesus is in the bread. So, God is with

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her. "Normally, nobody is allowed to keep the sacrament in their living quarters. But the Mother is so close to God," explained Sister Agnes, the Mother's first disciple and next to her in the hierarchy.

The sisters exude their normal serenity but it is difficult to keep the anxiety from showing. Their main problem is preventing the Mother from talking. Rooted to her bed, her mind is constantly on her work. "She never talks about her health. She wants to know how everybody else is," says Sister Blandine, one of the junior sisters who was able to see her recently. "She wants to know the details: whether the sisters who were supposed to go to Rome went, what the other sisters are doing. But then suddenly, she gets exhausted. She talks for five minutes, and her head drops and she dozes off."

Doctors have now forbidden visitors, especially after her condition became grave. But the letters pour in, from all corners of the world, from the rich and the poor, adults and children. Some are simply addressed to Mother Teresa, Calcutta.

The sisters give the impression of closing ranks behind an exterior of fortitude, like a solid wall. The smiles never cease, the skins glow. But within, they are clearly worried. Without the Mother, they would really become like the orphans they minister to. "No decision is taken without her," says Father Edward Le Jolly, 80, former spiritual Father of the Missionaries of Charity. "People ask me whether Mother Teresa, like Indira Gandhi, is a banyan tree under which nothing grows. The sisters are excellent workers, but the Mother has kept it all in her hands. She has not decentralised."

Work goes in all the homes set up by the Mother. But sadness has crept in. "This has been a deep experience. But we have seen the hand of God. He has a purpose: people are praying. But work goes on. Our hearts are heavy," says Sister Shanti, one of the six councillors of the Missionaries of Charity. Once mass—described by Sister Shanti as "our powerhouse"—is over, the sisters plunge into work. But for almost three weeks after the Mother fell ill, there was listlessness. Not only were there round-the-clock prayers, but most of the sisters also fasted. "They all had long, sad faces, and the rhythm of work slowed down," says one foreign volunteer working at the mission.

THE sadness is not confined to the sisters. In Shishu Home, which has nearly 300 abandoned or seriously ill children, the little inmates are also concerned. The day the Mother's condition was very serious and hope was at its lowest ebb, the sisters found Priti, 10, alone in the chapel, praying with tears running down her eyes. "She sat there for half an hour, squatted on the floor and put us all to crying," says Sister Alex, who runs Shishu. Priti's prayer was simple and straight from the heart: she asked *Bade Pita* (Big Father) to make *Badi Ma* (Big Mother) well. She fasted for two days, as did her friend Meera, 11.

On the other side of town in Prem Dan, a sprawling home with hundreds of destitutes—who were literally picked up from the streets by the determined little Angels of Mercy—another personal kind of litany is taking place. Most of the inmates are Hindus, but many of them keep going to the chapel to pray for *Ma*. The old men just sit and cry. Says Sister Norbert who is temporarily in charge of the home: "Before I even open the chapel or put on the lights for the adoration, many of them are inside, praying. They come in silently, one by one, and pray."

Some are dying. Too ill to go to the chapel, they sit up in bed and pray. Nanda is old and almost blind. He prays for *Ma* three times a day. "We feel so bad. Our life is over, God should take us. But for *Ma* there are so many people to look after. *Ma* is a gift from God to us."

Mary Magdalene, who is almost blind, holds her rosary in her hands, saying: "I pray six times during the day, and night too. This is our Mother. There can be nobody like her." The other women sitting nearby nod tearfully in assent.

In the home for the dying, Nirmal Hriday, in Kalighat, the Mother's first home, they are too close to death for prayer. But an old man, a twisted bunch of shrivelled, immobile limbs, looks up and smiles when her name is mentioned. Expression flickers briefly in his dead eyes. It is here, perhaps, that the spirit of the Mother is more palpable.

The Mother seems like a prism through which the light or the vision she saw comes through and breaks into hundreds of little images of her. Some of the sisters speak her language of bewildering simplicity, punctuated by the words, Love and God. They see Jesus everywhere: in the abandoned babies, in the decomposing old men and women, even in the indifferent and cruel.

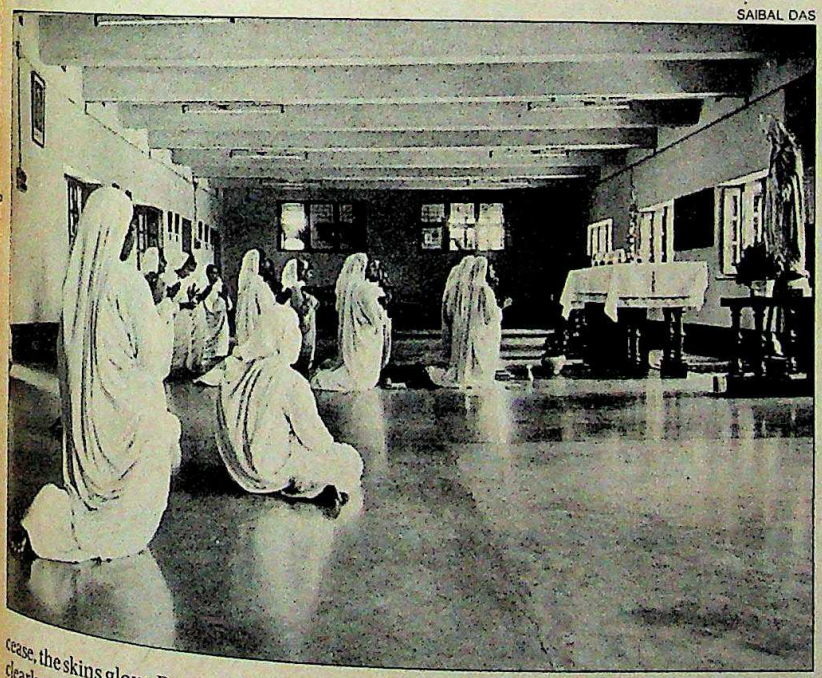
The question on all minds, but a question which dare not be expressed, is: After Mother Teresa who? She may recover. But she is now 79, and after her current illness will obviously not be able to continue at the same furious, body-battering pace. The doctors say that her heart has already "taken quite a beating".

At present, Sister Agnes is in charge. As the Mother has been spending half the year abroad expanding the missions—including three in the Soviet Union—Sister Agnes already has considerable experience. But it is clear that the sisters are so dependent on the Mother that they have not even contemplated a future without her.

The most precious gift the Mother has given them is faith. It is that, more than the marvels of modern medicine, which keeps alive the hope that a higher being will intercede and return Mother to them—and to a world so desperately in need of her kind. —MADHU JAIN and FARZAND AHMED in Calcutta

Sisters pray for the Mother's recovery

SAIBAL DAS



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Dysentery	Bacteria	X	✓	✓
Diarrhoea	Bacteria	X	✓	✓
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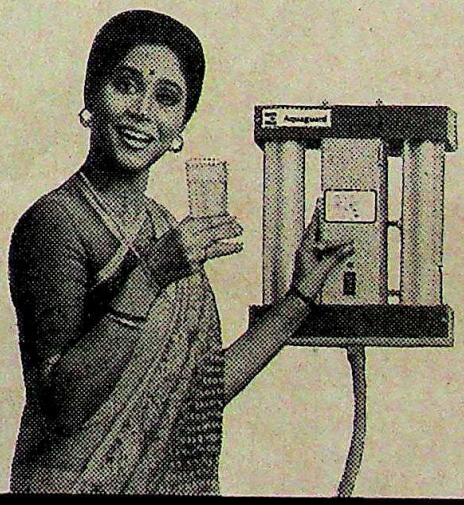

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THEATRE

The Fading Arclights

A historic retrospective, but theatre is at an impasse

CONTEMPORARY Indian theatre seems to be stuck in an impasse. Last month's two-week-long smorgasbord of nearly half a century of Indian drama presented under the ever-stretching canopy of the Nehru Centenary celebrations showed that theatre in the country is barely alive. And hardly kicking.

The Nehru Shatabdi Natya Samaroh organised by the Sangeet Natak Akademi was no doubt a historic occasion. There were 15 plays spanning a wide arc. From Bijon Bhattacharya's *Nabanna*, directed by Kumar Roy, which deals with Bengal's traumas of 1942-1943 to a recent Mahesh Eklunchwar play, *Wada Chirebandi*, directed by Vijaya Mehta which depicts the disintegration of a joint family.

The 'retrospective' included works of grand marquee names: Mohan Rakesh, Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Habib Tanvir, K.N. Panikkar, Rattan Thiyam—23 Sangeet Natak Akademi awardees no less. Among the plays staged was Utpal Dutt's *Kallol*, which had once landed him in jail. Conspicuously absent were Shanta Gandhi's *Jasma Odan*, Shiela Bhatia's *Heer Ranja*. Also absent were Badal Sircar, E. Elkazi and Shombhu Mitra.

Still there were the chef d'oeuvres such as *Adhe Adhure*, *Hayavadana*, *Ghasiram Kotwal*, *Urubhangam*, *Chakravyuha*. The last by Rattan Thiyam—a highly stylised rendering of a portion of the Mahabharata—electrifying the audience. But what the big show ultimately proved was that Indian theatre has not gone anywhere, particularly after the golden age of the '60s and '70s.

"The '60s were easy. Post Independence we were conscious of a national identity. We looked for folk forms. The issues were carved out by historic conditions," says playwright, actor and Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Girish Karnad. Tendulkar's *Ghasiram Kotwal*, Karnad's *Hayavadana* and Tanvir's *Charan Das Chor* used folk forms to enhance urban theatre and won critical acclaim.

But in the present era of instant utsavs, folk forms have been ritualised. Says Dr Jabbar Patel, who directed *Ghasiram Kotwal*: "This play was a post-Independence look at grassroots to find a new format. Today we choreograph the rituals. We have not really presented the soul. The modern application of all this has yet to come out."

"The urban artiste has become a kleptomaniac. He lifts bits of tradition and then decorates his art with it."
MAHESH EKLUNCHWAR

"Do we expect actors to starve or stand outside on the road? How long can you be *qurban* for theatre?"
MANOHAR SINGH

"Look at any of the plays in the festival. Do they deal with any of our concerns today, our political realities?"
M.K. RAINA

Often, these plays have become no more than emporium theatre, boosted by government grants and peddled abroad. "The urban artiste has become exploitative, a kleptomaniac," complains playwright Eklunchwar. "He steals song, dance, colour from the rural. He lifts bits of tradition and then decorates his art with it. Like icing on cake."

Tanvir, who delved deep into the traditions of the tribals of the Chhattisgarh region and came up with original theatre like *Mitti ki Gadi* and *Charan Das Chor*, is also sceptical. "What seems to be folk-oriented is actually imitative. I don't see why we should not oppose imitation of Indian rural by the Indian urban and vice versa. We have to produce a play related to our cultural ethos."

One reason for the lack of growth is this inability to examine the contemporary urban or rural Indian. Says G.P. Deshpande, playwright and professor of Chinese at Jawaharlal Nehru University, whose play *Uddhwasta Dharmashala* was staged: "It is only now that we are beginning to come to terms with modern man." Volatile actor-director M.K. Raina feels that the turn to the classical or to the folk is an escape from reality. "Look at any of the plays in the festival. Do they deal with any of our concerns today?"

For Shyamanand Jalan, from Calcutta, the only relevant theatre is the popular. He describes traditional theatre as "laboratory theatre". Says he: "In the villages there is no audience for them. Is it for drama critics and for seminars?"

Played out, too, is the naturalist theatre which came out of the European mould of Ibsen and Shaw. Those like Karnad believe that this form does not work for Indian realities. "The naturalist form is constricting. Ours is a far more complex society. People just don't come and sit on the sofa and talk," says Karnad. "Indian society does not express itself totally in eloquent words. In Shaw's plays everyone was capable of expressing his woes in eloquent terms. But here the daughter-in-law is not going to speak in front of her mother-in-law. In a sense we are more like Chekhov where people want to say but can't say—the 19th century feudal family." But there are

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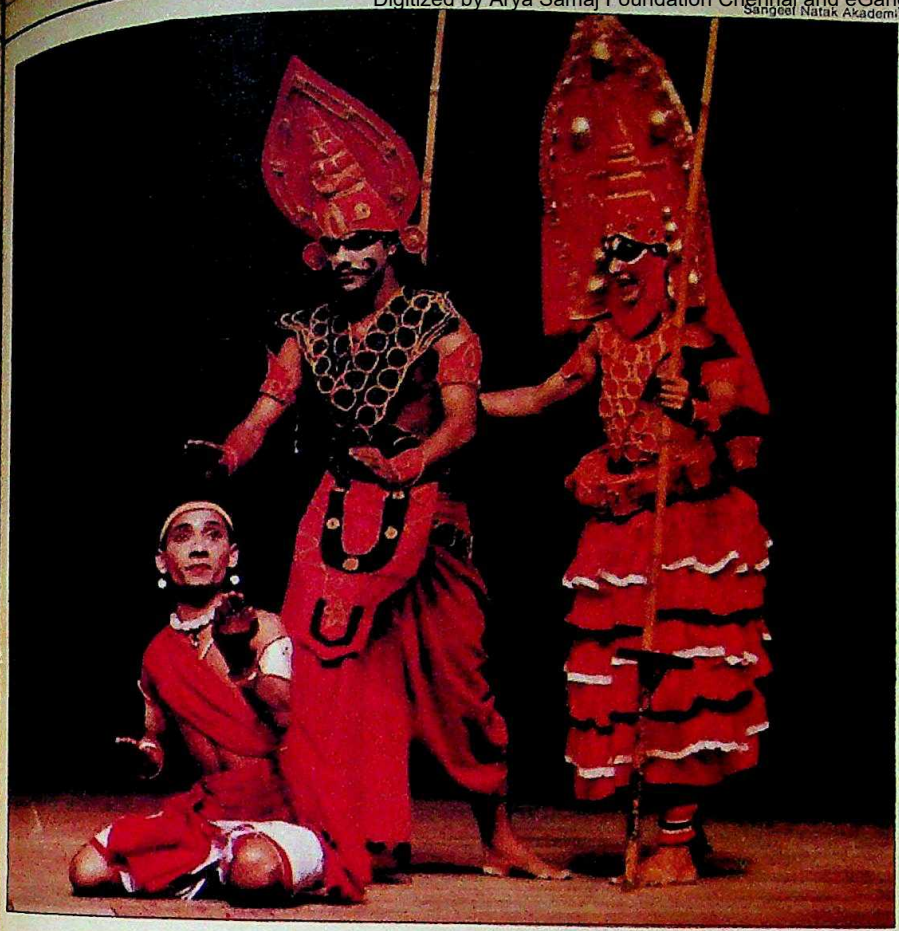
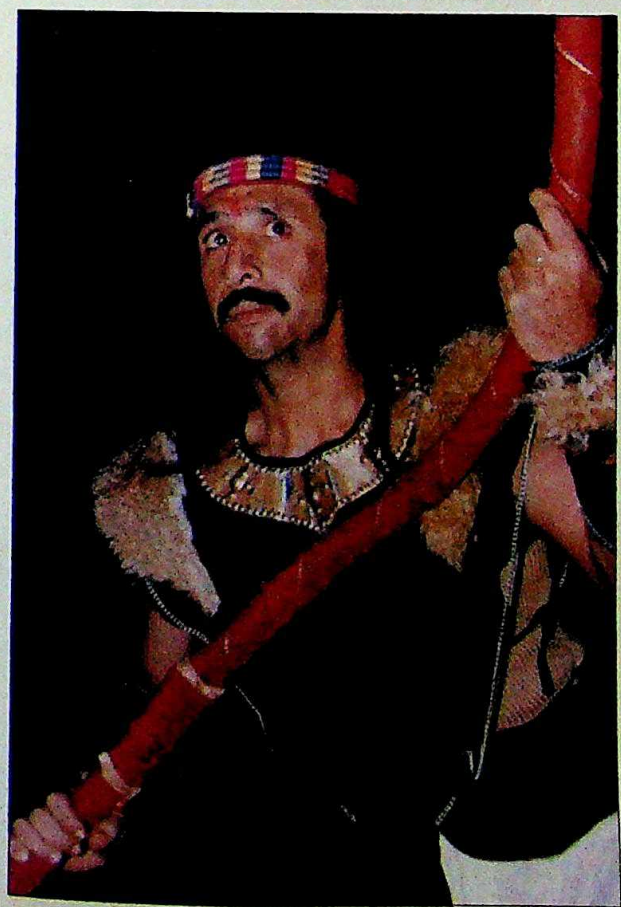


Sangeet Natak Akademi

Scene from *Urubhangam* (above); and Naseeruddin Shah in *Andha Yug*



Sangeet Natak Akademi

those like Eklunchwar who are quite comfortable with the living-room. His reasoning: "We are in the proscenium and I see no reason to go out of it. We have not really tapped the strength of Indian prose."

But the biggest problems are financial. There is no equivalent of the National Film Development Corporation. Complains actor Mohan Agashe: "This is the only country where there is no subsidy for theatre. Nor is there a national association of actors." Even places to rehearse in are difficult to find. Says Eklunchwar: "All the halls are rented out for weddings today."

However, most damaging has been the exodus of talent to television and cinema. The best playwrights—Tendulkar, Jabbar Patel, and Karnad—today concentrate on these mediums. So do actors with long standing theatre links like Naseeruddin Shah and Amrish Puri.

So theatre remains an amateur effort. Nobody draws a salary. Says Agashe: "We don't even get pocket or smoke money." Result: theatre is treated like a hobby, or a part-time job. The Theatre Academy of Pune for instance is made up of bankers, architects, teachers and doctors. Says actor Manohar Singh, who has taught at the National School of Drama: "Do we expect actors to starve or stand outside on the road? How long can you be *qurban* (martyr) for theatre?"

Many dramatists believe that eventually something might emerge out of the present chaos. Says Tanvir: "The abundance of cultural things throws up high quality. Our fiction is strong. There are lots of little groups in small towns trying new things. Something will come up. Whether it is from street theatre or the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA)."

What also interests him is that even the die-hard Sanskrit scholars, who blindly followed the line of thought drawn by the occidental orientalists like Max Mueller that Sanskrit could only deliver poetry and not drama, have come on stage. "Now Sanskrit pundits are also acting and producing plays," adds Tanvir.

A fresh wind is also blowing in from the streets. Coincidentally, next door to Kamani Hall—where the Akademi staged its plays—political satire adorned Chauraha, the first All India Street Theatre festival. And the audience shuttled between the two.

Thirteen groups participated in the three-day festival. Corruption, superstition, dowry deaths, environment were some of the themes examined. Among the more effective was the play on communalism by the Lucknow IPTA group—a brilliant send up of "computer baba" who recommends pitting pundits against mullahs as the quickest route to electoral victory.

Indian theatre will have to soon find an exit from the impasse it's in. And in a country in which various centuries exist side by side, it is a variety of forms of expression that will provide the answer. —MADHU JAIN

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ATHLETICS

Tracking the Stars

A galaxy of international champions dazzles at the Nehru meet

A blur of colour, flashes of near-Olympian endeavour, a wave to the crowds, and suddenly it was all over. For thousands of Indian sports fans, last fortnight's athletic extravaganza barely lasted the 10.47 seconds it took Carl Lewis to hit the tape in the 100 m. But even that—and the downer of seeing the legendary Lewis beaten into second place by a relatively unknown Austrian—was enough to bestow the two-day Nehru International Athletic Meet with the stamp of delightful success.

True, for most of the world athletes on display, the attraction of the meet was mainly the bonus it offered to visit India, a country far off their beaten track. The heat and humidity, and the fact that it was the fag-end of the international track season, ensured that timings were well below their best. As British star Nicky Morris complained: "It's too hot to break records." But the presence of 16 Olympic and world champions was enough to send spectators into a frenzy of appreciation.

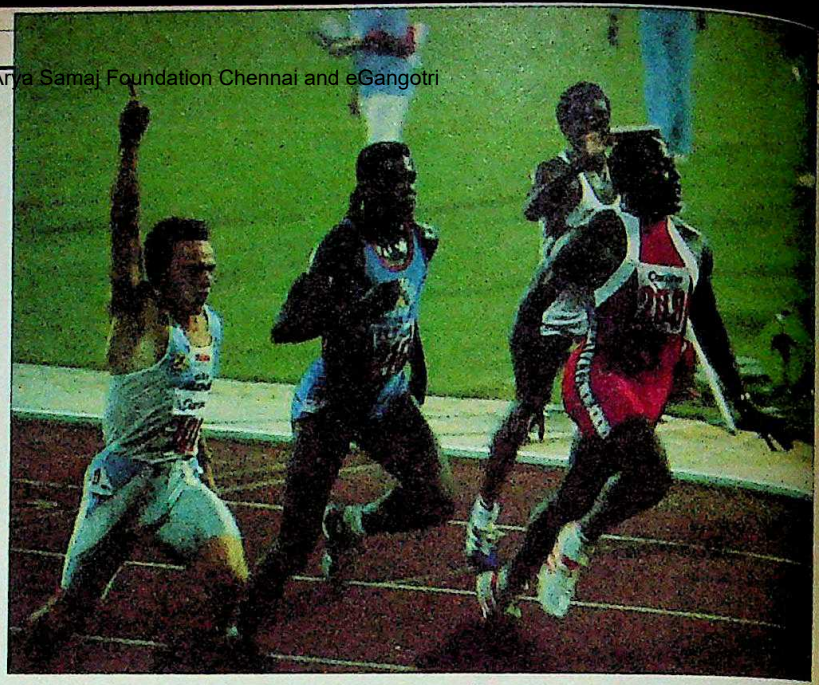
The list was straight from athletics' Hall of Fame. Carl Lewis. Said Aouita. Steve Ovett. Evelyn Ashford. Grace Jackson. John Walker. But more than their prowess on the tartan track of Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, it was the aura of glamour and star quality that dazzled the most. Their flashy, designer running gear was an unusual enough sight on Indian track. But even that was dimmed by the presence and parade of international megastars. As Lewis himself explained: "You could now actually see people whom you normally saw only on television. Sometimes, people touch us and say—Ah! it's flesh!"

But the flesh was augmented by the flash. Carl Lewis, winner of four gold medals at the 1984 Olympics, spent most of his time signing autographs and basking in the adulation. Predictably, the meet turned into an Indian *tamasha*. On day one, the solemn opening ceremony was interrupted by the blare of an announcement: "Ladies and gentlemen, Carl Lewis has just joined the President's box." Fifty-thousand eyes swivelled around as Lewis walked into the VIP enclosure.

Despite the star-studded field, Lewis was clearly the main draw (*see box*). His track appearances—a second place in the 100 m and anchoring the Santa Monica club team to a win in the 4 × 100m relay—didn't matter. What did was that the long-limbed legend was actually on view. Said Delhi University student, Sandeep Reddy, 18: "I never thought one would see Carl Lewis here. I mean he is actually here."

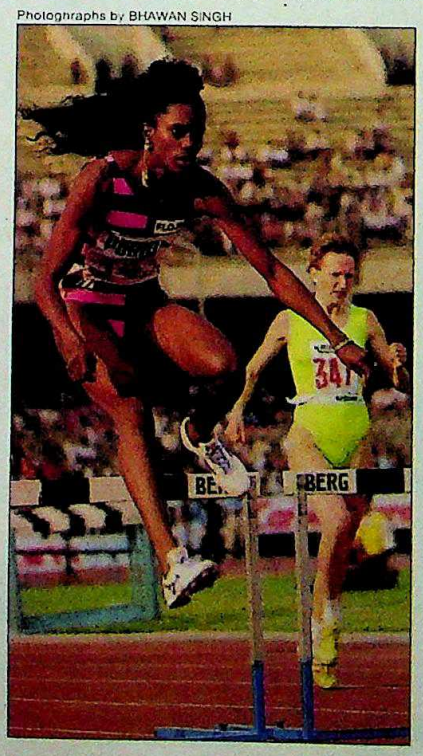
Moroccan Said Aouita, who holds a spectacular five world records, ran a close second in the popularity stakes. Aouita has a special relationship with India. He confided: "As a kid I used to love seeing Indian movies." He recalled watching *Dosti*. His favourite stars: Raj Kapoor, Dharmendra, Hema Malini and Rekha.

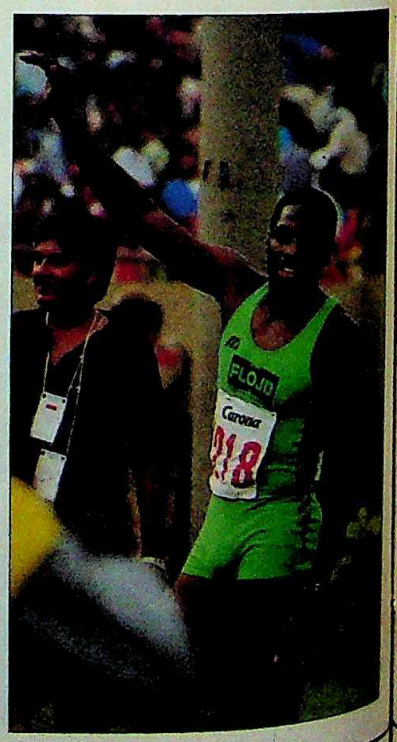
Meanwhile, the other track stars were soaking in their first dose of Indian heat and dust, colour and spice. Nicky Morris was expectedly affected by the poverty,



Carl Lewis (centre) beaten by Berger in the 100 m dash: shock defeat

Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH





Sandra and David Patrick, both winners of 400 m hurdles: popular couple

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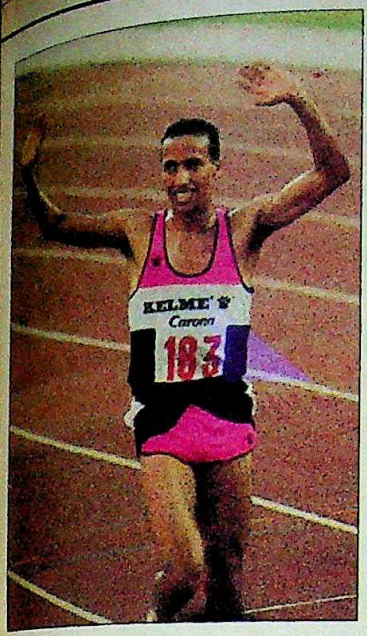


Danny Everett: Lewis's Santa Monica club mate who won the 400 m

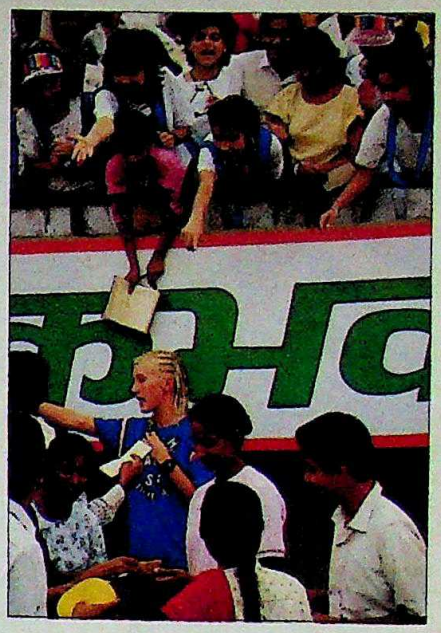
was amazed at the traffic, but loved the Red Fort, Qutab Minar, Chandni Chowk and Janpath. Said she: "This trip means so much to me." Several stars said they were here to see a part of the world they had never seen. Former Olympic gold medallist, Donald Quarrie, said: "At the end of the season, it's a nice chance to see India." He took back a miniature Taj Mahal.

Little known Austrian policeman, Andreas Berger, turned out to be the discovery of the meet, beating Lewis in the 100 m. Ironically, Lewis drew more attention because of his defeat. He refused to offer excuses for his 10.47 showing—well below his normal sub-10 timings—simply saying he'd been sluggish.

BUT the real darlings of the meet were the husband and wife team of David and Sandra Patrick, who each won the 400 m hurdles. As they ran a personalised victory lap close to the stands, waving and signing autographs on their way, they were adoringly adopted by the crowds.

At the end of it all, what was left were a few questions—had Indian sports gained anything? While most Indian athletes returned with well-below their personal bests, a few excelled in exalted company. Bahadur Prasad (timing: 3:43.40), the most promising Indian middle-distance runner, was inspired by running alongside Said Aouita into breaking the 23-year-old national record of 3:43.7 for the metric mile set up by Edward Sequeira in 1966. Shiny Wilson too did well, P.T. Usha clipped another second from her recent best in her favourite intermediate hurdles and Ashwini Nachappa returned her life's best timing for the 200 m. "I had to prove a point," she said jubilantly.

The main benefit was that the meet gave numerous Indian athletes—who may be national champions but still have little hope of ever qualifying for an Olympics—the chance to perform with the megastars. Ovett explained: "Many Indian have the potential to become international stars with proper exposure." It gave them the opportunity to exchange notes on training methods, diet—the very approach to competitive athletics.



P.T. Usha: eclipsed by megastars, yet a crowd favourite

Shiny Wilson up front in 800 m: one of the rare Indian victories

There was some controversy as well. Union Sports Minister Margaret Alva—with whom Suresh Kalmadi, Amateur Athletics Federation of India (AAFI) president, has had a running row—failed to show up. There were questions also on whether the foreign stars were paid large sums in foreign exchange as appearance money. J. Narayan, deputy chairman of ITC—which sponsored the Santa Monica club—officially stated: "We paid air fares, provided accommodation and gave AAFI Rs 5 lakh, an expenditure of about Rs 11 lakh." Kalmadi categorically denied any payments were made to the stars in foreign exchange or otherwise.

However, what does seem a positive fall-out is that athletics—the orphan Annie of Indian sport—received a major commercial transfusion. Former badminton ace Prakash Padukone, now promotion manager of Carona which co-sponsored the event, said: "We have spent Rs15 lakh for this meet." Added Kalmadi: "Our idea was to bring glamour athletics into India to attract the younger generation."

Even the foreign stars were optimistic. Says Lewis: "When people see us in the flesh, they realise we are human like them. Everyone has a talent which can be developed." Added Aouita: "With money and organisation, Indians can absorb the

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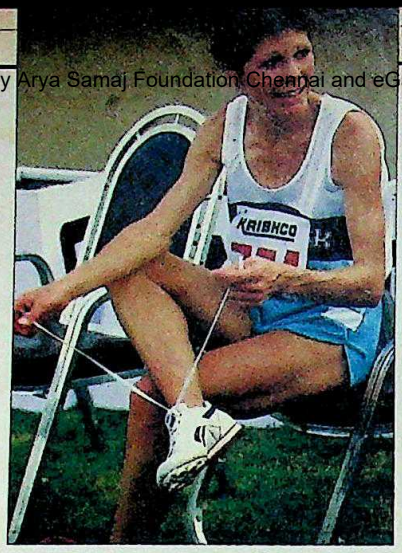
experience of world athletes."

And exposure is critical. Lewis' personal manager, Joe Douglas, explained: "Sponsorship is important as it shows everyone what happens when you develop talent. Besides athletes, coaches and other sponsors need to know there's something up there to aim for."

There was one major benefit. Having staged its third Permit Meet, India is now eligible to bid for the coveted Grand Prix Championship next year. These are controlled by the International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF) where participation by top athletes is mandatory. Kalmadi was cautiously optimistic: "We'll need to do a lot of lobbying."

Significantly, the IAAF observer at the meet, P. Solomon, stated: "I'm totally satisfied with the technical side of the meet." And, with all the top stars saying how impressed they were with the facilities, the chances are high. Said Aouita: "With these facilities and organisation, India can get the Grand Prix."



Morris: meaningful trip

For the Indian sports enthusiast the meet offered an encounter with the kind of athletic talent even Asia-level meets rarely see. To that extent the endeavour was worthwhile. More than anything else, transcending all controversy and the disappointment over the lack of world-class performances, the meet set a positive new precedent: of an Indian sporting organisation succeeding in organising so major a show, defying the politics and bickerings that chronically dog Indian sport. —SHANTANU DEY

CARL LEWIS

Top Draw

LEWIS mania. That was the name of the game. From the moment he landed at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport at 12.15 a.m. on September 19, till he left 48 hours later, the US megastar was mobbed wherever he went. The life-size hoardings of Carl Lewis plastered all over Delhi had already raised anticipation to fever pitch. And now, here he was in person.

In a private conversation with INDIA TODAY just before leaving, Lewis, 29, said he was overwhelmed by the reception. "In the US they recognise you, but the crowds are nowhere like they are here." He didn't know the names of any Indian athletes but did know tennis star Vijay Amritraj. Lewis, sporting a new hairstyle, a ponytail, was curious about *Sindoor* and the "Indian dot" (*bindi*). He quizzed: What does it mean? Is it a fashion like rings? How do they do it?

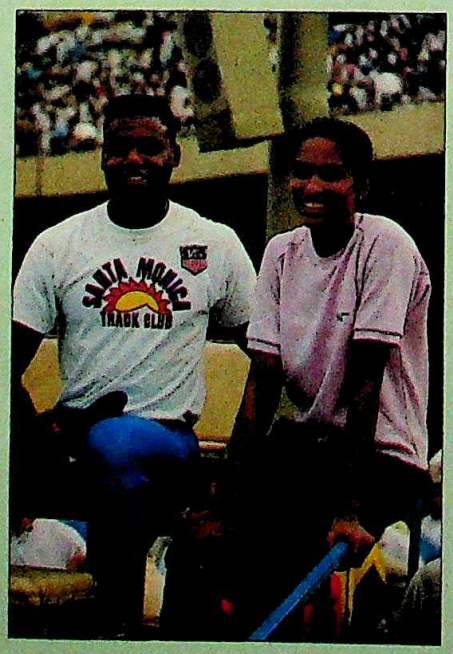
Earlier, Lewis spent time at Maurya Sheraton sampling Indian food. He loved mutton *biryani*, *murgh kausk purdah* (a chicken and pastry concoction) and the traditional *lassi*. In between, he slipped out looking for curios, miniatures and jewellery, while his personal manager, Joe Douglas, kept refusing endless interview requests.

But when film maker Amol Palekar asked for a three-minute recording for his promotional film on sports targeted at children, Lewis agreed. "I was overwhelmed," said Palekar. Lewis, in fact, has a special love for children. "I'd like to have lots of kids. Maybe 15," he said.

Lewis and his Santa Monica clubmates were sponsored in India by corporate giant ITC, who agreed to foot the bill when the Amateur Athletics Federation of India approached them. They went overboard playing host to their celebrity guest, obviously pleased at what was ultimately a major publicity *coup*.

Lewis had his own reasons for coming to India. Besides wanting to see the country, he has other less publicised Indian interest points. He is reported to have an Indian guru and the wife of one of his close friends has recently taken up Indian dance.

Lewis with Usha: at home in India



While fans searched the stadium for the star after he lost his 100 m race, the pop-singing athlete was back in his hotel checking out what an Indian discotheque was like. After a visit to Maurya's *Ghungroo*, Lewis commented: "It's just like those in America."

Next morning, the deeply religious track star was trying to arrange a meeting with Mother Teresa. Ultimately, Lewis did not get to meet her but sent a card and $ 100 to the Missionaries of Charity. As reporters kept chasing Lewis around, the man himself was finalising his shopping list. He arranged for jewellery and silk to be sent for his mother—to whom he is very close—and some dance jewellery for his friend's wife. Lewis also picked up a raw silk menu of the Dum Pukht restaurant for his mother who is an avid collector of menus from all over the world.

The superstar says he hasn't married because he hasn't yet met the right person. Said he: "I have to wait for someone who'll sweep me off my feet." Speaking about girlfriends, one of the world's most eligible bachelors admitted: "No, I don't have a steady girl-friend." And then, the fastest man in the world added: "Neither am I fast."

Did he have any regrets about his Indian debut? "Yes, I didn't have time to see much of India." Before boarding his flight, Lewis summed up his visit: "I leave with the most favourable impressions. I enjoyed it." —SHANTANU DEY

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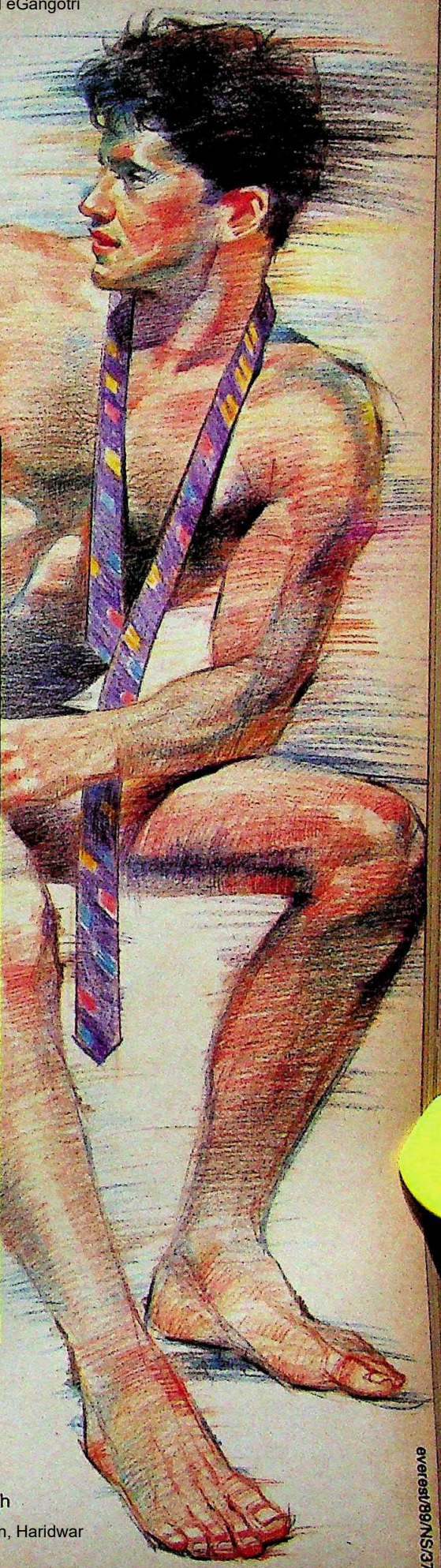

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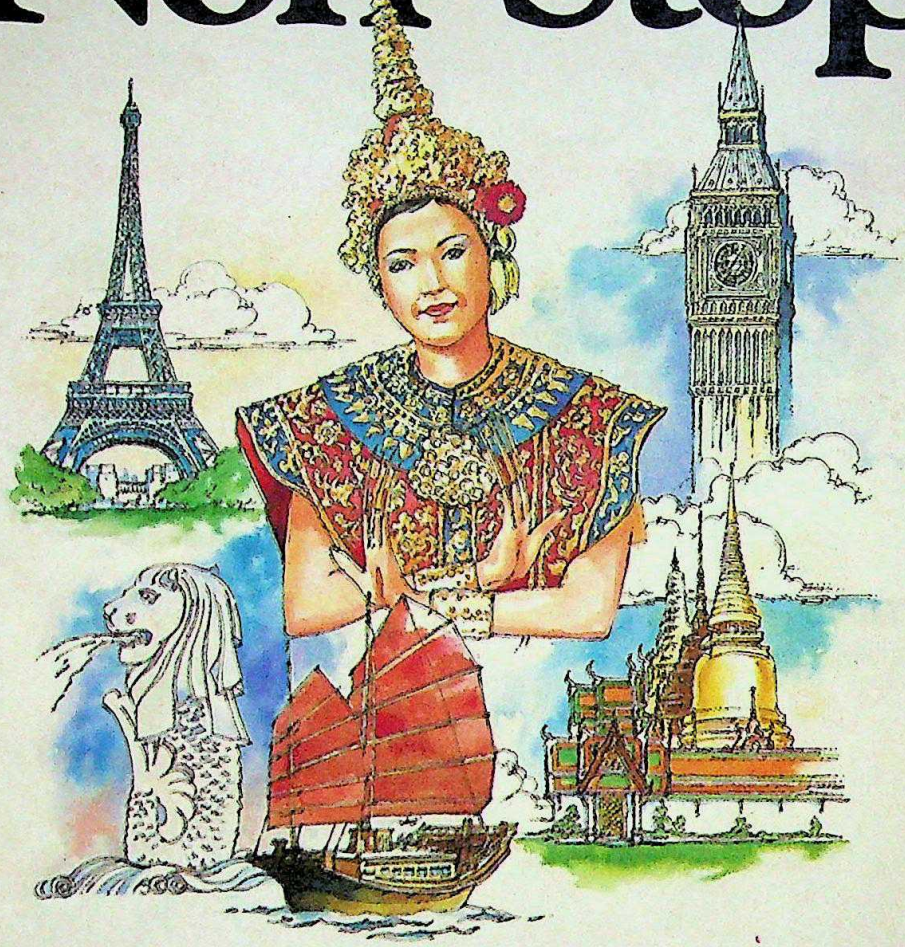

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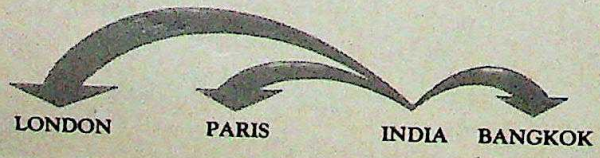

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NEW DELHI METRO

The Great Rail Race

Frenetic lobbying by foreign and Indian firms

NOW you see it, now you don't. Like the smile of the Cheshire cat, the much talked about rail-based mass transit project for the capital keeps appearing now and then, before vanishing again.

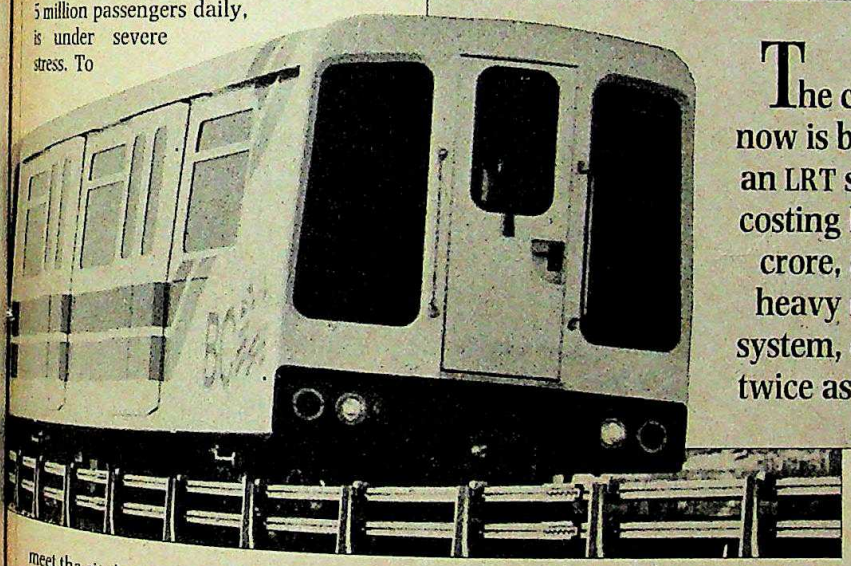
With religious regularity, committees, study groups and task forces have been set up to suggest ways of solving the capital's accelerating transport problem. In almost every case, the reports have become irrelevant before they could be acted upon, defeated by the burgeoning population and bureaucratic lethargy. The outcome: Delhi's traffic speeds from bad to chaotic.

The capital's lifeline, the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC), with a fleet of over 5,000 buses that carry close to 5 million passengers daily, is under severe stress. To meet the city's needs a decade from now, the fleet will have to be upgraded to 12,000 buses, a number even Delhi's wide roads can hardly take.

Realising belatedly that this problem can no longer be shelved, planners have finally got into the act. Rail India Technical and Economic Services (RITES) is working on a detailed project report for a 36-km east-west corridor, to be taken up in the first phase of a mass transit system in the capital (*see map*). And though the Rs 2.5-crore study is incomplete, the question of who will get the prize contract for the project—worth an estimated Rs 2,000 crore—has suddenly acquired Bofors-like importance.

One of the first to enter the fray were the Belgians. In 1986, a consortium headed by Transurb—a joint sector company that specialises in urban transport and built the Manila light rail—made a bid for a light rail transit (LRT) system, expected to cost about Rs 800 crore. Also in the reckoning is the public sector Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL), armed with the futuristic maglev (magnetic levitation) technology under an agreement with the West German Magnetbahn, a member of the huge AEG-Telefunken group. Competing with them for a piece of the action are companies from the Soviet Union, Canada, France and Japan.

Despite much lobbying, both the Belgian and BHEL proposals have run into trouble with the railways, which believes that only a heavy rail metro—like the one in Calcutta—can meet the city's gargantuan requirements.



The choice now is between an LRT system, costing Rs 800 crore, and a heavy metro system, costing twice as much.

It is in fact this debate over the most suitable system that has led to the most delay. In the mid-'80s, the Urban Development Ministry, the nodal agency for urban transport, favoured the cheaper LRT system. The view was reinforced in 1986 by the report of the study group set up by the Ministry of Railways.

Later, it became evident that there had been a gross underestimation. An LRT system can transport up to 30,000 persons an hour in any one direction. The demand estimated on the east-west corridor is 80,000 people an hour during peak time by the time the system becomes operational, progressively rising to 1 lakh.

As for maglev, the main argument against it is that the technology is untried. This is hotly contested by BHEL which points out that Berlin and Las Vegas have opted for it. But, says a railway official: "We can't trust it. It's not carrying passengers in the capacity we want anywhere in the world."

BHEL has even thought of taking up the metro project on a turn-key basis as the leader of a consortium, using either maglev or the LRT system. The BHEL proposal includes as project consultants RITES and the Indian Railways Construction Company (IRCON), both public sector undertakings under the railways.

The railways, on the other hand, had suggested the creation of the metropolitan transport construction corporation that could take up metro projects throughout the country—a proposal the Cabinet shot down as premature. Yet, the railways are considered the only agency capable of absorbing the technologies needed for a rail-based rapid transit system. And the general opinion tilts towards the heavy metro, whether underground or overground.

There is, however, a big catch: the cost of heavy rail would be double that of the LRT. Says Virendra Prakash, adviser to the Planning Commission: "An underground heavy metro system is best if cost is no consideration." Confirms an Urban Development Ministry official: "LRT is now more or less out of the reckoning." Even if that question is settled, there is stiff competition to grab the deal.

The project was put on the fast track following Minister of State for Railways Madhavrao Scindia's visit to the Soviet Union last year. Impressed by Moscow's underground, Scindia sought Soviet help for Delhi's mass transit system and got an immediate positive response. In February this year, a team arrived in India.

Almost simultaneously, the Canadians offered systems manufactured by Lavalin and Bombardier. While Lavalin is offering an advanced LRT that can carry up to 1 lakh persons an hour, Bombardier is in the heavy metro field. Both packages are likely to have significant financial aid components from the Canadian Government and provisions for transfer of technology. Bob Logie, a Canadian High Commission official, says both firms have had

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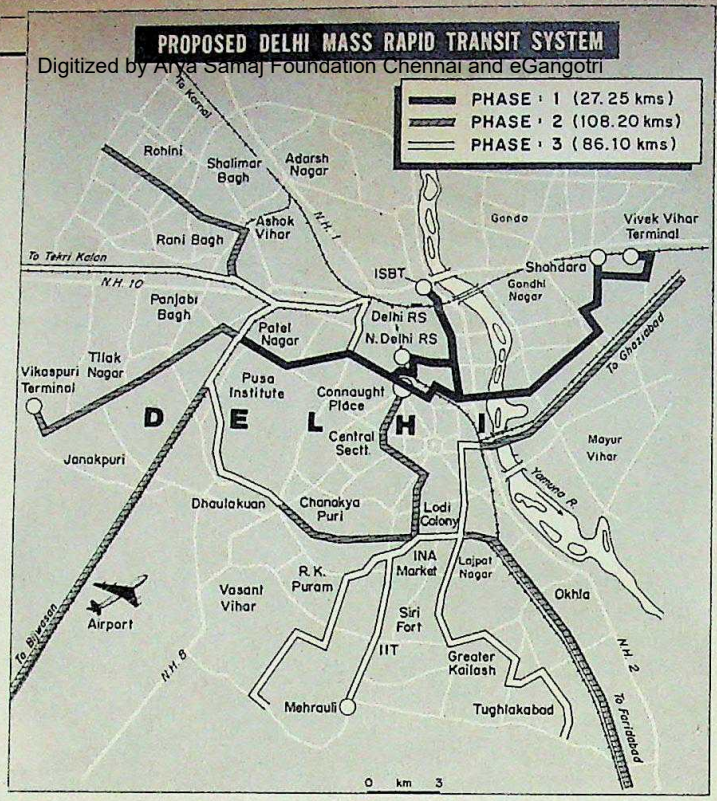


discussions with Indian companies for setting up manufacturing facilities here.

Not to be outdone, French companies such as Alsthom and Interinfra used the Festival of France in India as an excuse to organise a seminar on railways and urban transport early this year. But, admits a French Embassy official: "We were a little late in entering the race."

Eventually, Japanese, Italian and even British companies may join the race. British High Commission sources say two firms, Merz and McLellan and Design Triangle, have already shown interest. What may eventually clinch the deal is the aid component of the package. As an official points out: "We are simply not in a position to have the project executed on a commercial basis on our own."

That's why the Russians seem to have the best chance as their aid is likely to be liberal. Besides, since trade with the Soviet Union is in rupees, there will be no drain on foreign exchange reserves.

What goes against the Soviets is their not-so-up-to date technology. According to a RITES official this problem can be overcome by getting the civil works done by the Soviets and using other technology for the rolling-stock and signalling equipment. Apparently, an Urban Development Ministry official says, the Soviets are not averse to the idea.

There is good reason for them to accommodate Indian demands. Besides Delhi, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Lucknow are also planning mass transit systems. And by the year 2001, as many as two dozen cities will have a million-plus population and the need for metro systems. The rail race is undoubtedly on.

—ALOK TIWARI

METRO FINANCE

New Ideas

EVEN after the issue of who will build Delhi's metro is settled, the big question of financing it will remain wide open. It's not just the Delhi metro which is yet to get on the rails, but metros in a host of other cities too. Finding the cash required will be tough as losses in existing rail systems have soared.

The railways, which run the suburban systems in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, faced a loss of Rs 147 crore in 1988-89 in these cities. So, they don't want to pick up the tab for the Delhi metro. Says R.K. Jain, former chairman of the Railway Board: "Metros should be under the cities they serve." The Maharashtra Government is contributing to the new Mankhurd-Belapur section in Bombay.

Most metro systems around the world are losing propositions. Creating huge capacities for peak hours which remain underutilised during the rest of the day is a costly affair. Combine this with low fares for socio-political reasons and you have the perfect recipe for heavy subsidies.

With the railways not willing to foot the bill, planners are trying to evolve innovative methods to raise the cash. The proposals being contemplated by the Planning Commission and the Urban Development Ministry are:

► Development of property along the rail route and in stations.

► Tax on employers. Firms in downtown areas, enjoying the benefits of a mobile work force, may have to pay for it.

► If a locality is connected by a metro, the value of property there goes up. The owners may be asked to pay more taxes.

► Those who use their own vehicles where public transport is available may be penalised for increasing congestion. This may include a toll on entering downtown during rush hours, increased parking charges or both.

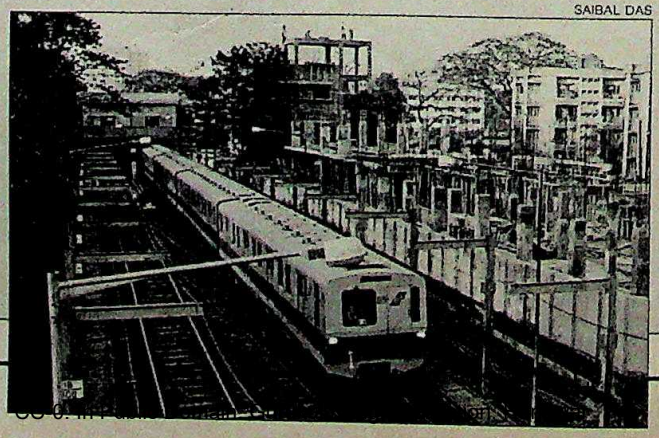
This last proposal could rake in money. For instance, Delhi has just 1 per cent of the country's population but 10 per cent of its vehicles. In the last two decades, the city's human population has grown 130 per cent and vehicle population 1,300 per cent. Many of these methods have been successfully used in other countries. And as a Planning Commission official says: "The buck has to stop somewhere."

Besides, last year the Planning Commission approved setting up of a Consortium Fund for Urban Transport with a nominal sum of Rs 2 crore. It is proposed to expand the fund to Rs 100 crore and use the amount to finance urban transport projects nation-wide. A combination of charity and cleverness should see Delhi's metro chugging along.

—ALOK TIWARI

Calcutta's metro: facing losses

SAIBAL DAS



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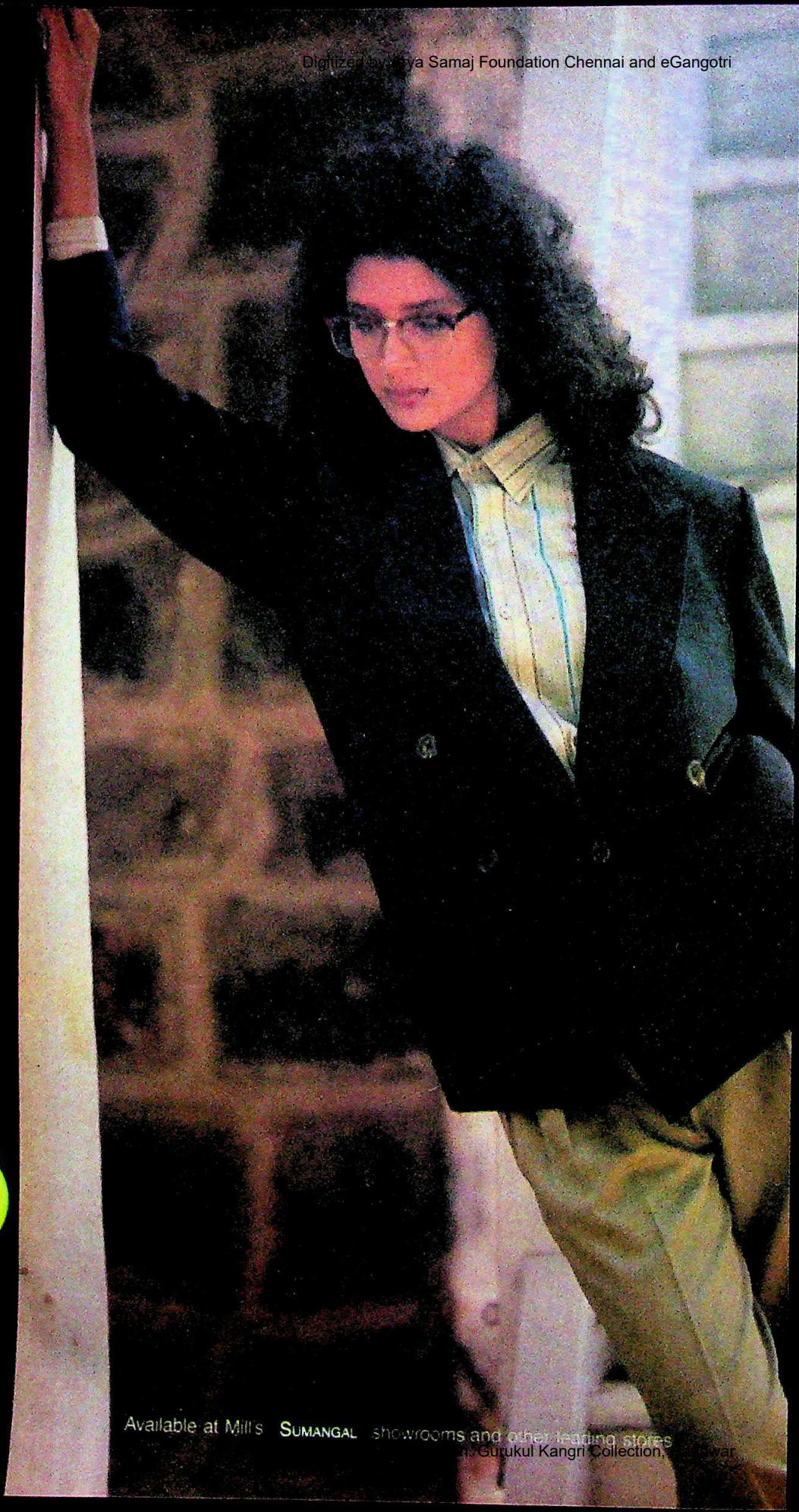

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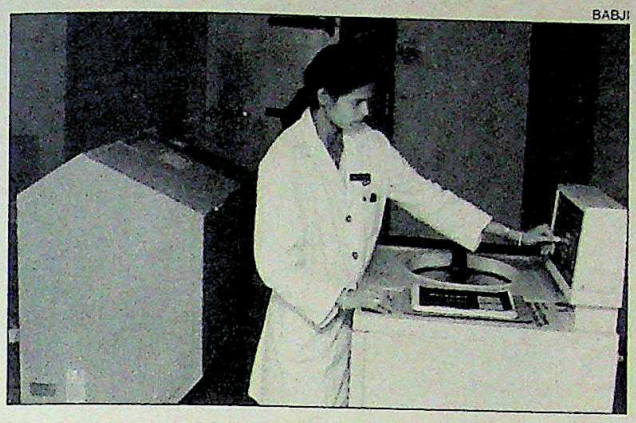
The Ultimate Test

WHEN the chief judicial magistrate of Tellicherry, Kerala recently sought the help of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad, in determining the parentage of a boy, it marked a new bold step in judicial and scientific history. The test known as DNA fingerprinting, discovered by British scientist Alec Jaffreys in 1983 and now developed by the CCMB scientists led by Lalit Singh is the biggest advance in crime detection since the discovery of fingerprinting in 1891 and the first bio-technology-based service to be commercialised in India.

BABJI



CCMB's DNA fingerprinting lab: major step

The test is based on the fact that DNA—the living unit of the body—is different in every person. The test detects genetic fingerprints in tiny samples of blood, semen, skin scraped from under a suspect's fingernails, hair roots or marrow. "The DNA print is an indelible tag. It cannot be changed and can be used to identify a person after death," says Lalit Singh.

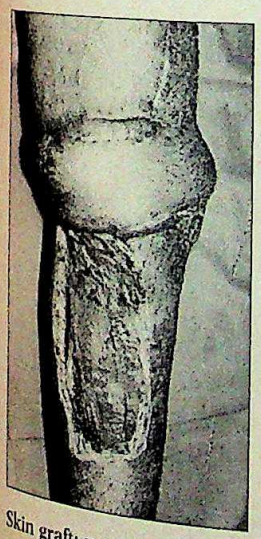
The DNA test is complicated and takes about two weeks. The scientists have to analyse the results of chemical reactions and radioactive photographs. For this the test relies on short sequence of lab made DNA known as 'probes'.

The difference between the western techniques and the one developed in CCMB is mainly in the speed with which the probe—derived from the venom of a branded krait—developed by Singh and his colleague Sridevi Naidu works. "It acts like a blood hound seeking out its matching DNA sequences," says Singh.

The CCMB charges only Rs 7,500 for isolating and printing three samples of DNA strains plus Rs 1,200 a day for the expert who presents the evidence in court—just a third of the rates charged abroad. The Central Forensic Science Laboratory has used the test in 16 cases till now but these have not yet come up for trial.

Radical Finding

● Ever since William Harvey discovered the circulation of blood in the 17th century, scientists have believed that veins carry blood from various parts of the body back to the heart. Now, a group of plastic surgeons in Bombay is turning that belief on its head. Its investigations suggest that blood in a vein flows both ways.



Skin graft: new explanation

The finding explains why a skin flap removed from one part of the body for transfer to another remains alive for at least an hour though there is no blood flow to the flap. "The single venous channel with the internal to and fro flow meets the demand of the flap tissues during its wait for transfer," says Dr R.L. Thatte, head of the Department of Plastic Surgery at the Tilak Hospital, Bombay. Thatte presented the findings at the annual conference of the British Association of Plastic Surgeons in Bristol, UK, in July and won the prize for the best paper.

Plastic surgeons at the Tilak Hospital have been working since 1981 on improved skin transfer methods. They stumbled on their latest findings while conducting skin transfer experiments on dogs. Using a dye and a tracer, Dr Nitin Kamdar of the Department of Nuclear Medicine, KEM Hospital, showed that blood flow in a vein was two-way. And a fluid mechanics specialist, Dr D.V. Khakkar of the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, confirmed the result in computer-based studies.

The ramifications of the finding? They haven't yet been explored. But Thatte quips: "The significance is more than skin deep."

World on Wheels

● It is the latest addition to the land of *rathams*. This motorised chariot, though, is aimed at dispelling superstition. Called Astro Car, it is equipped with a mini-planetarium from Japan, video and cine screening systems and a telescope and has been doing the rounds of villages in Andhra Pradesh since August 6. Launched by the B.M. Birla Science Centre, Hyderabad, the Astro Car offers a package of astronomy and popular science programmes aimed specially at schoolchildren and teachers. But eager villagers too flock to take a look at the indoor sky.

BABJI

Astro Car: welcome project

Says B.G. Sidharth, the centre's director: "It opens up the sky and creates interest in astronomy and space through programmes in and around the van." Built at a cost of Rs 3 lakh, the Astro Car has its own portable generator, so villages without electricity too will fall within its orbit.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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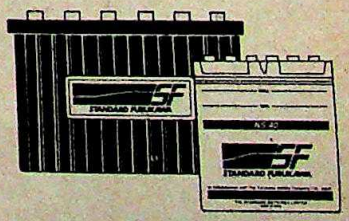

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BY K. NATWAR SINGH

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Gandhiana Relived

EARLY in the year I had a conversation with an acquaintance from the Soviet Union. That conversation led me to re-read some of Gandhi's books. Also Romain Rolland's (1886-1945: Nobel Prize for Literature, 1916) correspondence and conversations with Gandhi, Professor Raghavan Iyer's three volumes *The Political and Moral Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* and George Orwell's essay *Reflections on Gandhi*.

Orwell's illuminating essay begins: "Saints should always be judged guilty until they are proved innocent." To this I might add my own minuscule contribution to Gandhiana: "Was Gandhiji a saint among politicians or a politician among politicians or a politician among saints?" Orwell says: "That one even thinks of asking such questions indicates his stature."

Gandhi's achievement is so colossal that nothing can diminish its glow. The only important original political idea that has, in the last 150 years, come out of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and which has influenced and changed human beings and the modern world came from Gandhi—satyagraha. A priest in Belgium, a teacher in Argentina, a black civil rights leader in the US and a black political activist in South Africa were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize because they were followers of Mahatma Gandhi. Lech Walesa, the Solidarity leader, told me in Warsaw in June, how much he respected Gandhi and his teachings.

Gandhi was the most creative communicator of the 20th century. In 1930 he immortalised a historical moment. Who else could have turned 'salt' into a magical word? Without the aid of public relations agencies, TV, the jet plane, the computer and, during the initial years of his political life, without the radio, he got his message through to the people of India and much of the world. Just as the Buddha did 2,500 years ago. "My life is my message," said Gandhi.

To use another of Orwell's memorable phrases, Gandhi "disinfected the political air". He had the supreme courage to own and correct mistakes. In history, truth, non-violence, virtue, morality and goodness, if not totally bypassed, have often been in abeyance. When Gandhi arrived on the scene he brought them centre stage. We need to do so again if we are to extricate ourselves from the moral crisis which is beginning to envelop us.

I have been carried away. Let me get back to my Soviet acquaintance. We discussed the New Delhi Declaration of November 1986 on which appear the signatures of Rajiv Gandhi and Mikhail Gorbachev. Non-violence finds an important place in that document.

I shall paraphrase what he said. For the first time in the Soviet Union, efforts were afoot to study and analyse Gandhi's life, teachings and his message. This is all part of our new thinking. The world has run out of political ideas. Ideology is becoming passe. Marxist salvation is not round the corner. *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* have room for Gandhi. Hence, the Delhi Declaration.

The Gandhi-Rolland correspondence and conversations are fascinating. The book was brought out by the Publications Division some years ago and carries a foreword by Jawaharlal Nehru. Wrote Nehru: "In the turmoil and agonies of the world today, I think that Gandhi's message has a peculiar significance for all of us, whether we live in Asia, Europe or America...."

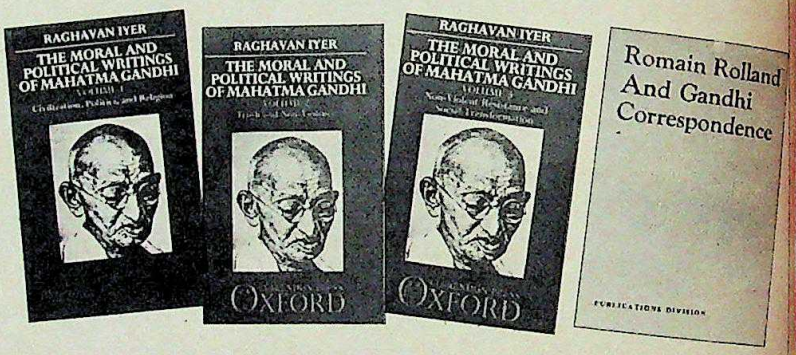
Returning from the Round Table Conference in 1931, Gandhi spent several days at Villeneuve in Switzerland. He held prolonged talks with Romain Rolland, an outstanding European intellectual who had done much to make Gandhi known to the West. Their conversations have that rare quality which makes even the most cynical realise that while man cannot live without bread, he does not live by bread alone. Rolland kept a detailed diary of Gandhi's visit and we get, through friendly but not uncritical European eyes, glimpses of the range of Gandhi's thought, activities and style in a European setting and the impact they made on the world.

Iyer's three volumes are quintessential Gandhi. Gandhi's collected works, published by Oxford University Press, run into over 120 volumes. A discriminatory and authoritative anthology was needed. Iyer fills the gap. Volume I deals with civilisation, politics and religion. Volume II with truth and non-violence. Volume III with non-violent resistance and social transformation.

Gandhi is generally presented in a solemn, reverential manner. Often, it is forgotten that the Mahatma had a marvellous sense of humour. A foreign newspaper man asked him as he came out of one of the sessions of the Round Table Conference: "Mr Gandhi, what do you think of western civilisation?"

"It would be nice," Gandhi replied.

You can't beat that.



The only important original political idea that has, in the last 150 years, come out of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and has in a significant manner changed the modern world came from Gandhi—satyagraha.

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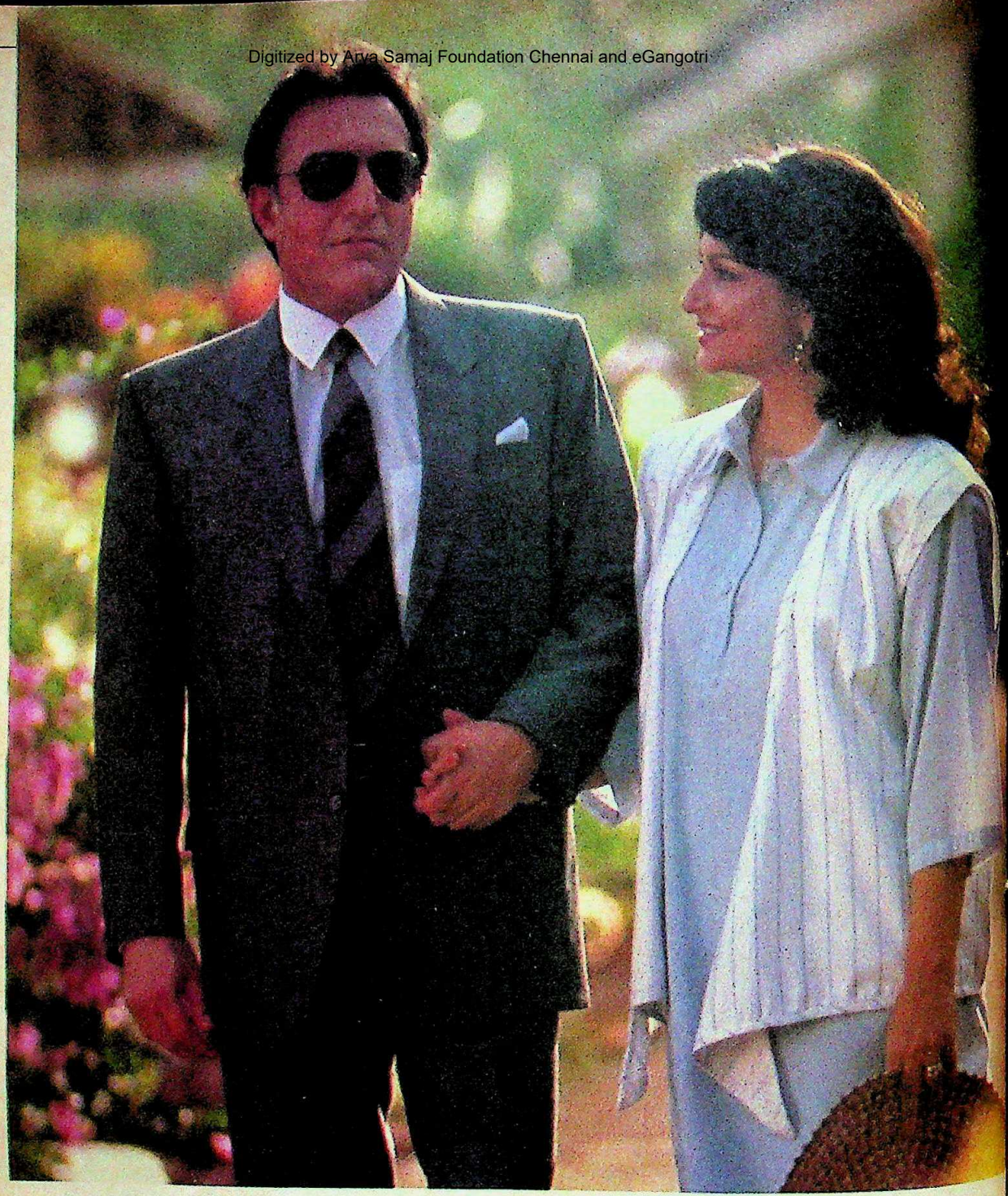

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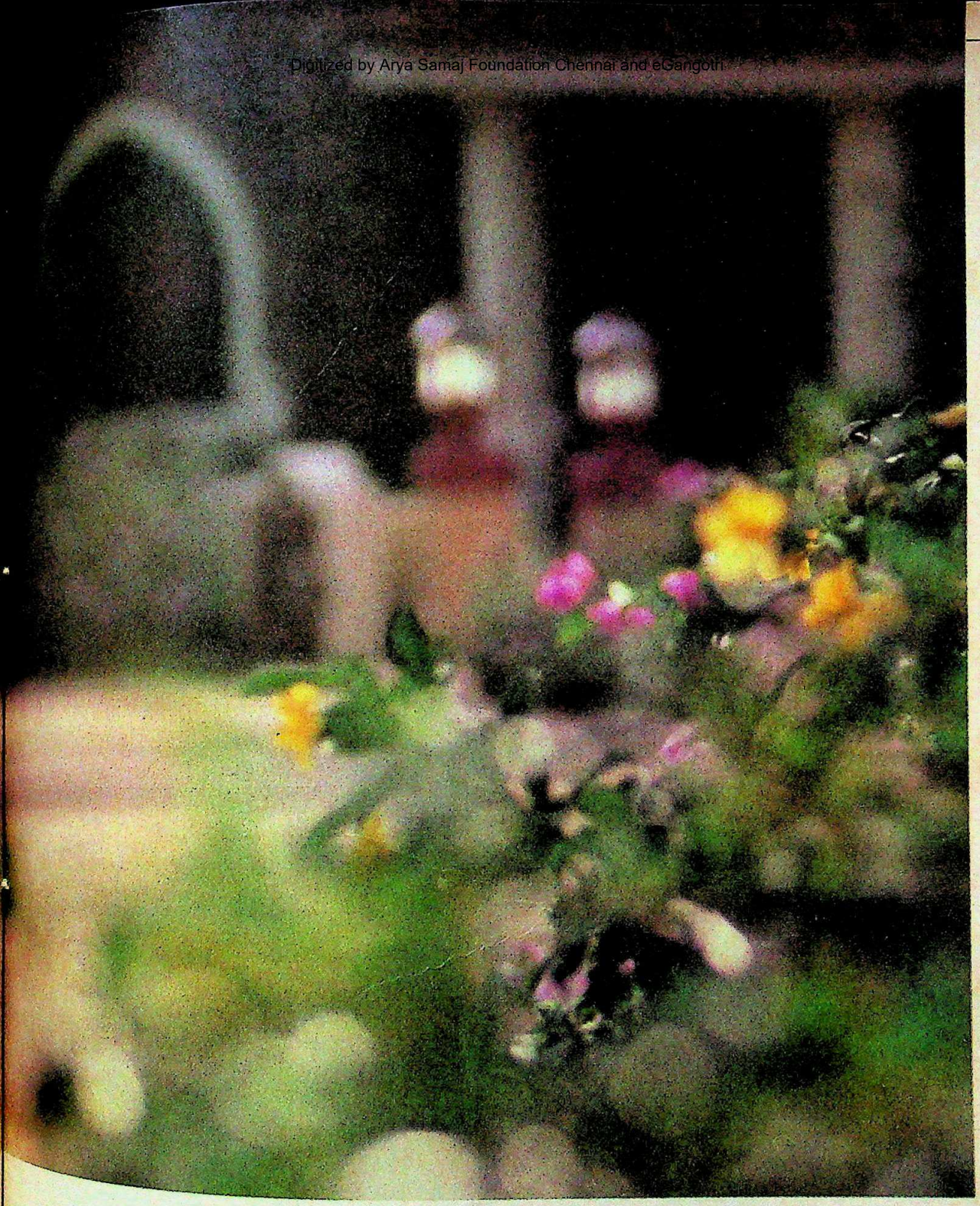

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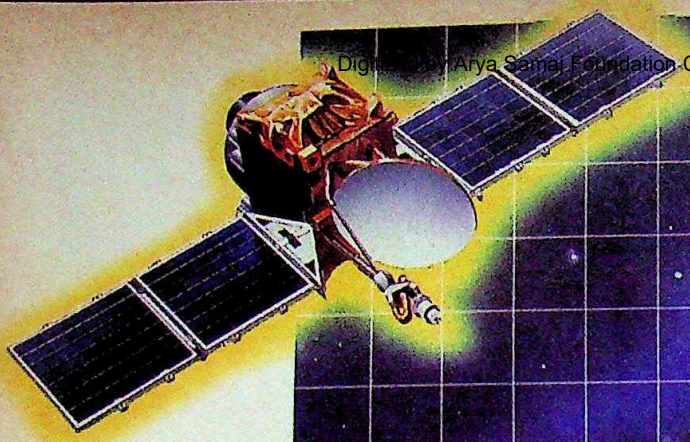

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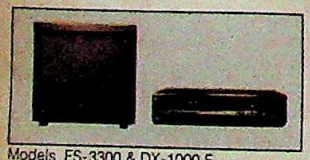

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Cat on a Cold Tin Roof

A high society potpourri, bland and banal

SOCIALITE EVENINGS
by SHOBHA DE
Penguin India
Price: Rs 50; Pages: 224

DESPITE the trumpets heralding the arrival of the Indian *Lace*, the *desi* Conran has yet to be born. The much-touted kiss-and-tell first novel of Shobha De, Bombay's reformed Hedda Hopper, is only a tease.

They say don't judge a book by its cover. But what do you do with *Socialite Evenings*? The seductive face of actress Neena Gupta (more famous for her love child than for her histrionics) stares out from the cover. Had the book been about the actress or come gift-wrapped with a film, this might not have seemed incongruous—like the French acute accent taking off from the last letter of the author's name.

The book attempts to look at the ugly side of the super rich and the super famous with the *dolce vita* gone sour, like its American supermarket bestsellers do: voyeuristic servings of souped-up, four-wheel-drive-sex-in-all-directions. But at least they have characterisation and plot. Here, the beautiful, naughty people are like cardboard cut-outs, put together from descriptions and one-liners—the kind of party repartee one always thinks of after the moment has passed.

The book, in fact, is one big party. It takes the reader to one orgy-laced party after another: on board the concrete ship harboured in port (where the high-heeled ladies of Bombay have to delicately negotiate a narrow ladder unless they want their "panties to show") or in filmi Juhu villas. The characters who wander about in search of a story line are: Varun, the blackmailing gay publisher, with a goatee beard; Anjali, the horny socialite; Girish, the widower, and flopped art film maker; a green-eyed actress with a husky voice; Babaji the Rajneesh clone; Gul, a Dubai-based member of the international underworld; Abe, a powerful Muslim adman who lusts after "pretty Hindu virgins".

This whirlwind of a guide through life at the top (ad world, film world, business world) suggests that this world is only peopled by predatory women, gay men (including "the gay arts and crafts guy who...looked like a Gupta-period temple deity") and boring "wimp" mother-guided husbands, with the odd macho-poetic lover thrown in.

As for sex, parts of the book sound like the confessions of a man-eater. The book could just as well have been called Boudoir Tales from Bored Housewives. A Henrietta Miller, De certainly is not. The sexual scenes are about as erotic as a cold *naan*. Worse, they couldn't be for real. The author's real obsession: her heroines' menstrual cycle which find recurring reference in her book.

Certainly, as founder-queen of *Stardust*, *Society* and *Celebrity*—magazines the former model edited as Shobha Khilachand—the author has had ample opportunity to observe the glitzy world of cinema and socialites at close quarters. This is her turf. Some of the characters could have jumped out of the pages of her magazines.

The story line is roughly in the Puss and Boots genre of the bumpkin from the provinces discovering the big, bad city and making good. The protagonist is Karuna, daughter of a "middle rung" government official who grows up in distant Satara, yearning for the other world. Predictably, her conduit is modelling, where she meets Anjali, the middle class lady who shimmied up the laminated ladder and now teeters on the top with her "fire engine red... talons" (her painted nails are her signature tune), rich, playboy husband and her succession of lovers and "toy-boys".

Karuna (only those who know De should look for autobiographical parallels) sees Anjali as the great escape from middle classdom to the world of the beautiful, and hitches her ambitions to her.

The novel is too clever. Finally, it is its cleverness which prevents this novel from being one. Somewhere along the way De seems to run out of clever lines. All her characters begin to sound the same. Even the dull husband. Mid-way through the book he begins to sound exactly like Karuna in upbeat mode. When she fantasises of "Morocco, Tangiers, China", he says: "We are not in the movies.... And I am not Bogart."

The hostesses of this novel would—heaven help them—never dare serve a flopped souffle. But the book is, in the end, just that. It promises everything but gives away nothing. And that's a pity for De with her armoury of barbed similes which fix people in aspic could have delivered a devastating high society *roman-a-clef*. But there are only bits and pieces of famous personalities here, and you can shake the kaleidoscope any odd way. De has covered herself shrewdly to pre-empt libel suits. *La belle dame sans merci* has, when it comes to the crunch, pulled in her talons.

—MADHU JAIN

NAMAS BHOJANI

Shobha De: princess of pulp

EXTRACT

As for husbands, they came into the picture only in a crisis—death in the family, a kitchen accident, or something that required a man's intervention.... And as all of us agreed, it wasn't the husbands who were the real villains. Poor fools—they were simple and uncomplicated and, therefore, happy creatures. It was us with our denuded anger who were miserable. But how could we communicate anything at all to men who perpetually sat reading the business pages of *The Times of India* while concentratedly picking their noses.

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A US Odyssey

Tale of self-discovery

JASMINE
by BHARATI MUKHERJEE
Grove Weidenfeld
Price: Rs 300; Pages: 241

EARLY this year, Bharati Mukherjee declared her love for the new world, became a US citizen and won the National Book Critics Circle Award for *The Middleman and Other Stories*. These short stories were a tribute to her new homeland, a poem to the changing face of American society, seen through the eyes of new immigrants of various nationalities. Now, with the publication of her third novel *Jasmine*, Mukherjee zeros in on the story of a young Punjabi widow, an immigrant whose spiritual odyssey parallels her own.

Jasmine, the Indian girl from Trinidad in a short story of the same name from *The Middleman*, was a "bright pretty girl with no visa, no papers and no birth certificate. No nothing other than what she wanted to invent and tell." Mukherjee admits to being "intrigued by that particular kind of survival". But she has transformed Jasmine into a young Indian from Punjab for *Jasmine* the novel, which opens in a Punjab village and follows its heroine, Jyoti—not yet Jasmine—through the traditional life of a farming community. A brief but happy marriage to an ambitious city boy transforms the feudal Jyoti into a modern Jasmine as her husband liberates her from the ways of the village in preparation for the America he hopes to immigrate to. A terrorist bomb, set off by a Khalsa Lion in a Jalandhar sari shop, ends their idyllic dream. The traumatised widow leaves for the US—with no visa, no papers, like her Trinidadian namesake—ostensibly to commit sati on the Florida campus where her late husband had yearned to start a new life.

What follows is a marvellously circuitous westward journey through European airports that culminates on a Caribbean shrimper, replete with the terrible conditions "boat people" must endure to land on dark nights on the US coast, avoiding border patrols to sneak in illegally. Although she does not know it yet, Mukherjee's heroine is beautiful, potent in her impact on others and an instinctive risk-taker who has incredible inner strengths. Indeed, "Jasmine is the essential American. Some people are born to be American." By American, Mukherjee explains, "I mean an intensity of spirit and a quality of desire."

In a climactic encounter with American violence as soon as she lands, Jasmine discovers her will to live and, instead of committing sati as she had planned, burns the suitcase containing her husband's college suit and her white widow's sari before she sets off on the highway to instant Americanisation. By the time she leaves Florida for New York, Jasmine has already discarded her salwar kameez and glittery chappals for a faded T-shirt and hand-me-down jeans: she has learned to "travel light" and "walk and talk American".

Bharati Mukherjee: immigrant images

ARVIND GARG

With her third novel *Jasmine*, Mukherjee zeros in on the story of a young Punjabi widow, an immigrant whose spiritual odyssey parallels her own.

Then, a five-month hiatus in a Punjabi "professor's" apartment in the Indian ghetto of Flushing offers a realistic view of the typical Indian immigrant's life. It's a life of economic refugees where America is kept at bay with Hindi films on video, fried snacks are served with tea and social life is restricted to a neighbourhood where the various communal groups remain so distinctly separate that even Jats and Sikhs don't intermingle. Mukherjee's fictional heroine (like other daring young women in real-life immigrant situations) breaks out of this airless cocoon, making her get-away with a fake green card into the brave new world of the more democratic Americans. As a "caregiver" in an upper westside home, Jasmine looks after the adopted child of a Columbia University professor and a Park Avenue publisher. With wit and compassion, Mukherjee describes Jasmine's acculturation into this liberal, liberating community. But, in the US, nothing is static for long; new possibilities always loom temptingly. Jasmine witnesses the disintegration of her employers' "happy" marriage even as Mukherjee imports a ghost from Jasmine's Punjabi past that makes her run away from New York in sheer panic.

Of course, like the old American pioneers, Jasmine was destined to go west. Almost arbitrarily, she chooses Iowa which is where Mukherjee herself started off when she came to America in the '60s to study at the famed Iowa Writers' Workshop. Jasmine's exotic looks and Indian background simultaneously fascinate and frighten Iowans, who try to make her over and give her yet another new identity as Jane, the common-law wife of the town's middle-aged banker Bud.

Together, they adopt Du, a Vietnamese teenager from a refugee camp who becomes Jasmine's spiritual son. In Mukherjee's scheme, he represents another kind of immigrant—one with a very different pattern of assimilation. Eventually, however, Jasmine is "caught between the promise of America and old-world dutifulness". She finds herself, once again, "greedy with wants and reckless from hope". So she "repositions the stars" and moves on to—where else?—California. Change, restlessness, social mobility and a new kind of non-biological "family" are, in the end, Jasmine's all-American choices. Mukherjee ends the novel with optimism and an upbeat belief in Jasmine's American future.

—VIBHUTI PATEL

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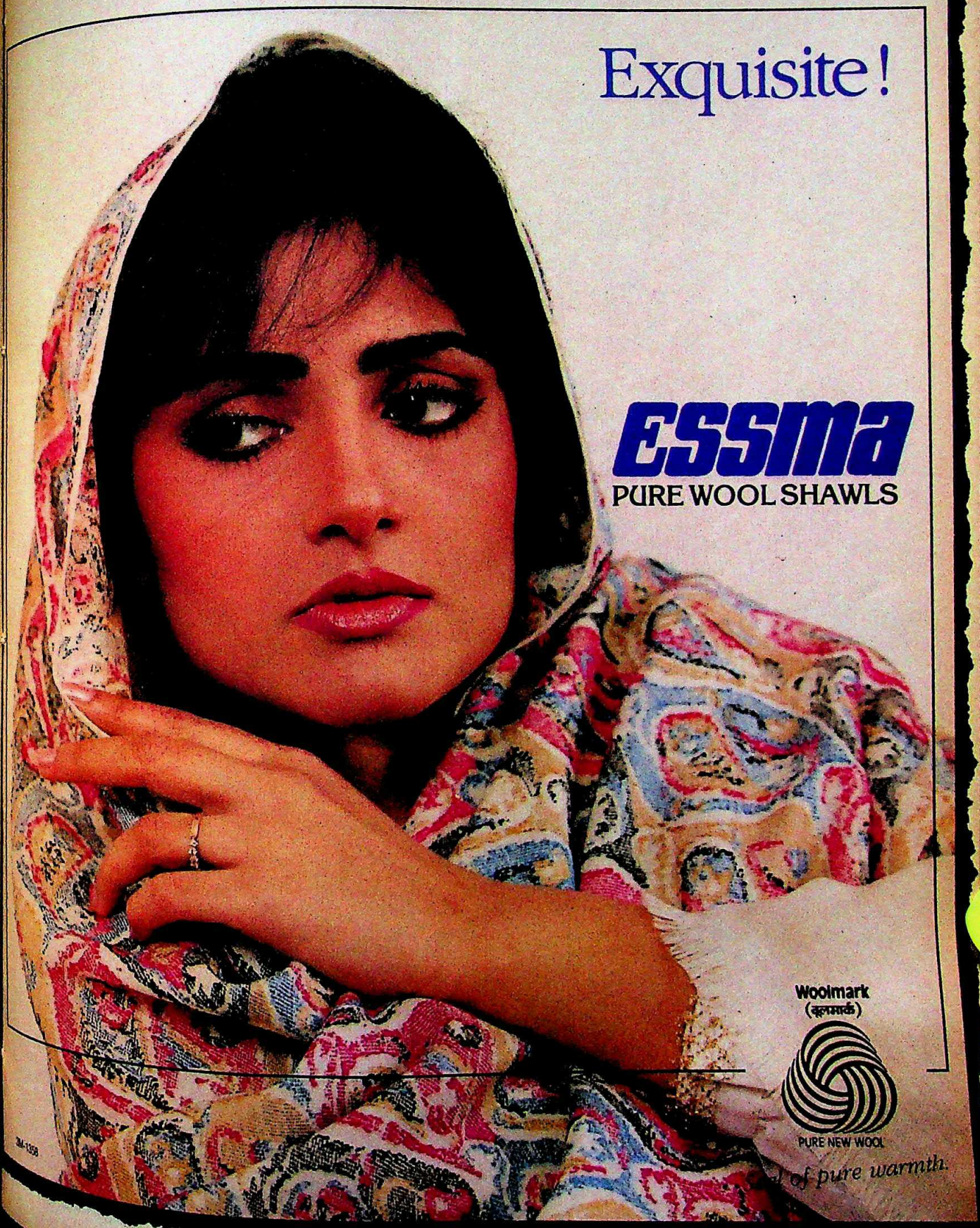

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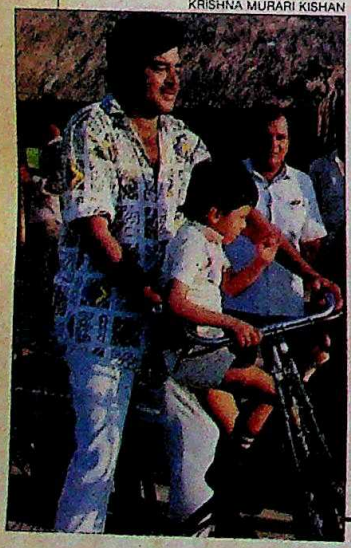
Fatima: new nymphet

◆ Even Peter Pan must feel old by comparison. And certainly envious. For Dev Anand continues to pull out nubile nymphets from his tilted golf cap with relentless elan. So after the Zeenies, Tinas, Richas, there comes **Fatima Sheikh**: a 22-year-old former air hostess. Says Dev, typically: "She's witty, pretty, talented. She'll become a big star." *Sau Crore*, her launch film, is based on the Syed Modi murder case. Gushes Fatima: "I associate the film with the population of India. I want all the *sau* crore to like me." Now, one would have thought Dev's attention was enough.

◆ You need a Bihari to upstage a Bihari. And if both happen to be legendary loudmouths, the show-down should make for apocalyptic noise, and boundless entertainment. Bihar's boy in Bollywood, **Shatrughan Sinha**, has taken on the state's professor-propagandist K.K. Tewary in New Delhi. The star, known for his over-acting, has already made up his mind to campaign for the Opposition in the coming elections. Even if he doesn't contest. What Shotgun is smug about is the mammoth crowds he has been drawing in north Bihar. Declared he in Patna last fortnight: "I'm not like Tewary. I do not need Doordarshan to promote myself." Actually neither does Tewary. Few will contest that the two gentlemen are by themselves quite enough.

Sinha: campaign noises

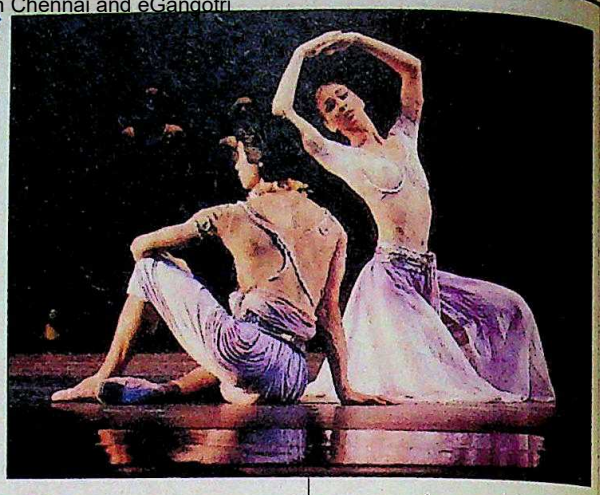
KRISHNA MURARI KISHAN



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Bano: diplomatic diva

◆ Relations between India and Pakistan are now moving to the lilting sound of the ghazal and thumri. The diva of ghazal singing, **Iqbal Bano**, was in the capital last fortnight mesmerising audiences. Her two performances—part of the Indo-Pakistan cultural exchange programme—fetched packed halls. Her renderings of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's revolutionary *Hum dekhenge* and *Dashte tanhai mein* enthralled. And then she belted out two Punjabi sizzlers that had the audience swaying. Bano exulted: "The audience was great." Then added: "Just like in Pakistan." Well diplomacy obviously doesn't overwhelm loyalties.



Scene from *Buddha*

◆ **Naresh Sohal** and Gautama Buddha together make sense. For both seem to belong to the same part of the world. What was unusual was that their fusion occurred through an occidental medium: western classical music. Composer Sohal's first ballet, *Gautama Buddha*, was performed last month by the Houston Ballet Company at the Edinburgh festival. The 50-minute score, said critics, was reminiscent of Stravinsky. Sohal, who arrived in England 27 years ago with £ 2 in his pocket, is now celebrating his 50th birthday with a string of concerts. Says he about his Buddha theme: "Every artiste must aspire to something beyond mortal fame." Of course, the practical bottom line is: there are plans afoot to make the ballet into a film shot at Sarnath.

◆ First there was *Heat and Dust*, and now there's *Dust and Ashes*. India has a way of getting itself summed up in these pithy, down-and-out phrases. And then the projects that bear these titles win awards too. A co-production between BBC-2 and Delhi-based Kas movie makers, *Dust and Ashes* has won the Earthwatch Award of the National Geographic Society, Washington DC. Jointly directed by **Naresh Bedi** and Michael York, the film is about the extraordinary faith that moves 15 million people to undertake the Kumbha Mela pilgrimage. The film moves beyond the crush to discover the meaning this has for two of the pilgrims. Says Bedi: "It's a great feeling winning the award." Meantime, we wait for the next ashes and charcoal venture.

Bedi (centre): coveted award

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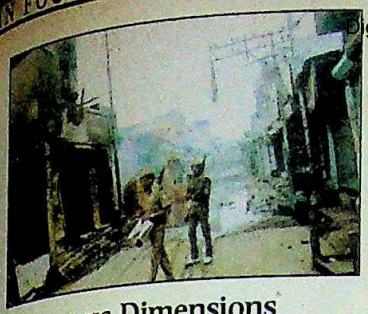
IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT



Dangerous Dimensions

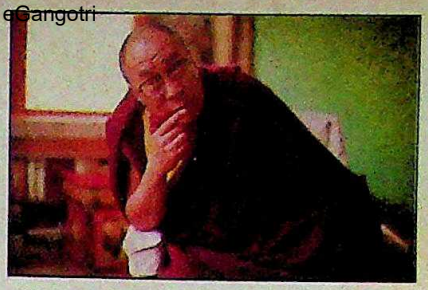
As November 9, the date set for starting construction of the controversial temple at the mandir-masjid site in Ayodhya, approaches, the atmosphere is getting tense. Political parties are playing the religious card, and the communal situation is being dangerously exploited for its electoral worth.

COVER STORY 26

Controversy and Cover-up

With *The Hindu* publishing fresh evidence, the Bofors controversy has again taken centre-stage—and triggered off a public rift between Editor G. Kasturi and Associate Editor N. Ram who charged that Kasturi had stopped further exposes, fearing government action against the family-owned newspaper.

SPECIAL REPORTS 38



The Politics of Peace

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political leader of 6 million Tibetans, is an honour long overdue. But against the backdrop of the Tiananmen crackdown and the anti-China movement in Tibet, the award has taken on a bold political tint.

SPECIAL REPORTS 56

Flying into Battle

Rajiv Gandhi has embarked on the pre-election ritual of criss-crossing the nation with gusto. In less than six weeks, he covered over 200 Lok Sabha constituencies, laid foundation stones for projects worth over Rs 8,000 crore, and launched a blistering attack on the Opposition.

SPECIAL REPORTS 50

The Big Push

Reliance Industries, the third largest corporate group in the country—known for its closeness to the ruling party at the Centre—is embarking on a massive, Rs 4,000-crore, expansion drive, despite the controversies it's caught in. A report plus an exclusive interview with group Chairman Dhirubhai Ambani.

BUSINESS REPORT 112

Back to the Crease

The Indian cricket team under a new captain but comprising mostly old faces is ready to face a challenging season. The team has to live down the trauma of the battering at the hands of the West Indians and the searing controversy with the board that followed. Also, an interview with Captain K. Srikkanth.

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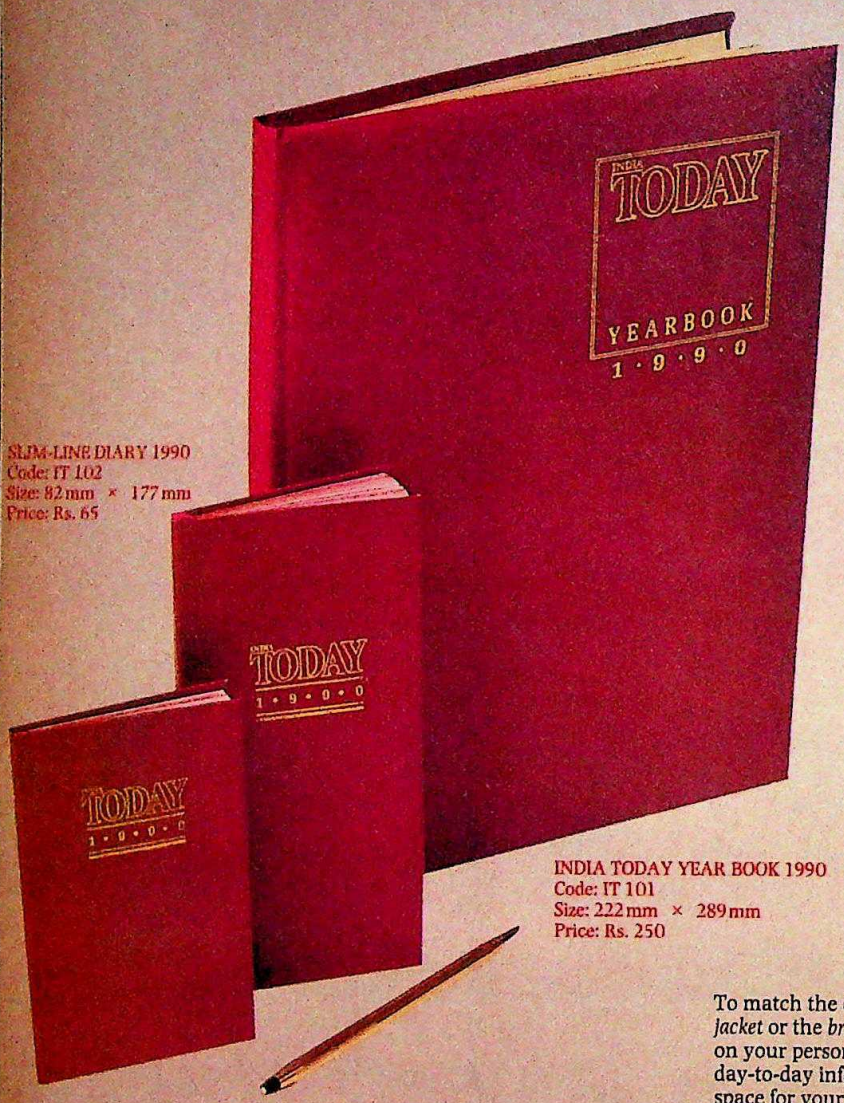

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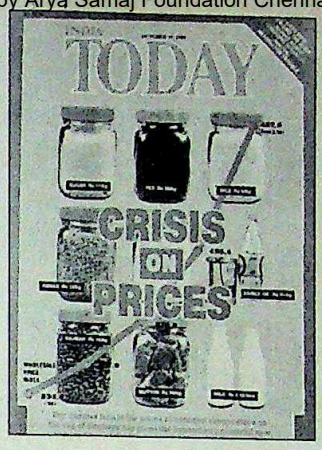

ALARMING RISE

The stress has now shifted from who has what and how much in numbered Swiss accounts, to a more existential area where the pinch is felt by the voters directly ("Crisis on Prices", October 15). Your analysis of the skyrocketing prices is a pointer to the electoral verdict hanging above the ruling party like the sword of Damocles.

New Delhi — **R. RAJAGOPAL**

■ The current hike in prices has given the Opposition a new issue for the coming elections. And if the ruling party does not check this rise, it will be facing a hostile electorate.

Baroda — **AMIT LOIWAL**

■ The present rise in prices has taken place at a time when the Government has been claiming record production of foodgrains and oilseeds. This rise is the cumulative effect of mismanagement of the economy, particularly after the last budget when the prices of essential commodities were increased.

Delhi — **V. SAGAR**

DANGEROUS DRIFT

Your cover story ("Falling Apart", September 30) proves beyond doubt that a political solution is the only way to bring peace and normalcy to Sri Lanka which has virtually become a killing field. To end the present crisis, all political parties must come together.

Madras — **ROBIN PALARAMB**

■ At least now the Sri Lankans should realise that clashes among different sections of the people on the basis of language and religion will be suicidal.

Trivandrum — **A. JACOB SAHAYAM**

■ Peace cannot descend on Sri Lanka as long as the JVP continues to follow the path of violence. The economy is in a shambles and it is a miracle that the country is still surviving. Given the continuing animosity among the various Tamil groups, the proposed pull-out of the IPKF will also throw the relatively quieter north-eastern provinces into turmoil.

Pune — **D.B.N. MURTHY**

■ President R. Premadasa has adopted a short-sighted strategy of exploiting the Sinhala nationalist sentiments to mount pressure on India to withdraw its troops from the island nation. But in the process, he has let the JVP get an upper hand.

Chandigarh — **SANJAY CHOPRA**

TERRORISM IN UNIFORM

It is sad that the police in Punjab are harassing innocent men and women ("Uniformed Brutality", September 30). Doesn't repression of innocent people by the police amount to terrorism? Although the people have protested against these incidents, the Government has not done anything to stop police brutality. This will only increase dissatisfaction among the Sikhs.

Kanpur — **-RAJPRIT SINGH SALUJA**

■ With the Centre following the "bullet for bullet" policy regarding terrorists, and the Akalis remaining divided, the innocent youth of Punjab are paying a heavy price. Those who have taken up arms to vent their frustrations bear testimony to this fact.

New Delhi — **SURINDER SINGH**

GOING PLACES

At last, women have shown they are in no way inferior to men ("Heels on Wheels", September 30). They no longer have to depend on anyone and are free to move around swiftly.

Nagpur — **VEENA ADIGE**

■ Driving by children should be discouraged. The case of 15-year-old Ritu Nanda who has been driving a moped for a year and now possesses a scooter is a gross violation of traffic rules. Even for non-geared or automatic-geared two-wheelers, only persons above 16 years can hold a licence. If this trend continues, road accidents can rise steeply.

Kanpur — **SANJAY PRASAD**

■ After experiencing the new liberation, Indian women must start wearing helmets. They should not lose their head over the new-found freedom.

Ooty — **PRIA KRISHNAN**

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REGRET

In the feature "A Slow Fade-out" (INDIA TODAY May 15, 1982), it was reported that Kamleshwar ran into trouble when he opposed a proposal, by a beverages company, to set up franchise stations in Bombay and Delhi with South Korean collaboration. Instead, Kamleshwar successfully pushed his idea of a second commercial channel, even as he turned down the same company's offer to sell TV rights for the Indian performances of a Afro-rock group. It was also stated that the Congress(I) politician who owned the company complained against Kamleshwar to Dhawan, and that some others too were cut up with Kamleshwar because they had expected a cut from the Rs 20-crore franchise station proposal. All this had sealed Kamleshwar's fate.

On further inquiry we find that there were some factual errors in the report. We had no intention to malign or discredit the reputation of Mr Charanjeet Singh of M/S Pure Drinks (New Delhi) Ltd., or any other person. We regret the error and any distress or embarrassment caused to Mr Charanjeet Singh.

—*Editor*

GLOSSING OVER REALITY

All the short films on Doordarshan on national integration ("Patriotic Plugs", September 30) very subtly stress that all is well, that the common man need not worry, and that India is in safe hands and on the road to progress. The reality, however, is grim and depressing.

Nasik — NITIN PARANJAPE

■ The films on national integration may be an election stunt but they make an old-fogey like me feel a patriotic glow.

New Delhi — H.C. SHARMA

DAMNING DEFEAT

The apology by *The Illustrated Weekly of India* ("A Shocking Surrender", September 30) is a blow to Indian journalism. Freedom of the press is absolutely necessary for the functioning of a democratic country. But it is sad that many exposes are made without cross-checking facts.

Cuttack — SRIMAY KUMAR SARANGI

■ The *Weekly* editor Pritish Nandy and his fellow journalists have made the situation worse by making the apology look malafide and a ruse to get out of the defamation suit.

Faridabad — PADMA WAHEED

■ Ultimately, power has prevailed. This crushing defeat of the journalists has belittled the stature of the press.

Indore — PRABHAKAR S. HARSOLE

THE HIDDEN HAND

You have painted a vivid picture of the CBI's inefficiency ("Controversial Cases", September 15). Impartial investigation and honesty have been forgotten by the CBI, which has become a puppet in the Government's hands.

Bangalore — C.R. NAIDU

MAPS PUBLISHED

In "Last of the Unknowns" (August 15), it is stated that "more than 40 years after Independence, the area (Abujhmarh) remains unsurveyed, with no administration, no police, and no accurate maps of the area". This is not true as 1: 50,000 scale maps of the area have already been published.

Dehra Dun — P.R. DATTA
deputy surveyor general, Survey of India

JHOLAWALA JOKES

"The Jholawala Syndrome" (August 15) was amusing. It enthused me to create a few jhola jokes. Here are some: What is the favourite appetiser of jholawalas? Jhola jeera; Sauce? Jholandaise; Dish? Jholar maach; Sweet? Jholebi; Musical instrument? Jholatarang. Which are the popular tourist towns? Jholalabad, Jholander, Jholapaiguri and Jholarpet.

Pseudonyms adopted by budding writers? Jholazhynytsin and Emily Jhola. What is a pick-pocket called? Jholamaar. Which is the gratest romantic tragedy? Jholaram and Jholiet. Why does a Jholawala get tired without his jhola? He suffers from exjholashun. What happens when a jhola is crammed to the brim? It reaches its jholastic limit. What is the name of the hero who walked round the ring road in his chappals in 80 minutes? Jholas Verne.

Mangalore — M.V. KINI

REPRESSIVE MEASURES

After reading "Act of Desperation" (September 15), it became amply clear that Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah has no control over Jammu and Kashmir. This was further substantiated by the celebration of Pakistan's independence day and a total bandh on India's Independence day. By trying to gag the press, he only made matters worse.

Vidyanagar — VASANT PRABHU

■ Though subversive elements are on the rampage again in the valley because of the Abdullah Government's failure to contain terrorism, they have not been able to garner mass support.

Kurnool — P. SIVA RAM PRASAD

A CLARIFICATION

The report "Booming Scandal" (July 15) distorts facts to malign a new product. Your correspondent did not contact B.G. Shirke; and it is not true that he refused to be photographed.

Your correspondent has ignored the fact that the Central Building Research Institute at Roorkee, has conducted trials on the anti-corrosion treatment on steel reinforcement in Siporex products in Bombay for two years and concluded that it is highly satisfactory for use in coastal and highly polluted areas. The tests also prove that corrosion of steel in Siporex products is 15 times less than in conventional concrete over a span of 60 cycles. Incidentally, Siporex has exported prefabricated material worth Rs 14.37 crore to West Asia and Japan.

The legality of the Government Resolution (GR) regarding the use of prefab technology was upheld by the Bombay High Court as "good in public interest". The Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority engineers have made a feeble last-ditch attempt to sabotage the GR, after new guidelines were issued last April.

Items like concealed wiring in slabs and fixing of fan hooks are incorporated at the planning stage and not after buildings are completed, even in the case of conventional work. Similarly, false ceiling and air-conditioning ducts can be fitted. Plastering is not required as the slabs are factory finished. Again, nobody applies oil paint to ceilings.

As for the quality of construction at the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) Prefab Colony, a complete building at this project was load-tested under the supervision of IIT, Bombay. It certified that the performance was satisfactory as specified by the Bureau of Indian Standards. CIDCO's certificate states that the product is superior to conventional construction.

Further, B.G. Shirke & Co has government audit. Its net surplus is restricted to 8 per cent and under clause 10 of the GR, doors are open to everyone. The Government has now appointed a permanent technical committee of four senior secretary-engineers to assess the claims of the organisations/industries regarding the new technology.

Pune — VIJAY B. SHIRKE

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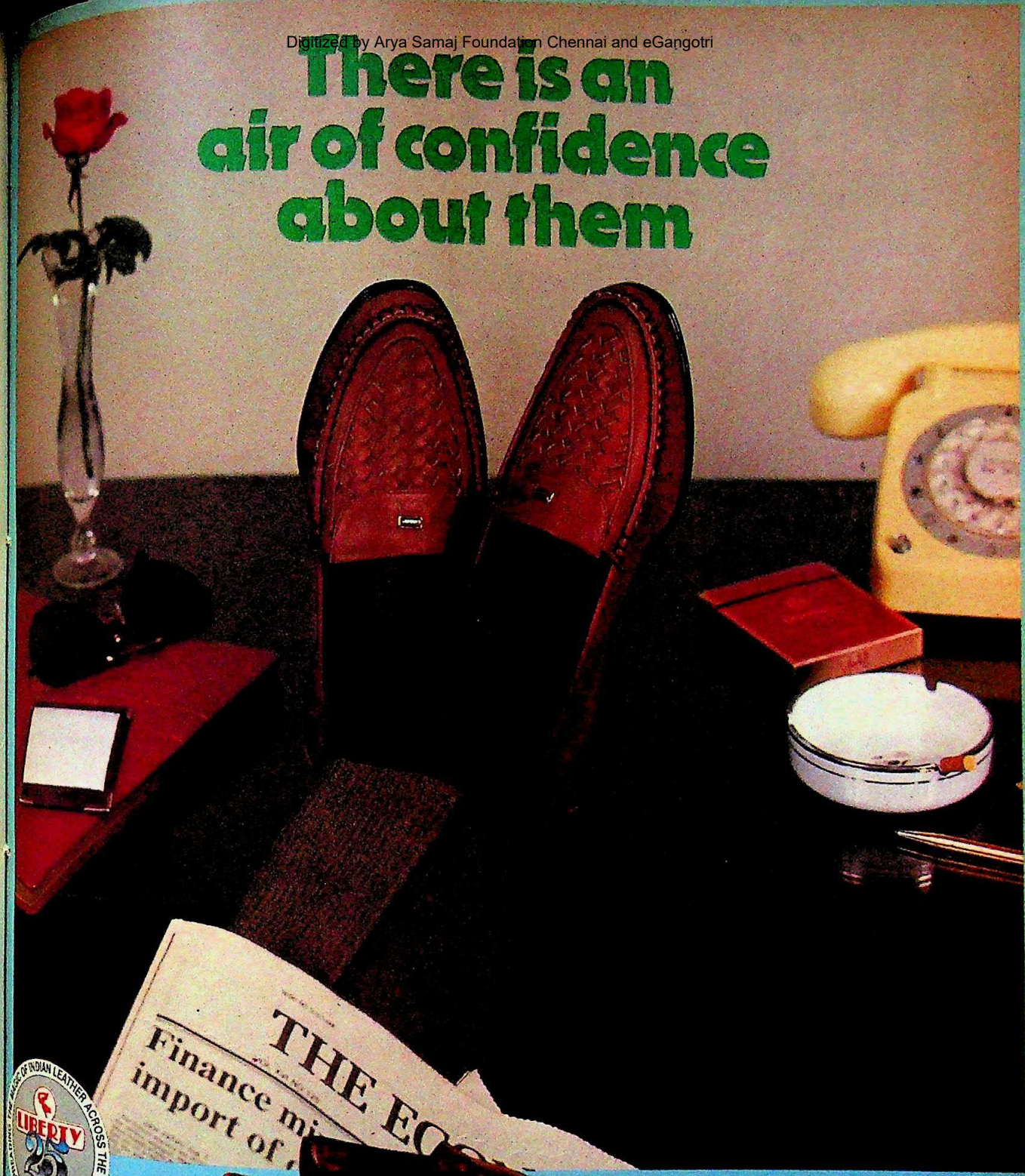

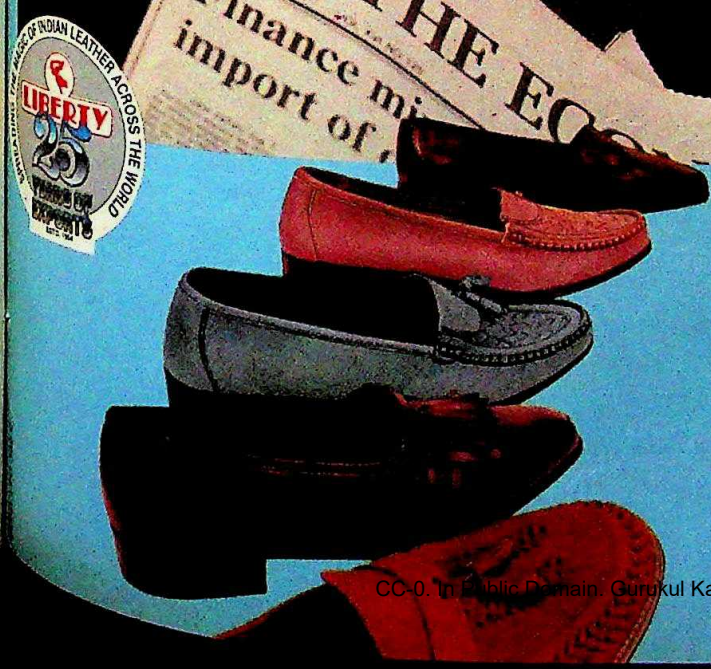

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A SMALL ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF CHOOSING THE SAFER SCOOTER.

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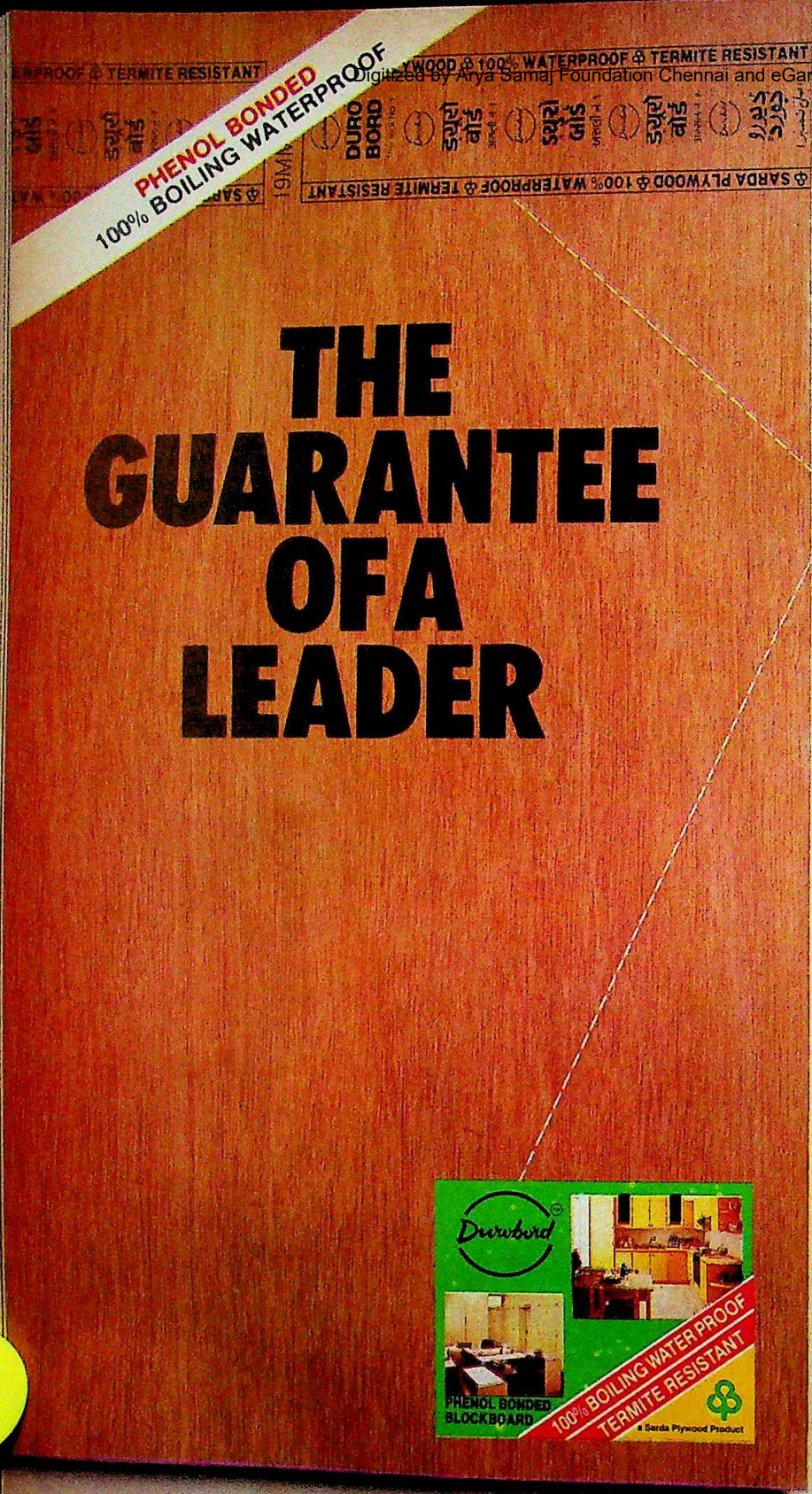

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Uneven Scales of Justice

IN modern republican societies, the rule of law is what keeps men from turning into beasts, governments into despotisms, bureaucrats into commissars, businesses into rapacious exploiters, the press into an organ of malice. It is the dharma that enforces fairness, engenders popular national consensus and the participation of citizens in the institutions of their nation. And more than the executive or the legislature, the keeper of this faith is supposed to be the judiciary. It is for this reason that judges should be judged by standards far higher than those applicable to any other national institution: their actions should not suggest even a hint of a conflict of interest; they should act without fear or favour.

It is, therefore, troubling that the judiciary is increasingly coming under critical scrutiny. It is in a state of imminent collapse. Chief Justice E.S. Venkataramiah was the first to admit this publicly. He warned recently that so paralysed is the system because of backlogs and inefficiencies that it will break down in a year. He concluded rightly that justice delayed is justice denied. And he deserves the nation's full attention.

But is the chief justice, described as a man in a hurry because of some radical reforms he has suggested—such as decentralising the powers enjoyed by the Supreme Court to district courts, and immediately filling all judicial vacancies—getting the attention of the judiciary he heads? Apparently not. With two lakh cases filed each year, the courts are barely able to dispose of 90,000. Failure of the system fuels the impression that justice is the prerogative of the influential and the rich.

Illustration by AJIT NINAN

And this belief is not without foundation. Last fortnight, the Supreme Court created history on Gandhi Jayanti day—when all the courts were closed—as two of its judges, P.K. Roy and S. Mukherji held a special hearing in Mukherji's home on a writ pending in the Bombay High Court, on whether Larsen and Toubro, now owned by the Ambani group, should be allowed to go ahead with their mega public issue. During this unprecedented hearing, the judges also heard an oral appeal from the Ambanis' lawyers that a newspaper be barred from reporting on the subject.

This is not to argue that the Larsen and Toubro case was not justiciable. But was there such an emergency? This case did not involve a last minute reprieve for a condemned man nor was a stay order against demolition of a housing colony being sought. Should a corporate case receive such prominently displayed judicial solicitude when hundreds of thousands of cases involving murder, the Essential Commodities Act, Goondas Act, fundamental rights, habeas corpus petitions and labour-management disputes have been languishing, some of them for as long as a decade, without even a hearing? This was precisely what the chief justice was talking about when he suggested radical decentralisation.

That the courts concern themselves with high-profile matters was also buttressed by the priority it gave to hearing the dispute over the disbarment of some cricketers from upcoming matches. The point is not that the dispute was unimportant. All Indians love cricket. But is cricket more important than the agony of a human being deprived of liberty and awaiting dispensation of justice for years?

THIS image of the courts is not new. The Delhi High Court set a precedent in 1986 when it entertained a midnight bail petition and freed industrialist Lalit Thapar. This is not to argue that Thapar did not deserve justice, but to emphasise that the alacrity with which the courts can act in cases involving the influential solidifies the common man's view that privilege and justice are synonymous.

The question mark that hangs over the judiciary has been created by the conduct of some of the subordinate judges. For example, the physical abuse of a chief judicial magistrate in Nadiad by the police was contemptible. But also questionable was the action by subordinate judges in Delhi who protested the incident by going on strike even after the Gujarat Government had initiated an inquiry. Judges behaving in the manner of trade unionists is hardly conducive with respect for the exalted position they occupy. Nor does the recent revelation that there are at least 80 judges in the country whose close relatives practice law in the same court, confer any glory on the judiciary.

It is small wonder then that increasing numbers of intellectuals, lawyers and retired judges have started raising questions in areas where the judiciary was never before scrutinised. These include the hanging of Kehar Singh, the questionable use of judges in commissions of inquiry and most recently, the striking down—after a year of delay—by the Delhi High Court of the Jain-Bannerjee Committee charged with investigating people responsible for the 1984 Delhi riots.

Administrative reforms suggested by the chief justice will, no doubt, lead to logistical amelioration. But the main problem confronting the judiciary right now is its image. And to tackle this, reform-minded judges must insist on a strict code of ethics—public declaration of assets, refusal of cases involving a conflict-of-interest, barring relatives from practicing in the same court, forbidding ex-parte communication with litigants including the Government, refusal to join government-sponsored inquiry commissions. The code should be inviolable and those transgressing it must be accountable to an ethics committee of peers empowered to mete out penalties. As former Supreme Court Judge V.R. Krishna Iyer recently said, justice is more important than justices.

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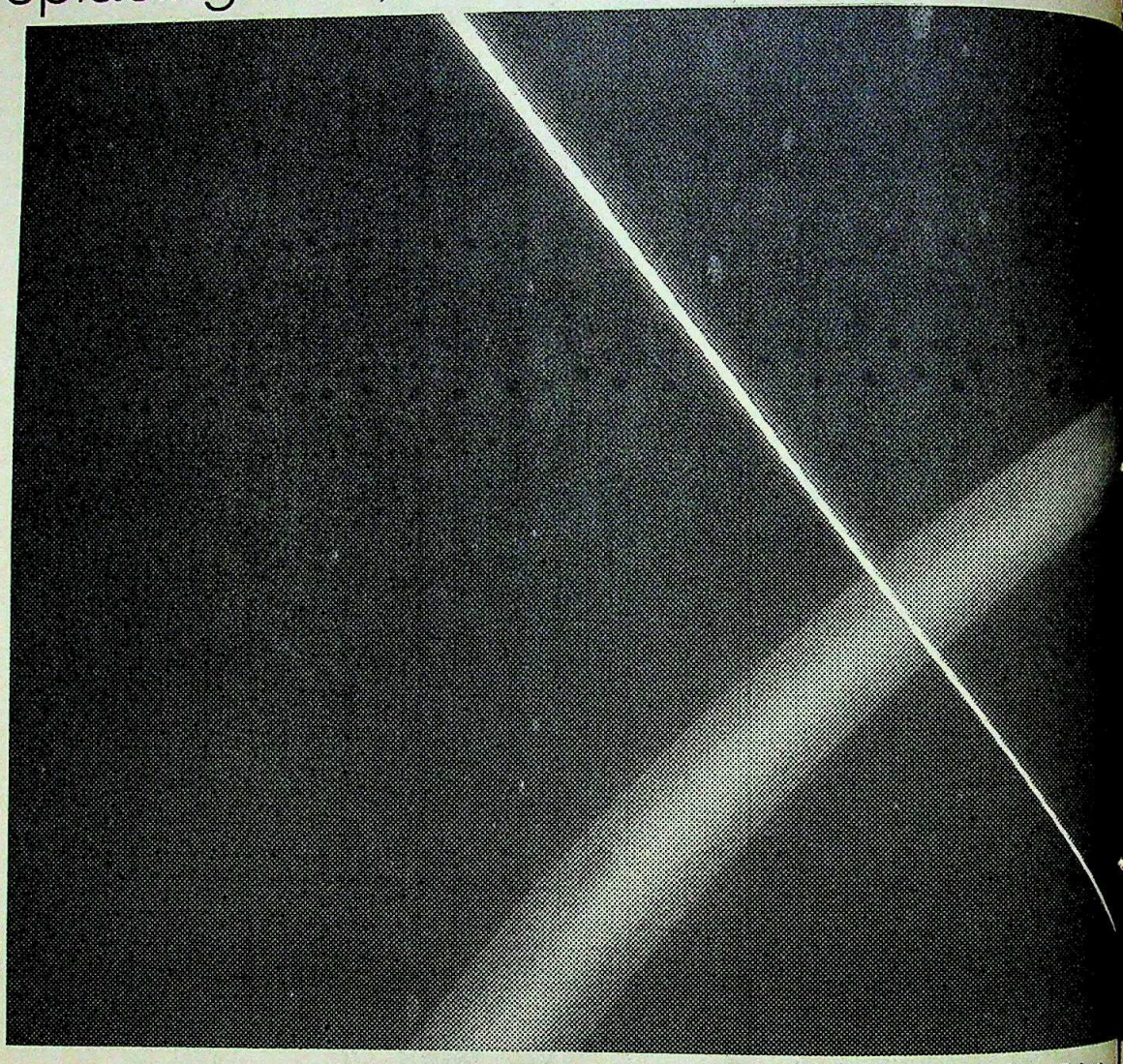

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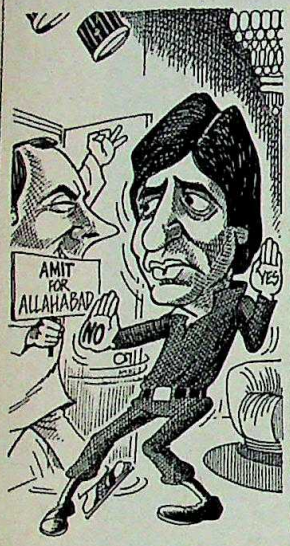
Friend in Need

● Last fortnight, during his official trip to Bombay, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi took some time off to visit poet Harivanshrai Bachchan, Amitabh's father, staying at the actor's Juhu residence. The senior Bachchan has been keeping indifferent health. The prime minister also used the occasion for what turned



out to be an hour-long pow-wow with his childhood friend, 'Amit', whose hectic film shooting schedules over the last several months have kept him away from Delhi.

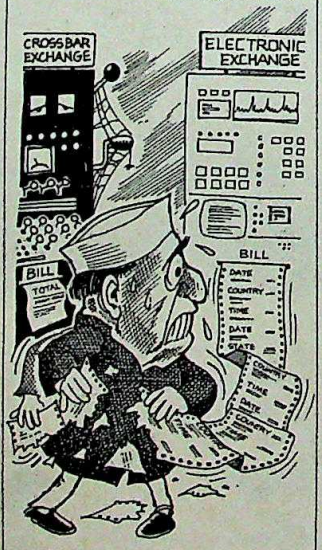
The meeting triggered off speculation that the major topic of discussion was whether Amitabh would consider running again on the Congress(I) ticket from Allahabad in the coming elections. Amitabh has repeatedly said that he has taken political *sanyas*. A powerful section of the Congress(I) high command feels that V.P. Singh will eventually contest the elections from Allahabad, and is of the opinion that only Amitabh is capable of giving the Janata Dal leader a run for his money. Also, if V.P. Singh faces a serious challenge in Allahabad, especially from Amitabh who he has repeatedly dared to a fight at the hustings, chances are that he will be heavily tied down in his own constituency and have less time for national campaigning. And that precisely is the ruling party's aim.

Technology Trauma

● With more and more efficient electronic telephone exchanges being set up in the nation's capital, there's a beeline of VIPs demanding to be served on a priority basis. Last month, several ruling party MPs—whose telephones were hooked on to the old cross-bar exchanges—were given electronic connections on a priority basis. But the boon, as some of them discovered, turned out to be a pain in the pocketbook. The new exchanges are capable of recording the exact time and date of each outstation telephone call. Their billing is also more efficient. So when one MP received a bill of Rs 8,000 for a month, he decided to challenge it.

Instead of meeting with the usual clerical obsequiousness of yore, the member came face-to-face with computerised evidence of his telematic extravagance—time, date,

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



and the number called. Unable to argue further, the MP put in a new request: that his telephone be returned to its antediluvian former cross-bar home. And according to the capital's telephone authorities, similar requests are coming in from other MPs faced with the same dilemma.

Negative Victory

● Who says that the ruling party bigwigs and the Prime Minister's Office don't learn from their mistakes? They've learned at least one lesson, at a price: it had been a fatal mistake to mount a propaganda warfare against the Opposition-sponsored Bharat Bandh through bureaucratic diktats and Doordarshan. The public-

ity virtually assured the bandh's success.

So when the Opposition began to plan Jat leader Devi Lal's birthday bash at Delhi's Boat Club with the announcement that some 30 lakh people would attend from all over India, Rajiv was bombarded with conflicting advice. The never-learn-a-lesson hawks insisted that people travelling to the rally should be harassed by the police at the Delhi border through devices such as deliberately created traffic jams. Also, they suggested that Doordarshan should launch an all-out campaign against the rally.

But better sense prevailed. And the exact opposite order went out. The police was asked to be accommodating and courteous. No harassment that would give the Opposition a political edge. And no propaganda campaign. Senior Congressmen are now gloating at having achieved their objective. Instead of the expected 30 lakh, only about 5 lakh showed up—a minor victory for the ruling party.

Damp Squib

● Notwithstanding poll-eve, Rajiv Gandhi continues to give enormous weight to projecting India's image abroad—no matter how cosmetic the exercise—even at the expense of local political mileage. Recently, the Himachal Pradesh Congress(I) held what was billed as its most important rally at Kangra to flex its muscle in an acknowledged BJP stronghold.

The MP from the state, the street-smart Anand Sharma, spent over a month to ensure the rally's success and show the high command his clout in the state. But just as Sharma was getting ready to pull out all the stops and go to Kangra to lead the rally, he received an urgent message to travel to, of all places, Namibia, as part of a delegation of observers of the Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa. Instead of Himachal, Sharma found

himself in Africa.

Now, no one quite knows what the committee attained in Namibia. But in Kangra, Sharma's youth brigade, utterly perplexed by its leader's inexplicable absence, went into a confused slump. And the rally proved to be a bit of a damp squib.

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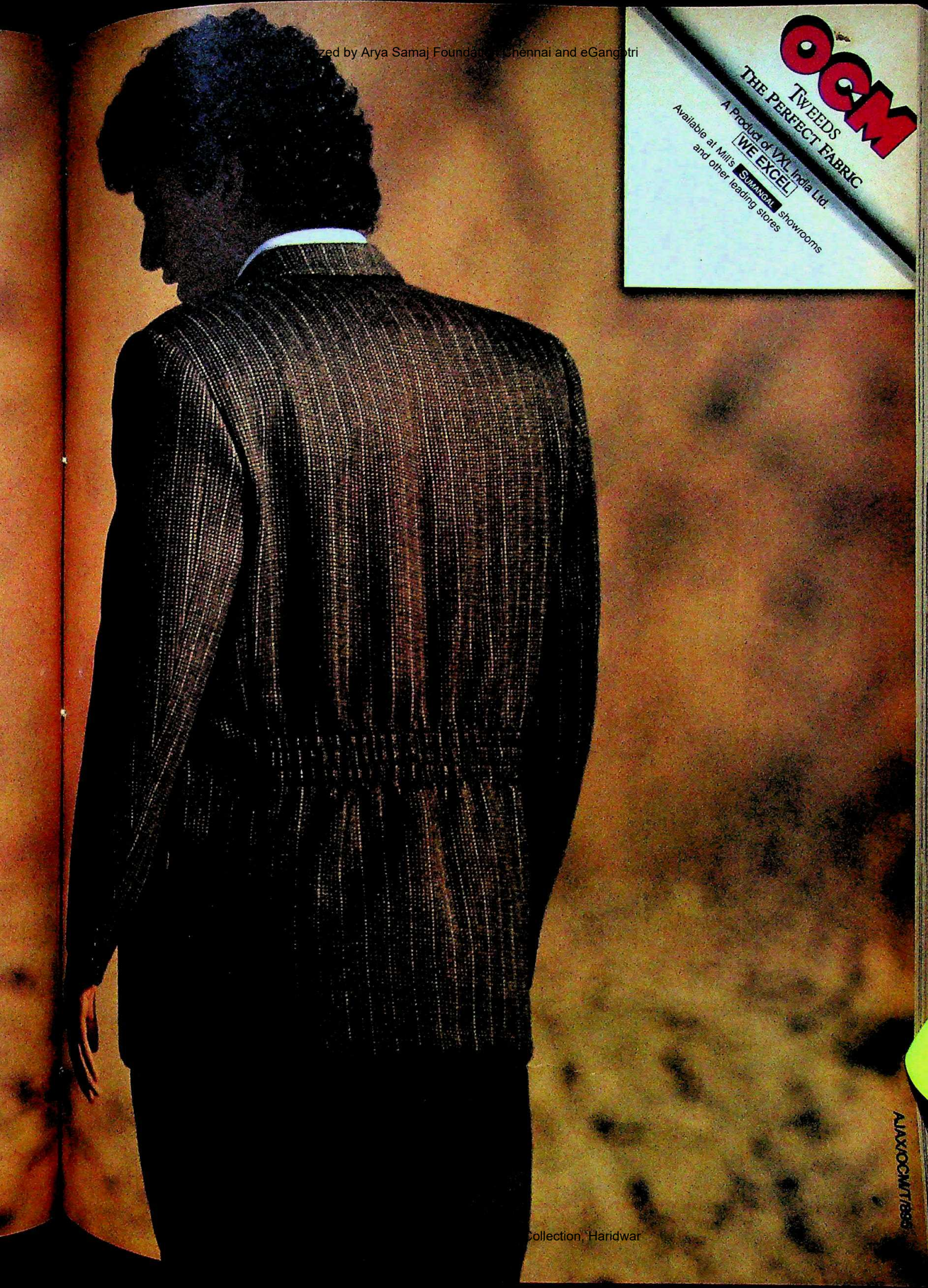

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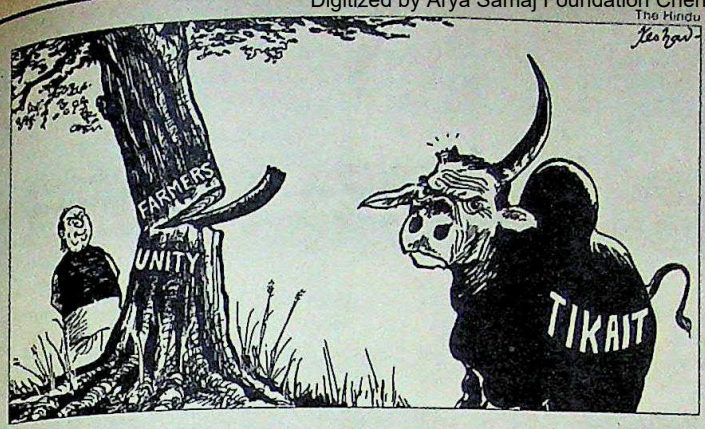

• *Rajiv Gandhi can never declare elections before consulting Kanshi Ram. Because if he doesn't consult me, he will get zero seats in Uttar Pradesh for example.*

■ KANSHI RAM in *The Sunday Observer*

• *Gather enough courage to give a stinging blow to your pride. Don't stand on the fault lines of history.*

■ BABA AMTE, in a letter to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, against the clearance of Narmada Sagar Project

• *Urdu like any other Indian language has grown in the soil of this country and belongs to each of us....Polarisation and politicisation on this issue is not only uncalled for but also dangerous, an example of which are the incidents of Badaun.*

■ V.P. SINGH in *The Statesman*

• *We are opposed to Urdu being regarded as a second language. But we are not opposed to Urdu per se. Urdu is an Indian language. The future of Urdu lies in India, not in Pakistan where it is being crowded out by Punjabi, Sindhi etc.*

■ A.B. VAJPAYEE in *The Times of India*

• *Justice is more important than justices.*

■ V.R. KRISHNA IYER, former Supreme Court judge

• *The 'stuff' you are presently holding in your hands, interestingly, has weathered more than normal turbulence, and I must confess there have been nights when I have contemplated joining Arun Singh and his lady love in Almora.*

■ VINOD MEHTA, on the launching of the Bombay daily *The Independent*

• *Given the current (political) situation or what little I know of it and your professional compulsions, I regret I do not meet the press.*

■ ARUN SINGH, in reply to a journalist's request to see him, quoted in *Sunday*

• *It is my mother's determination to fight gender prejudice and her conviction that having a daughter is in no way shameful that my sisters and I have accomplished what we have.*

■ BHARATI MUKHERJEE in *Gentleman*

• *Hemant Kumar died in Calcutta on Tuesday morning. He was murdered by Doordarshan on Wednesday evening. Long live Hemant Kumar!*

■ T.K. RAMASAMY, commenting on *Chitrahaar*, in *The Tribune*

• *We forgive them (the players). They made a mistake. They did something seriously wrong, and we showed them that they could not get away scot-free. But when they surrendered, we decided to show them mercy.*

■ BISWANATH DUTT, BCCI president, in *Sportsworld*

• *I am what I am today largely because of the set-backs I received early in my career. When you are successful you take so much for granted. You get carried away.*

■ MADHURI DIXIT in G

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MILESTONES/IT/236

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LUNATIC PLAN

■ With the stoneman stalking the streets, Calcutta's pavement dwellers were literally dying of fear. But in its enthusiasm to trace the murderer, the city police rounded up around 150 vagrants from the streets, even though it did not have a shred of evidence against them. They included a large number of roving lunatics.

The police hoped to pin the sidewalk killings on one of them. Only to be driven round the bend themselves.

For one thing, when the 150 detainees were asked to identify themselves, they trotted out about 750 names and aliases. To compound the confusion, each detainee "confessed" to being the elusive killer, now known as the stoneman.

The scramble to confess is probably due to the fact that these human derelicts thought it would give them some importance. With 150 nuts on its hands, each claiming to be the stoneman, it is the police which is now going nuts.

THE COY BRIBE

■ Corruption and coyness hardly go hand in hand, as a havildar in Maharashtra's Shivanagar discovered to his cost, literally. Having nabbed a scooterist for driving into a 'No Entry' zone, the havildar thought he would make a quick buck, or 20 to be precise.

But his conscience would not allow him to accept the money directly, so he asked the scooterist to hand it over to a *paanwallah* who had a stall across the street.

The scooterist went across and conspiratorially whispered to the puzzled *paanwallah*. The *paanwallah*, in turn signalled to the havildar, in pantomime, asking

him what was to be done.

The policeman held up two fingers to indicate the amount, and the bewildered *paanwallah* meekly handed over Rs 20 to the pleasantly surprised scooterist who rode off wondering about the coy policeman.

Moral: Corruption does not pay, but if you must seek bribes, it's better to be brash.

WINGED CURRENCY

■ Visitors to a mining office in Salem recently were happily surprised to discover hundred and fifty-rupee currency notes fluttering down from the sky onto the lawns.

Manna from heaven? Without stopping to ask questions, everyone present set about hastily garnering this heaven-sent harvest of currency notes. But they were soon stopped by men of the vigilance department.

The bills had apparently been thrown down from an upper floor balcony by officials and contractors exchanging 'speed' money when the police swooped down on them. Surprised by the arrival of the police, the staff threw caution to the winds, along with the money: Rs 2,100 to be precise, which wafted down onto the lawns.

Unfortunately for them, the winged money was evidence enough. The police decided that the contractors' bucks had stopped there. Salemites now say corruption in the mining office has gained new currency.

FUSION VS FISSION

■ To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. This basic law of physics applies as forcefully to marriage, specially when the person getting the action is someone other than the wife. A philandering physics lecturer of Indore learned this lesson the hard way.

The lecturer got too involved with his experiment in extra-marital fusion. He offered to redecorate his girlfriend's apartment, and strapped for cash, he joined a gang of thieves. They went house-breaking every night and the amorous adventurer picked up luxury items

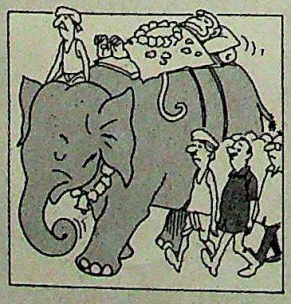
needed for the apartment.

But he had not counted on the reaction of the woman scorned—his wife. She tipped off the police who nabbed the lecturer as he was returning from a successful heist with a Maruti car and gold jewellery. The Indore Romeo is now cooling his heels indoors, in jail.

ROYAL RITES

■ Rajas and maharajahs are not the only ones to get a royal funeral. Recently a monkey of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, probably regarded as Hanuman's *avatar*, had the privilege of taking his last ride on an elephant's back.

With the elephant serving as a stately hearse, the funeral procession was solemnly winding its way through the town till it reached a particularly narrow street. The elephant could not possibly pass through. After a brief debate on whether they should take a new route or continue the journey without the huge hearse, the mourners decided on the latter.



The monkey's body was brought down to earth, completing its journey to the Manikarnika Ghat cremation ground like ordinary mortals—on the shoulders of four members of his evolutionary descendants: *homo sapiens*.

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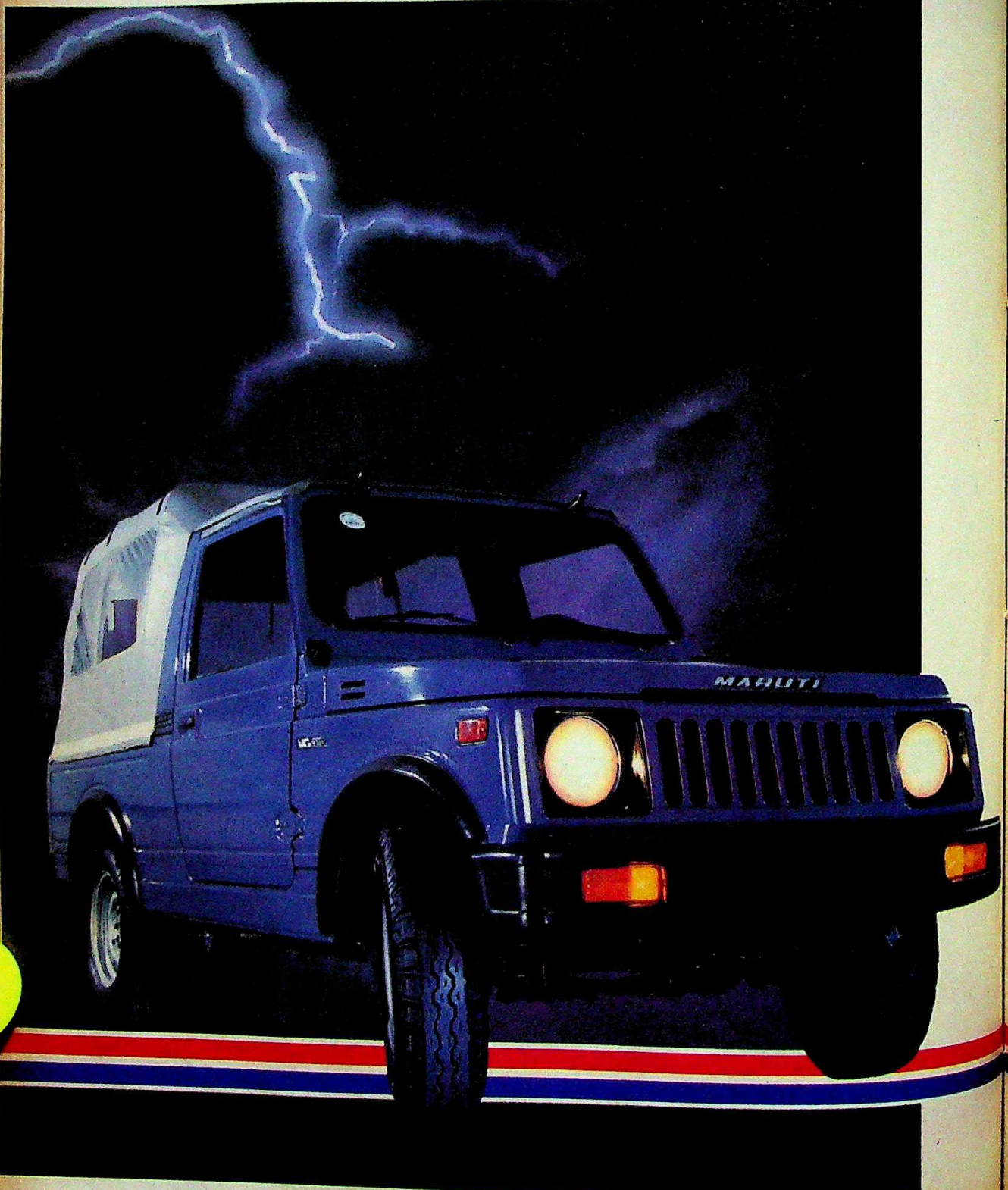

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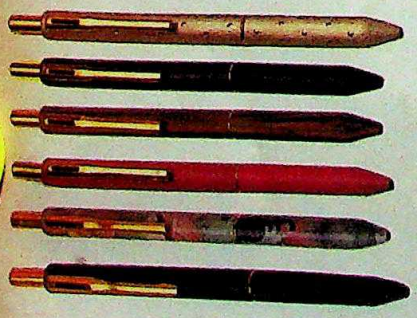

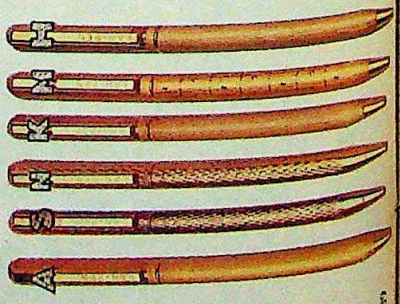

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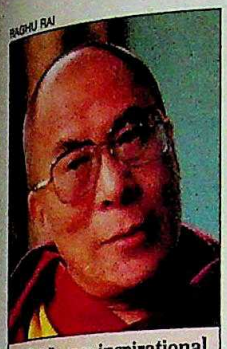
Serious Questions

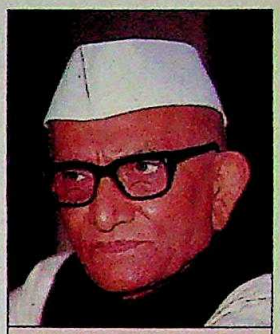
RAGHU RAI



Dalai Lama: inspirational

THERE were serious questions imbedded in the fortnight that was, stark and searing punctuation marks that loom larger with each passing day. Once again, the ghost of Bofors has pointed a skeletal finger at the Rajiv Gandhi Government, this time, with the accompanying whisper of doom.

The kind of questions the latest revelations in *The Hindu* have raised are clearly the most devastating in the sordid Swedish saga. There is now convincing proof of a deliberate cover-up to protect the beneficiaries of the kickbacks and, more important, collusion at the highest levels on both sides. On this alone could precariously rest the political fortunes of Rajiv Gandhi—and a party seemingly dependent on him for electoral survival.



Desai: uncomfortable

No less serious, in the electoral context, is the increasingly incendiary manner in which major political parties are prodding the communal scorpion. The fact that the latest communal shockwaves emanate from areas untouched till now by its mesmeric madness is symptomatic of its spread. But with electoral desperation in alarming ascendancy, parties like the BJP have even removed the final fig-leaf of secular pretence. That is a dangerous game—and an ominous warning that the coming elections could stoke the communal flame higher than ever before.

Even the crash of a Mirage 2000 at the Air Force Day aerobatics is a timely, if tragic, warning. Complicated aerial manoeuvres in modern, highly advanced fighter aircraft with large crowds in attendance is a dangerous enough indulgence. But the alarming number of IAF fighters that have crashed in recent years raises more serious questions, and not merely those involving the struggle to master high-technology. In the end, it is the system, rather than individuals, which is always the most vulnerable.

In the end, it is the system rather than individuals, which is the most vulnerable.

The tawdry theatricals surrounding the resignation of Vayudoot boss Harsh Vardhan is a point in case. The drama is intended to guise serious questions; a system, where safety should be of paramount importance, is stretched to vulnerable levels merely to serve the interests of politicians in power. The cost of power is often unaffordably high.

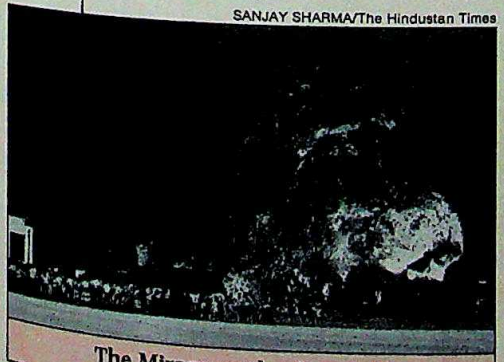
Morarji Desai will testify to that. Now, in the twilight of his years, the 94-year-old former prime minister is forced to live with an uncomfortable feeling: the charge levelled against him in *The Price of Power*, American journalist Seymour Hersh's book on Henry Kissinger, that he was supplying information to the CIA. However unbelievable the accusation, the American legal system, loaded as it is against libel suits involving public figures, has ensured the charge will haunt his remaining years. More so, since the man set himself such stern moral standards.

Political parties are playing a dangerous communal game, a sign of electoral desperation.

Politics and morality are the most irreconcilable of bedfellows. Which is why the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama is of some special significance. As a man who walks a precarious diplomatic tightrope, the Dalai Lama has succeeded in combining both with remarkable success. His life, and his belief in the cause of humanity, should serve as an inspiration. History, instead, has forced him to live in relative obscurity. As a testimony to our times there could be none so tragic.

—DILIP BOBB

SANJAY SHARMA/The Hindustan Times



The Mirage crash: alarm bells

YASBANT NEGI

Badaun riots: communal curse

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COMMUNALISM

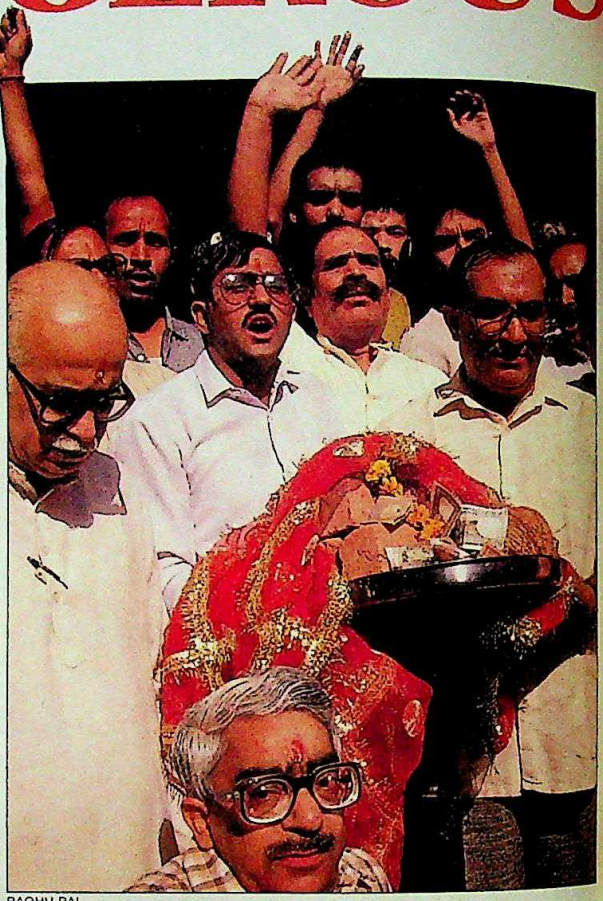
DANGEROUS

As town after town in north India erupts in communal rioting and as the countdown begins for November 9, the day on which lakhs of holy bricks will arrive in Ayodhya from every corner of the country for the building of a new Hindu temple near the disputed masjid-mandir site, the atmosphere is turning ugly and vicious. So much so that even the prime minister of the country has lashed out at those trying to create a Hindu Rashtra.

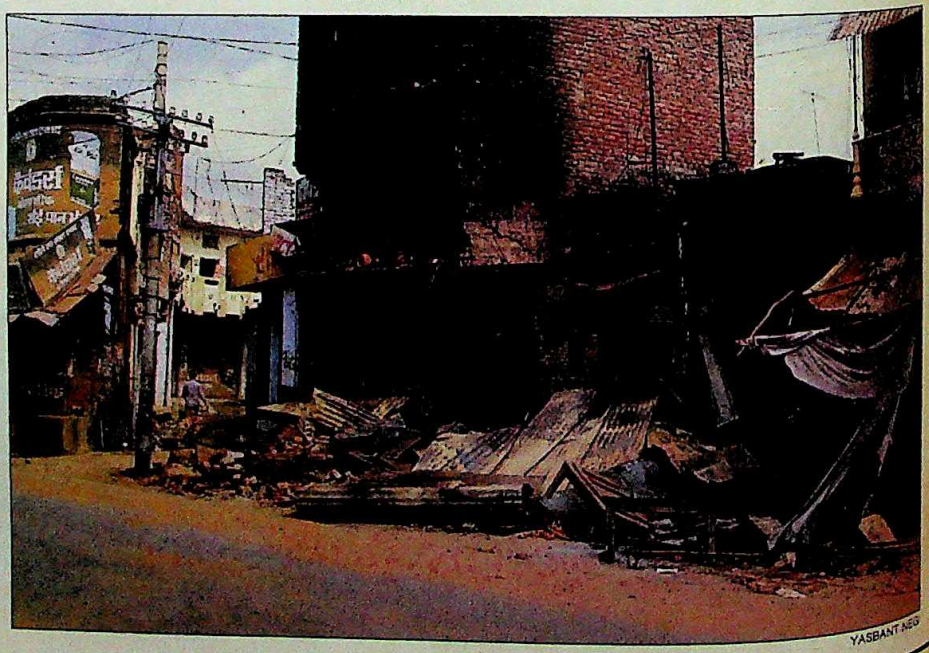
"No single issue has so adversely affected communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims as the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy," notes a recent Home Ministry document, adding that the growing temptation to communalise politics has become a strong impediment to the normalisation of communal relations. The ministry has solid cause for sounding this frightening alarm. For if a united backlash erupts from the minority community, the nation can be shaken to its very foundations. Muslims are a minority only in relation to their percentage of the total population. But what percentages don't account for is the stark reality that they number more than 100 million, half the size of the population of the United States, spreading from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, making India the second largest Muslim country in the world.

With the Ramshila pujas, the fundamentalist organisations believe they can galvanise the entire Hindu community.

But demographic reality neither fazes nor daunts the charioteers of the Hindu juggernaut. "You will soon see within this country a vertical divide within each political party—those who accept Hindu nationalism and those who don't." When Ashok Singhal, mahamantri of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the intellectual arm of the RSS which is spearheading the militant revivalism, uttered these words in a May 1986 interview, he was in deadly earnest. At that time the VHP, with the "liberation" of the Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya as its religio-political battle-cry, was in the midst of launching a fresh struggle, a *jagaran* (awakening) to arouse Hindu



RAGHU RAI



YASBANT NEG

BJP leaders at Ramshila puja (top); Riot-ravaged Kota

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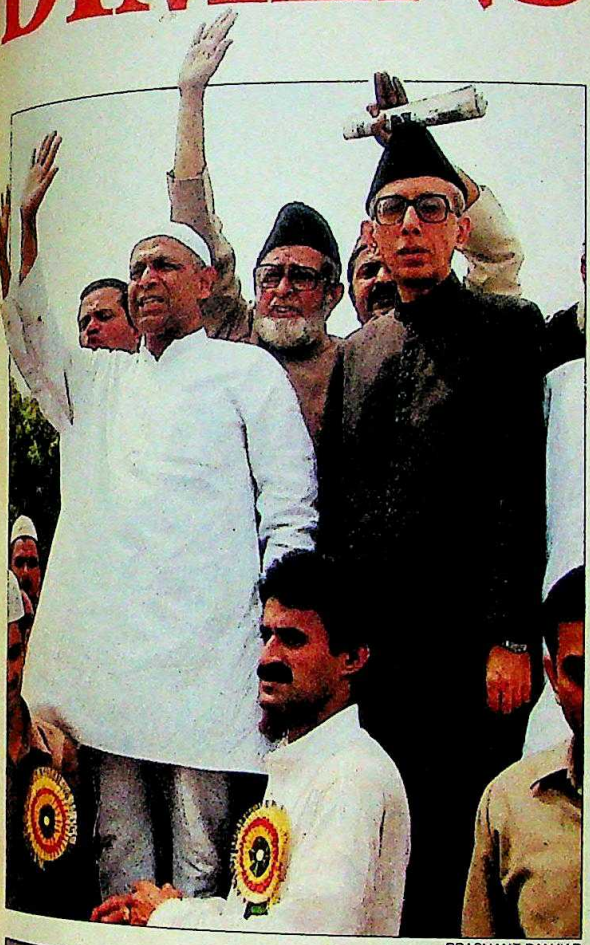
US DIMENSIONS



PRASHANT PANJIAR

R.K. GUPTA

YASBANT NEG

militancy through a four-point programme: bring Hindus under one *manch* to fight for Hindu causes, ban proselytisation, promote Sanskrit as a uniform language, and back political candidates who support Hindu interests.

Three years later, with elections round the corner, communalism—violent and latent—has come to straddle the country like a scourge. Today, religion—as symbolised by the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue—has been inextricably woven with politics.

Communal voting is not a new phenomenon. Traditionally, Muslims have tended to vote en bloc. Constituting more than 20 per cent of the electorate in about 98 crucial constituencies, they have been every party's dream vote bank—especially the ruling party's. The difference this time is the quest for a new vote bank—a consolidated Hindu vote—cutting across caste lines and extending into rural areas where voting has been along caste rather than religious lines.

As November 9 draws near, and the communal divide deepens, Muslim leaders are feeling increasingly insecure.

What the VHP's campaign to carry consecrated bricks—emotively called Ramshilas—for constructing the Ayodhya temple has done is to carry the Hindu message to every town and village. More important, the BJP has thrown its weight behind this move. The situation, according to Home Ministry reports, is sure to worsen.

This year alone, between January and September, some 336 people have been killed—more than the toll for the whole of last year—in communal flare-ups in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. More alarming, violence has broken out in areas hitherto untouched by the communal scourge. For instance, Kota in Rajasthan, Badaun in Uttar Pradesh, Sasaram in Bihar and Mhow in Madhya Pradesh. Says Home Minister Buta Singh: "International forces are active in this violence. We are the largest democracy in the world. This is our test *(see interview)*."

Communist-run West Bengal too felt the communal

Muslim leaders at Delhi rally (top); Badaun riot victims

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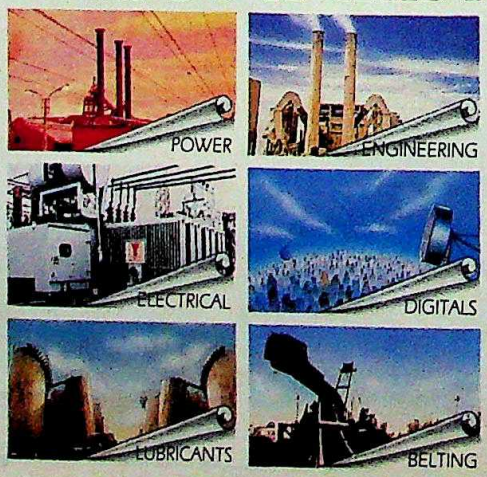

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heat when the VHP launched the Ramshila puja during the Durga Puja festival. To Jyoti Basu's credit, he came out firmly against this: "If anybody wants to worship bricks, he is free to do it at home, but we won't allow it in public places at the cost of communal harmony."

In Madhya Pradesh, after four years of a communal build-up, the eruptions have begun. In the last fortnight, rioting in Mhow, Ratlam and Khargone claimed five lives and property worth several lakhs. It is the BJP that has set the tone for nasty chauvinism. Its state unit chief Sunderlal Patwa has been lashing out at Sonia and Rajiv, saying: "This talk of nationalism comes from a prime minister who has kept in his house a *videshi* and *vidharmi* (foreigner and non-believer) wife who has endangered the independence and sovereignty of the country by providing easy access to the Italian mafia, Christian missionaries and foreign intelligence agencies."

Countrywide, the communal cauldron is on a high boil. According to a top secret Intelligence Bureau (IB) study: "Mutual distrust between communities remains at a high level. The number of riots classified 'serious' is higher than in 1986."

One dangerous trend is that communalism which was limited to towns so far—is spreading into the hinterland. In 1988, of 611 communal incidents, 55 per cent were in rural areas. This is cause for redoubled concern as it strains beyond limit the states' policing capacities. Also alarming is the fact that against 80 communal incidents classified as "hypersensitive" in 1971, the number rose to 213 last year. The number of "hypersensitive" districts last year was 82; in 1989 the hundred mark has already been crossed. Says a worried Home Ministry official: "The line between a communally sensitive area and a hypersensitive area is getting increasingly blurred."

A new meanness is abroad. The beatific smile of Ram in VHP posters has been replaced by a warlike image—trident and bow at the ready. The slogans, too, have changed. Earlier they were: *Saugandh Ram ki khate hain hum mandir vaheen banayenge* (We swear by Ram we will build the temple at the same site) and *Bachcha-bachcha Ram ka, Janmabhoomi ke kaam ka* (Every child belongs to Ram and for Ram Janmabhoomi). Now the air is rent with: *Jis Hindu ka khoon na khaule, khoon nahin vo pani hai; Janmabhoomi ke kaam na aye, vo bekaar jawanee hai* (That Hindu whose blood does not boil has water in his veins, youth that does not serve Ram Janmabhoomi is youth lived in vain).

Says the national Bajrang Dal President, Baikunth Lal Sharma 'Prem': "We are committed to the cause of the temple." These hotheads, belonging to fringe Hindu groups

Countdown to Confrontation

1984:

April: VHP-sponsored *Dharam Sansad* launches a movement to "liberate" the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi site in Ayodhya where Babar had constructed a mosque in the early 16th century.

June: Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti formed.

1985:

Ram-Janaki Rath Yatras start.

1986:

February: Faizabad district judge orders opening of the locks on the shrine, allowing unhindered access to Hindu devotees.

March: Babri Masjid Action Committee formed, followed by a country-wide Muslim "mourning".

1987:

March: Three lakh Muslims gather at Delhi's Boat Club to demand handover of the Babri Masjid.

April: Hindus congregate at Ayodhya to pledge liberation of the shrine.

1988:

August and **October:** Babri Masjid Action Committee issues call for marches to Ayodhya, but cancels them later.

December: Babri Masjid Action Committee splits.

1989:

February: Maha Sant Sammelan at Kumbh decides to construct a temple in Ayodhya.

May: Another sant sammelan at Haridwar lays down schedule of temple construction.

June: Communist Party of India takes out a peace march to Faizabad.

July: Bajrang Dal youth pledge to lay their lives for the temple at Ayodhya.

August: High court issues interim directive to maintain status quo about the disputed property pending a final judgement. Coordination Committee for the Babri Masjid Movement accepts adjudication by a bench of the Allahabad High Court, while the Babri Masjid Action Committee wants a special three-member bench comprising neither Hindus nor Muslims.

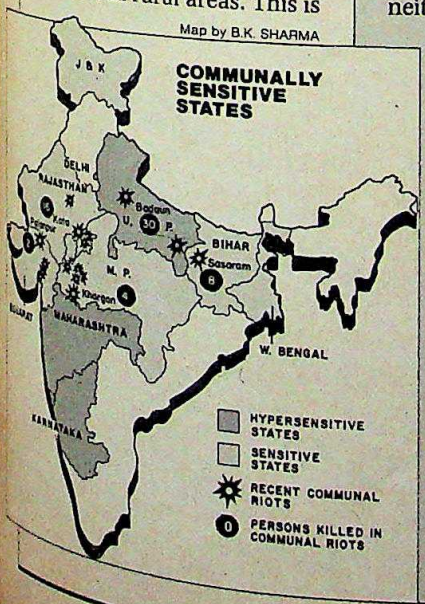
September 27: VHP agrees to lay the foundation-stone away from the disputed shrine.

September 30: VHP says it will not abide by an anti-Hindu judgement. VHP begins shila puja in villages with a population of 2,000 and above, with the bricks to be carried to Ayodhya. Tension escalates.

October: Riots spread to Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Government declares mosque cannot be demolished. Deadlock on VHP demand for handing over the shrine continues.

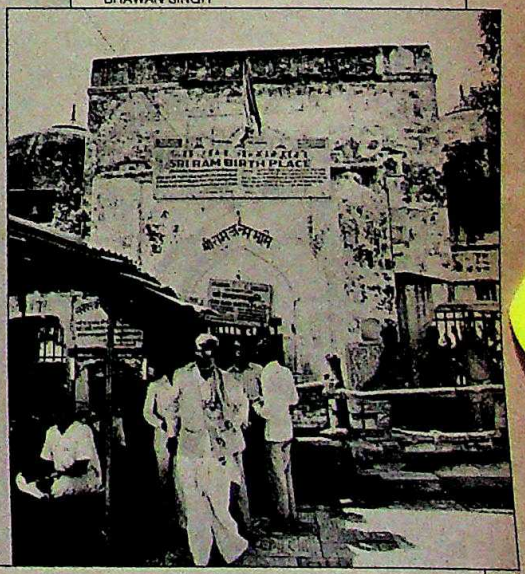
November 9: Laying of the foundation-stone for the Ram Janmabhoomi temple at Ayodhya. VHP to decide on giving the Government a new deadline to hand over the entire site to the Hindus.

Map by B.K. SHARMA



Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi

BHAWAN SINGH



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associated with the VHP, are a source of concern even to their own leaders because their outspoken fanaticism can cause the reins of the Hindu movement to slip out of the hands of the more moderate leadership.

This was visible in Delhi when BJP President L.K. Advani and General Secretary Kedar Nath Sahni attended a brick consecration ceremony. When it ended, the youth burst into a roar of communal slogans. Advani and Sahni watched helplessly. Singhal meant a step further and adopted a challenging tone of his own: "We gave the Government a deadline to open the locks and they did. Now we have given them another deadline for construction of the temple, they will meet that too."

There is little doubt that the Government is in no small measure to blame for the situation. The BJP's Maharashtra unit chief Pramod Mahajan holds the Congress(I) responsible for communalising elections.

He cites three examples. The Mizoram elections where the Congress(I) issued brochures saying it would fight for Christian rights; the Urdu language issue which sparked off riots in Badaun; and the use of Arun Govil, who portrayed Lord Rama in the TV serial *Ramayan*, in the party's campaign during the 1988 Allahabad by-election.

BADAUN

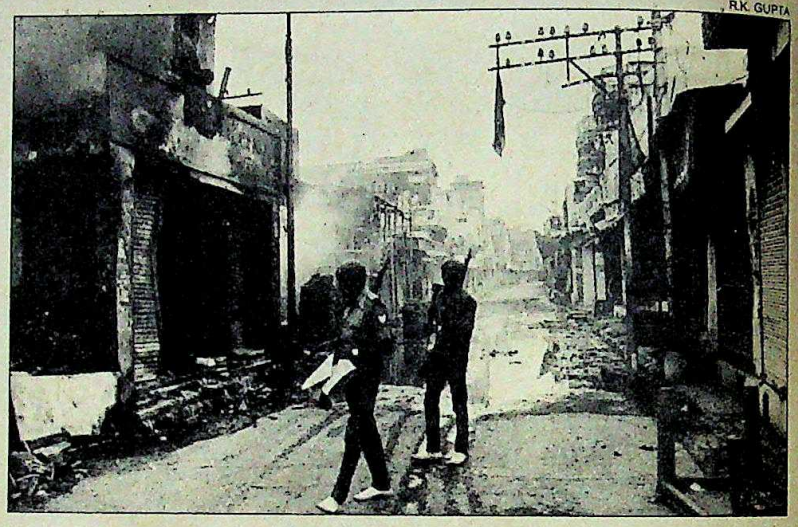
Anatomy of a Riot

BADAUN died last fortnight. Not that the western Uttar Pradesh town of 1 lakh residents, half Muslim and half Hindu, had much going for it. As a city it is a typical filth-choked, drain-clogged agglomeration of fly-infested bazaars and serpentine alleyways, a town of mechanics and traders, transporters, grain and cloth merchants, empty of industry but replete with semi-rural Harijan slums like Lotanpura and Muslim ghettos like Nayee Serai whose residents eke out a hand-to-mouth existence.

Yet, those who grew up there remember it as a pleasant sort of place. Flying kites in pre-monsoon breezes from the roof-tops of Jallandari Serai and Kacheri Road. Lining up for sugar-coated *pedas* at Mamman Khan halwai's shop. Playing hockey at the parade ground. Here, in Badaun and the nearby tehsil town of Ujhani, Muslim and Hindu milled and mixed, respected each others' masjids and mandirs. On Eid-ul-Azha, Muslims would deliver the choicest cut of meats to Hindu households, and on Holi, Muslims dressed in the finest white khadi and silk churidaars and adorning colourful caps would troop to Hindu households for the traditional *milan* (meeting).

Hindus and Muslims spoke to each other in Urdu-laced Hindustani, with Doordarshan's Hindi universally scoffed at as some incomprehensible tongue. After all, it was Badaun that gave birth to poets Shakeel Badauni and Fatri Badauni. And it is to Badaun that Hindus have travelled to worship at the ancient Ziyarat of Sufi saints Bade Sarkar and Chhote Sarkar under the guidance of Muslim priests. The Ganga cuts a wide swathe at the boundary of Badaun district. This is where lakhs of Hindu pilgrims head to participate in the centuries-old Kakora mela.

R.K. GUPTA



Ravaged town: deep divide

Really, Badaun is not Muslim. It's not Hindu. Ask, in any of its outlying *mohallas* which communities live there, and the answer you would get is Brahmins, Kayasthas, Mahajans, Muraos, Kurmis, Yadavas, Jatavas, Thakurs, Gaddis, Julahas, Ansaris, Pathans. Never "Hindu" or "Muslim".

And the citizens of Badaun had one proud boast. In recent years, Hindus and Muslims had rioted in adjoining areas like Shahjahanpur, Pilibhit, Moradabad, Allahabad and Barabanki. Not in Badaun. Even Partition saw limited tension here. The MP from Badaun is a Congress(I) Muslim, Salim Sherwani, the MLA, a Hindu, Pramilla Mehra, minister of state for tourism. Both won on a combined vote of Muslims and an alliance of Hindu caste votes.

Today this secular vote lies shattered. The Ziyarat lies abandoned of the faithful. Children no longer chase each other through the lanes of Khairati Chowk and Choona Mandi. They live in cloistered fear as Badaun limps out of 10 days of curfew. They have blood on their hands. Hatred in their eyes. Revenge in their hearts. Their souls are ruled by rumour. Every firecracker hurled by a mischievous child is a machine-gun attack. Vultures atop the town's water tanks are gun-wielding fanatics of the "other" community. Truckloads of warriors are supposed to have stolen into Badaun and Ujhani from other districts.

Who would believe that Badaun's riot of September 28, in which 30 lives were lost, was sparked off, of all things, by the introduction in the Vidhan Sabha of Urdu, a language which Badaun has loved? Its timing was foolish for it came when Badaun, even though the majority of its people did not give their feelings rabid expression, had begun to show signs of communal infection from the fundamentalist Hindu revivalism afoot countrywide, as well as from the short-sightedness of local Muslim political leaders. Better than its citizens, local criminals who typically gain political respectability by engendering communal riots and then emerging as community "leaders" had been able to judge Badaun as fissionable material.

It started with a peaceful BJP-inspired march on September 27 mostly by students of the S.K. Inter College to the collectorate—amid some ugly pro-Hindu sloganeering—to present a petition op-

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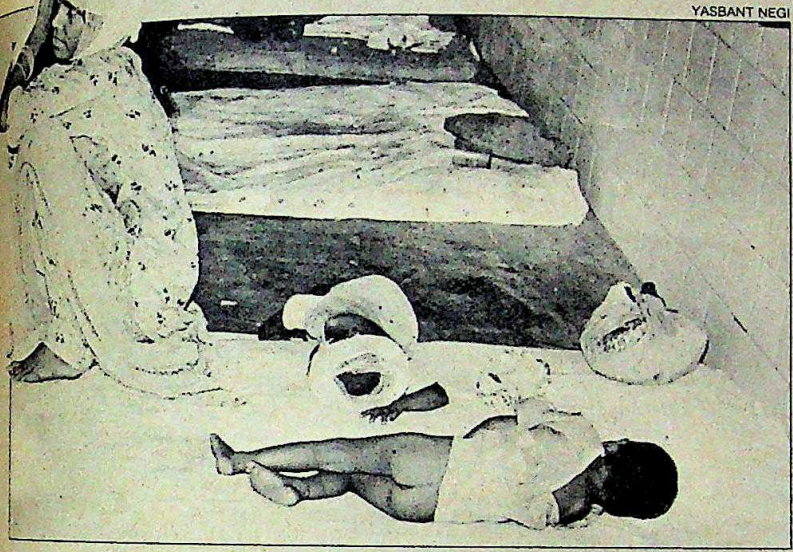
Hindu organisations cite other arguments to justify their militant stance.

▶ The Rajiv Government did not accept the Supreme Court ruling on the Shah Bano case and introduced the Muslim Women's Bill under severe communal pressure. The VHP now says if the Government can overrule a judgement through legislative action, it too is not bound to accept the Allahabad High Court judgement on the Ayodhya controversy.

▶ The Muslim leaders—especially Syed Shahabuddin of the Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC)—have indulged in brinkmanship. He gave a call to boycott the Independence Day celebrations, then cancelled it. Later, he called for a march to Babri Masjid, then withdrew it after discussions with the Government. Hindu groups are now playing a similar game.

What is alarming is that the Government has known all this for some time. As early as July, the Director of IB, M.K. Narayanan, wrote to the chief secretaries of the states, saying: "The activities and movements of sants and the spectacle of Bajrang Dal volunteers and RSS workers consecrating and carrying bricks to Ayodhya can disrupt the tenuous peace." Still, the Government trod softly on the Hindu militants. For example,

YASBANT NEGI



Riot victims in hospital: innocent

posing the Urdu bill. It was an obviously communal situation in which Hindus were equating Urdu with the Government's pampering of Muslims. Next day at 9.30 a.m., a 200-strong procession of slogan-chanting students, joined by criminal elements, marched from Islamia Inter College to S.K. College. It is still being debated whether this procession should have been allowed. But given the history of Badaun's communal peace, District Magistrate Sisir Priyadarshi and Superintendent of Police N.R. Srivastava did not expect violence.

It occurred when the marchers tried to force their way into the other college. They clashed. With brickbats, with knives. Priyadarshi and Srivastava rushed to the spot. Within half an hour the violence had spread downtown to the Chahsaraka area, the main chowk. Armed combatants began firing at each other from roof-tops, indicating an element of preparedness. Some 5,000 people were participating in the battle within the next hour with no more than 50 policemen conducting lathi charges and firing in the air. By the time reserves arrived from Bareilly, some 70 km away, Badaun was on fire. More than 200 shops were gutted, and places of worship damaged. Before relief could arrive, a train was held up near Badaun Railway Station and 13 people were butchered. The man arrested in connection with the incident was Ram Sewak, a Kurmi criminal-turned-politician, a history sheeter with several murder cases pending against him, a former Lok Dal "diehard" as police dossiers describe him, and of late a Janata Dal activist.

"Why this in Badaun?" Prabha Shankar, Badaun's most eminent lawyer is asked. He responds: "It's obvious that Hindus are not ready to tolerate their own government treating them as second-class citizens." Shankar is not a communalist. Perhaps he doesn't know the "pampering" he talks about, apart from the vote bank benefit to the ruling party, has a social element to it because more than 60 per cent of Muslims in the country live below the poverty line.

But he does articulate a commonly-held Hindu belief that minorities have been appeased while the majority has been restrained from asserting itself, and that some day, because of mass conversions and non-acceptance of family planning, the minorities will gain an edge. And there have been no efforts by the Government to explain that given the 1941 census base—and not the 1951 in which Muslims were undercounted—the rate of growth in Muslim and Hindu populations has been about the same.

It is this kind of thinking that has caused the majority community to develop a minority complex and given credence, even in places like Badaun, to the Hindu revivalist movement. The political behaviour of the Muslims in Badaun has perhaps also been short-sighted. Their voting patterns have tended to isolate them. Though the Muslims of Badaun have voted for Hindus, they have tended to vote as a community.

These patterns, of late, have disturbed Hindus of Badaun district. During municipal elections in June, Muslims turned out en masse to elect a Muslim causing some Hindu insecurity over the fact that with a Muslim MP and Muslim chairman there was a deliberate effort to create a Muslim raj. This paranoia was exploited in Ujhani a few weeks later by Janata Dal politician Sri Krishna Goyal. He made a communal speech that so galvanised the Hindus that they were able to elect a Hindu municipal chairman even though Muslims had rallied en masse behind Dr Nihal Ahmed.

In microcosm, this was the communal divide. And in Badaun it is sharpening as the elections draw near. For the first time Hindus and Muslims have drawn blood. Out of sheer insecurity, Muslims will flock together even more, perhaps to the Congress(I) side. Hindus have already begun demanding from their elected leaders the release of some 60 people jailed for the killings. Some even see the criminal Ram Sewak as a Hindu hero, and the message of Hindu-Muslim disharmony is spreading into Badaun district's villages where Yadavas and Thakurs and Muraos are being told that their identity is Hindu, that they should vote as Hindus.

What the future holds is anybody's guess. But, Badaun used to be Indian. Today it is Muslim and Hindu.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR in Badaun

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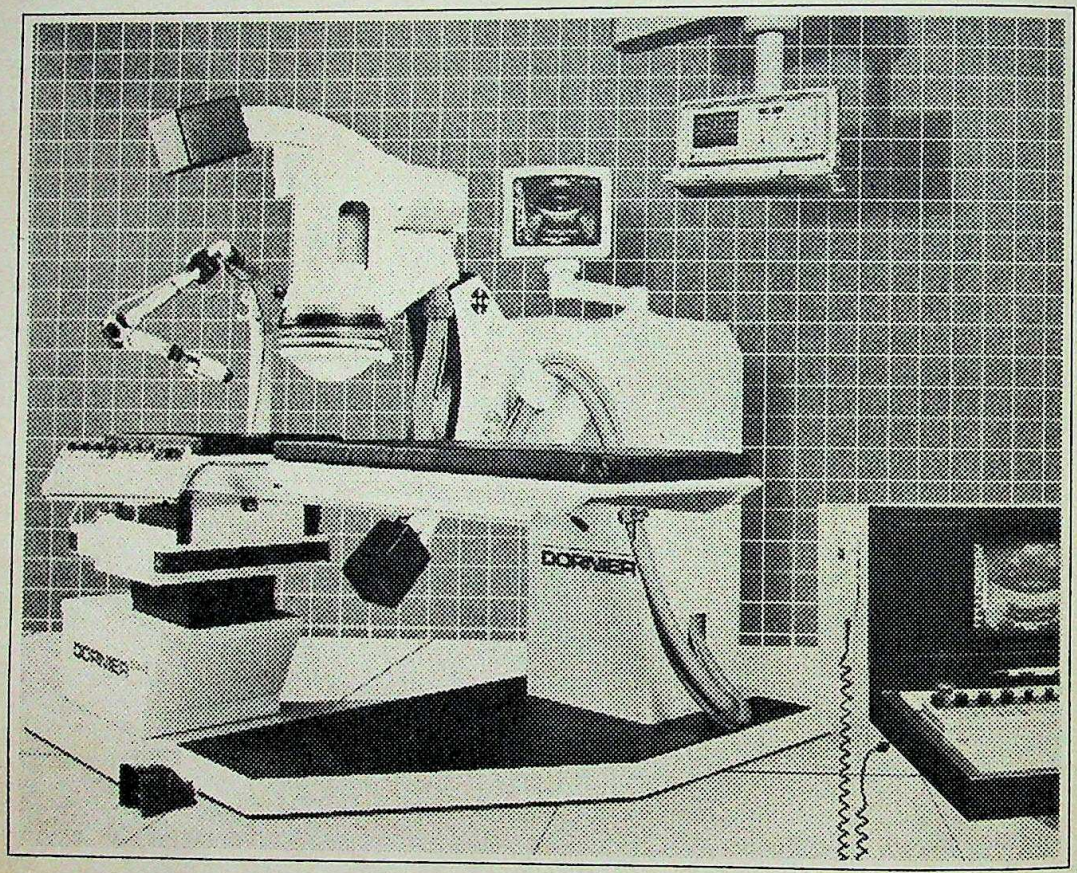

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last month, the Uttar Pradesh administration was asked to acquire land in Arvind Ashram close to the disputed site for storing the consecrated bricks arriving there. The *nazul* (government) land where the temple's foundation-stone is to be laid is also being acquired by the Government for handing over to the Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti, an organisation led by VHP and Hindu priests. Naturally, Muslims have responded angrily. Says Shahabuddin: "Till the title is decided any such allotment will amount to official support and patronage to an unlawful activity and prejudging a sub judice matter." Adds Ahmed Bukhari, the Imam's son and leader of the militant faction of BMAC: "The opening of the lock has already done irreparable damage. This will be sowing the seeds of a perennial conflict." Militant Muslim organisations are flexing their muscles for a showdown. The Jamaat-e-Islami-Hind has strong Pakistani links; the Students Islamic Movement of India, with 637 study circles, emphasises the Islamic way of life; the Students Islamic Organisation, founded in 1982 as the Jamaat's youth front has been campaigning against the telecast of *Mahabharat* and *Ramayan*. Then there is Ahmed Bukhari's Adam Sena, and the Qaumi Morcha, headed by Zafaryab Jilani, also a leader of the BMAC's militant faction.

At the moment, all parties are busy assessing the emerging communal scenario in electoral terms. At stake are about 100 Lok Sabha constituencies where Muslims constitute an estimated 20 per cent of the electorate. When the electoral race first began to get off the blocks, the Congress(I) had found itself competing for the Hindu vote with the BJP. In June, the party organised a parallel Hindu sammelan in Chitrakoot, roping in the Shankaracharya of Dwarka, Swaroopanand Saraswati, to steal the thunder from the VHP. Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Shiela Dixit chalked out this strategy, aimed at driving a wedge between Hindu religious leaders. Buta Singh told visitors he too had a shankaracharya waiting in the wings.

But the plan failed, and the Congress(I) appears to be returning to its traditional Muslim vote bank hoping to combine it with Hindu backward and Harijan votes. Ali Siddiqui, a gadfly politician and open admirer of the Gandhi family, has been meeting Shahabuddin. Rajiv too has come out openly against the Janmabhoomi campaign, declaring: "There will be no Hindu Rashtra." The party strategy seems to be: woo the Muslims but avoid offending Hindus by being lenient on those involved in communal incidents.

For the Janata Dal, all this has meant serious trouble. With the BJP growing militant, seat adjustments have caused divisions in the party. The reason: V.P. Singh wants to be everything to everyone. During a recent meeting of the party's minority cell, he held that if the party could somehow pull the BJP into a mainstream alliance, the communal crisis would de-escalate. Others disagreed. Said the cell's chairman, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed: "There was near-unanimity among the members to take up the issue of communalism with the BJP."

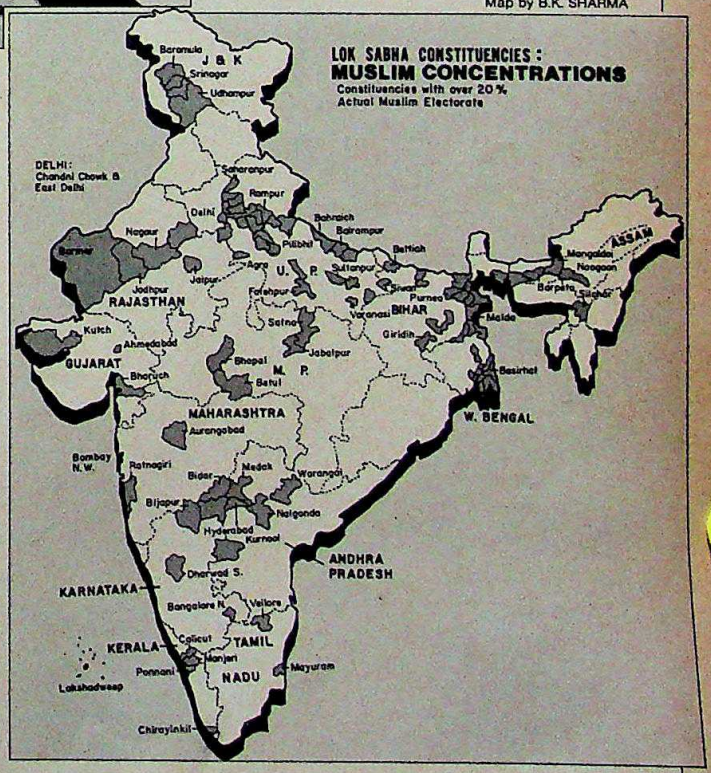
SINGH has been confusing colleagues, swearing by secularism even as he calls on fundamentalists like Abdullah Bukhari; wanting to carry moderate, progressive Muslims like Mufti and Arif Mohammad Khan in the central leadership even while retaining the hawkish BMAC general secretaries Azam Khan and Shaqikur Rehman Barq. He has also been talking to Shahabuddin on seat adjustments.

These chronic vacillations have divided the Janata Dal into two neat compartments. One wanting to continue ambling along with the BJP and another advocating some tough talking with them. There is also a small radical minority which believes Singh can still seize the initiative by announcing

Muslim convention: confused leadership

Constituting more than 20 per cent of the electorate in about 100 constituencies, Muslims have been every party's dream vote bank.

Map by B.K. SHARMA



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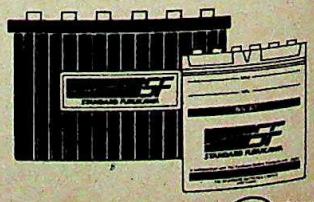

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categorically that he will not play ball with anyone with a communal leaning. The scenario is familiar. Ten years ago the Janata government had collapsed on a communal issue—dual membership in the Janata and the RSS. Today, as the communal issue hots up again, the Opposition's bid to defeat the Government in one-to-one contests again looks bleak.

Also, the attitude of the CPI(M) has hardened. A group led by Jyoti Basu was open to playing ball with the Janata Dal even if it had an electoral understanding with the BJP and Harkishen Singh Surjeet even met Vajpayee to clear the air. But after the BJP's recent Bombay meet, the CPI(M) is having second thoughts. The CPI, closer to the Congress(I) compared to the CPI(M), has redoubled its attacks on the BJP-RSS-VHP triumvirate. It suits the communists; they would like the Janata Dal to minimise the BJP's influence in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

But communal or fanatical, the BJP appears to be having the last laugh. "We will go it alone and triumph," was the refrain at the national council meeting in Bombay. Moreover, Vajpayee told INDIA TODAY: "There is no formal tie between the BJP and Janata Dal, we are not even in the National Front. Effort is being made only for seat adjustment. If they (Janata Dal) think by getting close to the BJP they will lose Muslim votes they are free to choose their electoral allies."

The BJP's hardline stance on controversial issues like Article 370, the minorities commission and the Ayodhya shrine dispute, has been born out of practical necessity. After its 1984 electoral rout, the BJP felt that the dilution of its stand as a champion of the Hindu cause had cost it dearly. The return-to-the-roots process started with the installation of L.K. Advani as party president in May 1986. The Ram Janmabhoomi issue is viewed as a means of refurbishing the party's Hindu identity and retrieving its traditional vote bank. The party feels that because of the situation in Punjab and Kashmir, a massive Hindu backlash is building up. And it is determined to prevent the Congress(I) from exploiting it as in the past.

But there are those who debunk the BJP's reach. They note that in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP has an effective influence in no more than 15 constituencies, whereas the Muslims are the deciding factor in about 50. Even Devi Lal, who'd accommodated the BJP in his cabinet, has sharply criticised its stand on Urdu. He has declared that even if it means the collapse of his ministry he will not hesitate to review his party's relationship with the BJP. He is clearly pre-empting a move by someone like Chandra Shekhar to use the anti-communalism plank. Janata Dal leaders fear that lumpen elements in the mushrooming senas may give a bad name to the entire opposition. The BJP, however, remains unfazed. Hence, the Janata Dal must now choose between Muslim votes and the BJP.

THE communal combination that will perhaps reap the richest electoral rewards is the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance in Maharashtra. At last count, the Sena had 9,657 branches all over the state. And unlike the Muslim League or even the Jamaat-e-Islami, it is not fragmented. "The Muslims do not have a leader," laments the All India Dalit Muslim Minorities Suraksha Sangh President Haji Mastan, "thus they do not know how to vote. We are trying to organise them so that they vote for those who work for them at the Centre."

With all hues of political opinion there is one certainty: that the coming elections will be largely communalised. Says Dawoodi Bohra reformer Asghar Ali Engineer: "Going by the utterances of the Shiv Sena and the BJP, communal tensions will run high at the time of the poll." He is critical of the ruling party's role: "Urdu was made the second language to woo the Muslims. But the backlash was negative for the ruling party. If the intentions were clear they could have made Urdu the

BUTA SINGH

"Foreign agencies are involved"

HOME Minister Buta Singh has been in charge of Rajiv Gandhi's policy on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy. In an interview with INDIA TODAY, *he reveals the Government's stand on the issue. Excerpts:*

On the Ayodhya controversy.

Foreign agencies are involved. Huge amounts of money are coming in, and Hindu communalists are getting ideological backing from groups abroad. We are the biggest democracy and as elections are coming closer, international forces are interested in our affairs.

On the evidence of foreign involvement.

These forces use very subtle means. Look how they have brought down Japan. A year ago the yen was riding higher than the dollar. It only took the discrediting of three prime ministers to undo all that. In India, attempts are being made to discredit our prime minister.

On the Government dragging its feet on the issue.

We have identified a common ground, but this ground is very small. The law will have to take its course.

On which side has been more rational.

The Muslims say they will abide by the court's verdict. The VHP is not willing to accept a decision against Hindus.

BAL THACKERAY

"This will remain saffron Hindustan"

IF any one person symbolises Hindu chauvinism and revivalism, it is the outspoken chief of the Shiv Sena, Bal Thackeray. Senior Correspondent RAGHU NANDAN DHAR *spoke to him in Bombay. Excerpts:*

On the Shiv Sena playing the communal card.

We are not communal. Whatever issues we have raised are of national importance. How do you expect us to keep quiet when we see the tricolour being burnt in Srinagar or read placards saying, "Indian occupants quit Kashmir"? These are important national issues.

On the fact that such a stand helps get Hindu votes.

It is not a question of Hindu votes. It is a question of focusing on the issues. In Maharashtra we'll win.

On the Shiv Sena instigating communal violence.

We don't have a violent attitude. But if we are attacked, we will retaliate.

On safeguarding Hinduism.

Where will the Hindus go if the Government and the minorities keep on behaving the way they do? As far as we are concerned, the colour of this country has been saffron since ages, and we will never let it become green. This will remain saffron Hindustan.

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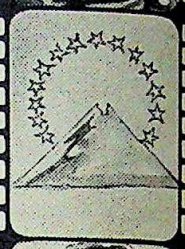

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NAMAS BHOJANI

Chitrakoot Hindu sammelan; (right) BJP's national council meet

second language earlier. However, if riots continue over such issues, Muslims would prefer voting Congress(I) than BJP, as it is generally felt the BJP is behind the riots."

Madhu Dandavate of the Janata Dal doesn't think the elections will be highly communalised. Says he: "Hindus never vote as Hindus. There are regional barriers, caste and even sub-caste considerations. Besides, villages have problems of a more immediate nature than communalism." He believes the communal attitude is an urban trait.

For all the frenetic attempts to create the Hindu vote bank, the real question is—does it exist or can it ever materialise? Historically, the most familiar pattern of Indian politics is the attempt to divide communities before elections. In the 1967 elections, divisive forces took the form of the Jan Sangh campaign against cow-slaughter but no real Hindu wave emerged. In 1971, Congress(I) leaders sought mileage from the fact that Indira Gandhi had taught a lesson to Pakistan in the war. Before the 1980 poll, Indira Gandhi went to the extent of writing a letter to Imam Bukhari, promising sops to the Muslims. And during the last general elections, slick advertisements by the Congress(I) whipped up the fear that Pakistan's borders were coming close to the people's doorsteps—subtle propaganda that dubbed Sikhs as Khalistanis. But in each case, the Hindu votes can also be interpreted as a vote for national security and integrity.

The creation of a vertical divide between the 83 per cent Hindu population and other minorities could well be a Herculean task. Says former Janata Party leader Madhu Limaye: "Hindus traditionally do not vote en bloc." In his opinion, the caste complications among Hindus, prevent this. So the move to consolidate Hindu votes is actually a strategy to counter Muslim votes in their areas of concentration. Admits an RSS leader: "Even if the backward classes do not come with us, the upper caste Hindus can swing the elections if they vote together."

And that is a big if. Because there are 98 constituencies in the country where the estimated Muslim electorate is over 20 per cent—a decisive chunk *(see chart)*. The major distribution is in Uttar Pradesh (25 Lok Sabha seats), West Bengal (18), Bihar (9), Andhra Pradesh (6) and Assam, Karnataka and Rajasthan (5 each). In 100 other constituencies—where Muslims are between 5 and 10 per cent—their collective vote can be decisive in closely contested elections. The Congress(I) has been using this factor successfully by playing to the Muslim gallery. The BJP's aggressive wooing of Hindu votes can further push them into the Congress(I)'s lap.

In the communal mania that is holding both Hindus and Muslims in its grip, the epitaph of secularism is being written.

But there are certain basic miscalculations in the BJP's thinking. First, the emotive appeal of the Ram Janmabhoomi issue is by and large restricted to the Hindi heartland. Second, being an essentially urban party, the BJP has minor influence on the Hindu caste considerations in rural areas. However, communal violence before elections has always polarised votes. For instance, after the anti-cow slaughter movement in 1967, the Jan Sangh got 36 Lok Sabha seats—and more than 9 per cent of total votes polled. Again, after communal riots prior to the 1971 polls, the Bharatiya Kranti Dal unexpectedly bagged the Aligarh seat, as the Congress(I) fielded a Muslim.

But the most unexpected element in an election—which might disrupt any communal calculation—is the Indian voter. Shahabuddin illustrates this point. "The only assembly segment I lost in my Lok Sabha election had a Muslim majority," he says. That puts a big question mark on the ongoing efforts of Hindu communalists.

The quest for the elusive Hindu vote and the Hindu Rashtra, for these very reasons, may be conceptually flawed. It is like reaching out for what could be an imaginary Holy Grail. But in the process of doing so, the perpetrators of this ideology have created a situation fraught with the horrendous consequences of religious warfare in which there will be no winners.

The sants and sadhus, the VHP activists and the RSS diehards, the Bajrang Dal volunteers and the Shiv Sena enthusiasts, the Adam Sena, Qaumi Morcha and the Jamaat-e-Islami-Hind, the Students Islamic Movement of India and the Students Islamic Organisation, are not merely propagators of religious faiths. They comprise the armies of the communal night. And as they clash, they will release not the illumination of religious enlightenment but the pitch darkness of anarchy. Everybody will lose.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR and PANKAJ PACHAURI with BHASKAR ROY, KANWAR SANDHU and bureau reports

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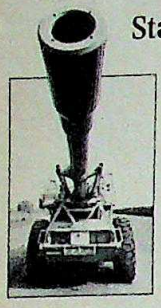
BOFORS

Controversy & Cover-up

Startling exposes by *The Hindu* amid allegations of the paper being gagged



FULLY one week before *The Hindu* exploded its latest Bofors bomb on October 9, the Government had an inkling of imminent trouble. Its rumour-mills in the nation's capital were abuzz with gossip that the Madras-based newspaper was about to publish another scoop that would embarrass the Rajiv Gandhi Government as much as General Krishnaswami Sundarji's revelations.

The rumours soon proved correct. But this was attributable not so much to the regime's sleuthing abilities as to the fact that an open power-struggle had broken out in *The Hindu*, amid allegations that the newspaper was being pressured against printing any further damaging exposes arising from its three-year investigation.

The October 9 story—billed as the first in a new series of exposes—was sensational enough as it contained excerpts from the secret portion of the Swedish National Audit Bureau (SNAB) report dating back to June 1, 1987. The story, the paper said, was 'to be continued'. The second instalment was expected on the 11th, the 10th being a holiday. But what created an even greater sensation were the developments following the story that did not appear on October 11. What did appear, was a cryptic front page note by the editor, which said: "Enough has been written supported by extensive documentation, in *The Hindu* to establish the fact of the cover-up and the non-serious pursuit of the investigation

CHASING A RED HERRING

DECOY TRAIL

SEPT. 15, 16 & 18, '87

- AT secret meetings in New Delhi between the Bofors delegation and a Govt. of India team, Bofors states that Moresco is a Switzerland-registered company which was originally known as Pitco. It was paid SEK 81 million (Rs 16.2 crore). So far, Bofors had claimed that Moresco and Pitco were code or reference names.
- Bofors adds that its Per Ove Morberg had called on the Swedish Central Bank in Dec. 1986 to furnish clarifications in respect of the remittance of SEK 188 million (Rs 37.7 crore) to Svenska Inc.
- Bofors repeats it has not paid any amounts to any Indians.

OCT. 6 LETTER

Bofors tells Bhatnagar that "Moresco is not a company but a reference for Moineao S.A."

OCT. 15 LETTER

Bhatnagar asks Bofors to explain why a registered company (Moresco) requires a reference name.

NOV. 4 LETTER

Bofors tells Bhatnagar that "the name of the company is and has been Moineao S.A. The rest is all reference or code names, and is used for sake of convenience."

SNAB REPORT

JUNE 1,'87: The SNAB report reveals that "Commission payments to business or accounts in Switzerland were made to those who took care of the Bofors FH-77 deal.... The current President of AB Bofors, Per Ove Morberg, has in his talks with the Swedish National Bank stated that the principal beneficiary in Svenska Inc. is an Indian who has been an agent for Bofors for 10-15 years (minutes from visit to the National Bank 1986-12-18)".

SVENSKA

DEC. 14,'78: Bofors signs a consultancy agreement with Svenska Inc. for 4 % commission on its sales in Asia including India.

MAR. 11, '81: The agreement is renewed and the commission increased to 6 %.

JAN. 13,'86: The commission is virtually, and inexplicably, halved. The two agree to terminate the agreement on a commission of 2.24 % on the advance payments to be made by the buyer and 0.96 % (totalling 3.2 %) on subsequent payments if Bofors won the FH-77 deal with India.

- Bofors pays SEK 188.4 million (Rs 37.7 crore) between 27.2.86 and 18.12.86.

PAY-OFF TRAIL

SEK 188.4 million (Rs 37.7 crore)

SEK 81 million (Rs 16.2 crore)

PITCO

OCT. 15,'79: Bofors signs an irrevocable consultancy agreement with Pitco, Switzerland, an identifiable company registered in Switzerland for 12 months & agrees to pay a commission of 8 % - 6 % on advance payments to be made by the buyer and 2 % on the delivery of the material.

MAY 7, '80: The agreement is renewed till Oct. 10,'81. JUNE 22,'81: The commission is raised from 6 % to 10 %, of which 7 % is to be paid on advance payments and 3 % on the delivery of the material.

SOGEVALOR

Holding company for Pitco. Registered in Switzerland.

THE HINDU EXPOSURES

APR. 22,'88: Five documents establish a link among Moineao S.A., Moresco & Pitco as code names - and Sangam Ltd, the Hinduja's company, in the form of "Pitco, c/o Sangam Ltd" and "Pitco, c/o G.P. Hinduja, Sangam Ltd".

OCT. 20,'88: Government confirms authenticity of Hindu documents.

MORESCO

JUNE 29,'84: The irrevocable Bofors-Pitco agreement is transferred to Moresco Inc., also registered in Switzerland.

- Bofors pays SEK 37 million into Manufacturers Hanover Trust, Geneva, between May 22 & Dec. 22,'86. Code name: Tulip.
- SEK 12 million into Credit Suisse, on May 21,'86. Code name: Mont Blanc.
- SEK 32 million into Swiss Bank Corporation between Nov. 13 & Dec. 22,'86. Code name: Lotus.

Total Payments: SEK 81 million (Rs. 16.2 crore

ARDBO DIARY ENTRIES

JAN. 30,'87: "London. Meeting with GPH" (alleged to be G.P. Hinduja)

MAY 21,'87: "Met H."

OCT. 9,'87: "Carlberg phoned and wanted to have a meeting immediately. It concerned India. I called Hanover who was breathing fire and fumes over Nobel's entering (recording) of the Indian deal. I stated quite clearly that I was not into forgery. The contract could go to hell."

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by the official agencies...".

The hottest rumour that day was that the Government had somehow been able to gag *The Hindu*. In Madras, the paper's Associate Editor N. Ram was flooded with phone calls from all across the country about why the 'to be continued' portion of his story had not appeared. Ram interpreted the phrase "enough has been written" to mean that future exposes had been barred. Still, his response was guarded. "Wait," he told the questioners, "I'm coming to Delhi this evening, and you'll know the rest."

The next day the capital witnessed an unusual press conference. In front of some 250 journalists, Ram openly accused his editor-uncle Gopalan Kasturi of buckling under pressure and killing a story which showed that the Government had colluded with the Swedes in a massive cover-up of the Bofors payoffs. Ram said he had stepped out of the four walls of *The Hindu* and into the public arena because "the larger issue is whether the people have a right to know". He then released to select publications—based on his assessment of their "independence and integrity"—the report that *The Hindu* did not publish along with supporting documents dug out by him and his Geneva-based star reporter Chitra Subramaniam, pointing to a trail damaging to the Government.

Kasturi, predictably, defended his stand. One of the arguments put out by him for holding up the story was that it

Chart by B.K. SHARMA and Compiled by HARPAL SINGH

B

BOFORS

Lies & More Lies

WIN CHADHA

■ *"Bofors used no middlemen, paid no commissions for contract."*

● Fact: "Commission payments... were made to those who took care of the Bofors FH 177 deal." (SNAB report)

■ *"Bofors has not paid or conspired to pay any bribes."*

● Fact: "There is reason to presume that bribery crime has been committed." (Lars Ringberg)

■ *"The name of the company is Moineao S.A. The rest is a code."*

● Fact: "There's no company such as Moineao. Moresco is a registered company." *(The Hindu)*

■ *"I have nothing to do with Svenska or any such foreign company. I heard of Svenska, AE Services and Moresco from newspapers."*

■ *"To my knowledge no Bofors' representative has said that commissions were paid."*

■ *"To the best of my knowledge, no money was passed, nor any commission paid."*

● Fact: "Morberg...stated that the principal beneficiary behind Svenska 'is an Indian who has been an agent for Bofors for 10-15 years'." (SNAB report)

JPC REPORT

APR. 25,'88 : On the basis of incomplete information given to it by the Swedish and Indian delegations, the JPC concludes that :

- Moresco and Pitco are not registered in Switzerland.
- Win Chadha did not act as a middleman.
- There is no evidence that winding up costs were paid to any Indian in the country or abroad.
- There is no evidence to show any middlemen were involved. Therefore, the question of payments to any Indians or Indian company does not arise.
- Mere suspicion about middlemen and commissions is not sufficient ground to terminate the contract with Bofors or claim reimbursement of Rs 64 crore.

MOHAN KATRE

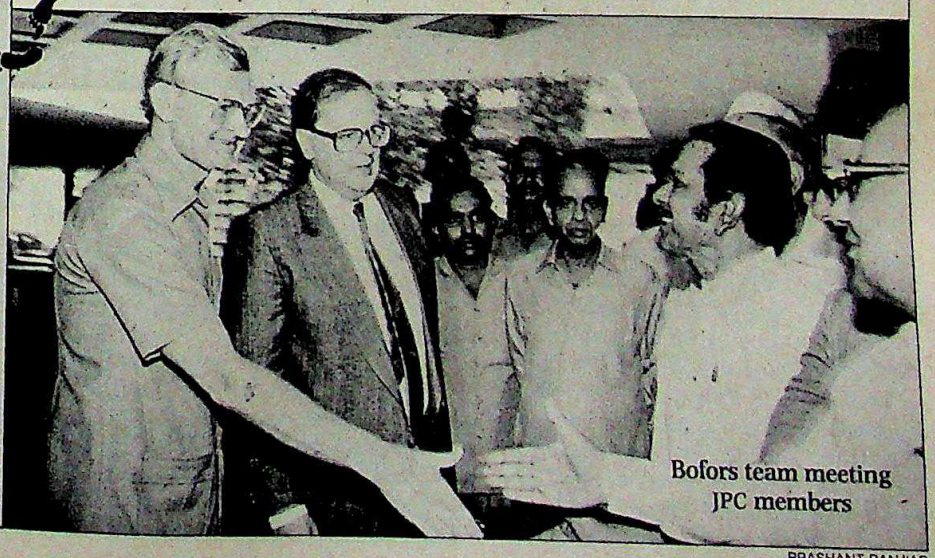
In September 1987, at a secret meeting, Bofors gave Indian officials names of companies that received the payments. The JPC was given an altered version of this information.

CBI is misled to investigate the decoy Moineao S. A. instead of Moresco.

MOINEAO S.A.

OCT. 6,'87 : Bofors introduces Moineao S.A. into the plot as a company with which it had entered into an agreement on Oct. 15,'79, and concluded at the turn of the year 1985-86.

NOV. 4,'87 : In response to an enquiry from Bhatnagar about the status of Moineao S.A. Bofors says that "the name of the company is and has been Moineao S.A. The rest is all reference or codes, and is used for sake of convenience." This varies from what Bofors told the Government of India team in its Sept. 1987 secret meetings.



Bofors team meeting JPC members

PRASHANT PANJIAR

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was a mere rehash and that there was "nothing new" in what Ram was offering his readers. But the record suggests otherwise.

With the technical and operational quality of the Bofors gun now more or less accepted, the burning questions still haunting the nation are who received the illegal payoffs and whether the Indian Government faithfully carried out its stated objective of conducting a thorough investigation by following all leads that may have pointed towards the culprits.

THE Government's official, and final, position on the payoffs scandal has been that it was exhaustively investigated by the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), with the aid of the Ministry of Defence and investigative agencies headed by CBI chief Mohan Katre.

The JPC began its work in August 1987 and submitted its final report in April 1988. Its conclusions: There were no middlemen involved in the deal, no Indians were paid any commissions for helping the Swedes to secure the contract, and that the Rs 64-crore paid to Win Chadha, Svenska, Moresco-Moineao, and AE Services were "winding up" costs for consultancy services provided by them to Bofors. Also, the JPC concluded that despite the Government's best efforts, some of these companies remained untraceable and that the Swedes had been unable to supply the names of the people who had benefited because of secrecy laws.

This, in summation, has been the official and constantly-repeated theme of the Government—including that of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

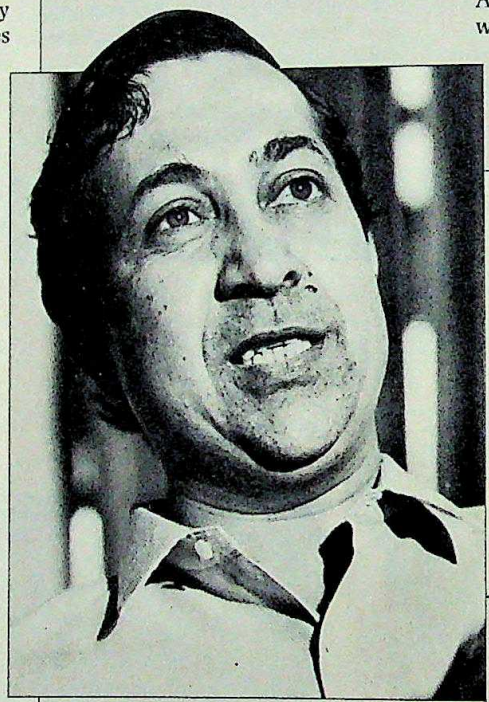
But has the Government really made every effort to get at the names, in other words, to comply with what is after all its most solemnly pledged objective? The first massive doubt was raised by Sundarji's revelation that his advice to threaten cancellation of the contract to pressure Bofors into coughing up the names, was turned down by Rajiv.

Where the October 9 *Hindu* story, and the one that Kasturi refused to publish on October 11, break new ground is in showing that the JPC's conclusions are totally untenable, and that the Swedish Government too colluded in the lies. Ram's investigation unearthed a mass of documents from Swedish sources, including a secret portion of the SNAB report which declared that Chadha was the "principal beneficiary behind Svenska Incorporated"—one of the three front companies which was paid Rs 37.7 crore specifically for its help to Bofors in winning the

N. RAM

"They can't go after Chadha or Hindujas"

FOR nearly two years N. Ram, the Marxist-oriented associate editor of the Madras-based The Hindu *and his Geneva reporter Chitra Subramaniam, have been giving their readers a blow-by-blow commentary on Bofors pay-offs. But last fortnight, the iconoclastic Ram jumped from*



BHAWAN SINGH

the ringside seat into the ring, and went public, charging his editor-uncle G. Kasturi of sabotaging the latest exposes. He released the unpublished documents to select papers. Ram spoke for two hours to Associate Editor RAMINDAR SINGH *about the exposes and the fall-out. Excerpts:*

Q. *You have published so many documents. What have they proved?*

A. Bofors says that there was no connection between the payments and the contract, but the documents prove they all were contingent on winning the contract. I have no doubt that Win Chadha was the principal beneficiary of Svenska. He was entitled to 6.2 per cent and somebody—that is AE Services Limited—cuts in on November 15, 1985 and takes away 3 per cent, four months before the signing of the contract. It makes no sense because AE Services performed no service whatever.

Q. *Who is behind AE Services?*

A. I want to keep that for later. We have a document of a meeting between Bob Wilson of AE Services and Martin Ardbo (former president of Bofors) in which Wilson says he will never reveal the persons behind AE's holding company Ciaou Anstalt.

Q. *The Government knows this?*

A. Rajiv Gandhi and Gopi Arora are fully in the picture. Officially the Government came to know of AE Services only in September '87 (when Bofors gave a list of the recipient companies). But, on behalf of top people, the CBI had negotiated with Bob Wilson of AE Services before that.

> "I told Rajiv Gandhi when I met him sometime last year that A.E. Services is your real smoking gun.... He was terribly nervous."

Q. *Are you convinced this is a cover-up which goes right to the top?*

A. Absolutely. Right to the top. But they can't take any action, they have got tied down. I am convinced completely that they cannot afford to go after Chadha, or the Hinduja nexus with Pitco-Moresco. The minimum would have been to go after Chadha, why can't they do it? Because the whole story of the cuts will come out.

Q. *Should Rajiv resign?*

A. Absolutely. Rajiv Gandhi is involved in a corrupt deal, and in the cover-up of it. If it's somebody else, then what's there to hide?

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Q. Are we going to get to know the names of those who took the money?

A. I told Rajiv Gandhi when I met him (last year) that AE Services is your real smoking gun. He said he did not take (money) nor his family, but if some party politician took it then I must help him to find out. Now I discover that Moresco is even more damaging. And it links up with what G.P. Hinduja told me in April 1988. He said: "Of course we know who is behind Svenska, who is behind AE, who is behind Pitco, but we cannot reveal it because of a larger objective."

Q. What kind of feeling did you get after your meeting with Rajiv?

A. He was terribly nervous. It appeared he either did not know anything or knew too much. He was interested that I should look at the Middle East connection; he suggested there was a Middle East angle involved. That's what the Hindujas were telling us.

Q. Did he suggest you should not publish anything else on Bofors?

A. Nothing like that. It was to get a briefing, to find out. The first 20 minutes talk about Sri Lanka was very relaxed. On Bofors it became strained. He was nervous. He took notes and often told me: "Don't go too fast. I'm getting mixed up." Basically he said, please cooperate. It was very odd: they ask you for material, want cooperation but there's no follow-up. They were very angry later on. G. Parthasarathy (joint secretary to the prime minister) came to me repeatedly afterwards and asked: "Are you a campaign journalist like Arun Shourie?" He set up a meeting with Katre, who said he had told Rajiv that the documents were authentic.

Q. What is your view of Rajiv's Government besides his sins on Bofors?

A. There are many other corrupt deals. HDW for one. All round, in matters of policy too, he has flunked the test. He should go.

Q. What is the specific charge?

A. The specific charge is that the Government of India has colluded with Bofors and in a secondary capacity with the Swedish Government to obstruct justice. It has connived at the doctoring of facts and conspicuously failed to go after leads established. There is a conflict of interest because of the nature of AE services and even Pitco-Moresco. I have reason to believe that you cannot possibly afford to have the owners of AE Services and Moresco-Pitco revealed.

Q. Is Rajiv Gandhi responsible?

A. Rajiv Gandhi directs this.

Q. What are the other leads they failed to act on?

A. No cooperation was given in August 1987 to Ringberg, who was sitting on a mass of information and documents. He repeatedly asked for cooperation and sent questions to Katre who said his hands were tied because he was assisting the JPC. This was the device used to obstruct any possibility of cooperating with the Swedes.

Q. You are convinced that Pitco-Moresco is a Hinduja operation?

A. Pitco is definitely linked with Hindujas. We published three documents on it, where the Pitco address was care of G.P. Hinduja, Sangam Limited. The original agreement with Pitco dated 1979 said its entitlement was 8 per cent. That would have meant Rs 120 crore on the value of the Bofors contract. When Pitco became Moresco, the entitlement was divided into three parts and banked in the code names of Tulip, Lotus and Mont Blanc. Pitco is basically a front for a Swiss holding company Sogevalor.

> "The Government of India has clearly colluded with Bofors and, in a secondary capacity, with the Government of Sweden to obstruct justice."

Q. How will your stand affect the family ownership of the newspaper?

A. I think there will be a division but who can say. I think public response will shame any element which tries,... let the people judge. After June 1988 Kasturi said 'no more Bofors'. But in November we published something. After that he would not permit even the first piece about the SNAB secret report. I gave him three days saying I will have no choice but to go public. So he printed the first.

It was doublespeak. First he said "no Bofors", then asked "what's new", and then he wanted to clear everything once and for all. He was obviously reacting to some environmental danger. Then, when that editor's note appeared on the front page saying "enough has been written on Bofors...", that did it.

Howitzer contract in India.

This, by itself, totally demolishes the Bofors line, aped willingly by the JPC and the Indian Government, that no Indians were paid, that there were no middlemen, and that only winding up charges were involved. Though the full SNAB report was presented to the Swedish cabinet in June 1987 by the minister for foreign trade Anita Gradin, yet, on April 12, 1988, Gradin told a constitutional committee investigating Bofors: "The report (of the audit bureau) does not say it could be anything else but winding up costs."

The charitable explanation for this would be that the Swedes simply refused to part with the secret report despite the Indian Government's persistence and so the JPC and the Government came to their conclusions on the basis of the information available. But the worst case scenario—as it emerges from *The Hindu's* documents—suggests that the Government was not only less than eager to pursue leads but that it appeared to have misled the JPC by providing it selective information. Thus the Government obscured a vital trail that had been established during a crucial September 1987 meeting between representatives of Bofors and a delegation of secretaries of the Indian Government.

BETWEEN September 16 and 18, 1987, Bofors President Per Ove Morberg and Chief Jurist Lars Gothlin, met with a high-level Indian team comprising the then defence secretary S.K. Bhatnagar, law secretary P.K. Kartha, special secretary to the prime minister, Gopi Arora and additional secretary, defence, N.N. Vohra. This was prior to their scheduled appearance before the JPC. At this meeting, two crucial things gave the Government a fresh opportunity to pursue the matter of the payments. First, in response to a question from the Indian side, Morberg admitted that he had given details about the Svenska payments to the Swedish Central Bank. This has raised the question of whether anybody in the Indian Government had knowledge at that time of some part of the secret portion of the SNAB report, which had concluded on the basis of Morberg's statement to the bank, that Chadha was a middleman. Even if the Government did not have prior knowledge, the point is that the subject of Morberg's admission to the bank never came up before the JPC for any kind of questioning.

And perhaps for good reasons. Because the secret minutes of this meeting between Bofors and the Indian team were withheld from the JPC. These minutes also list details of the payments made to Pitco

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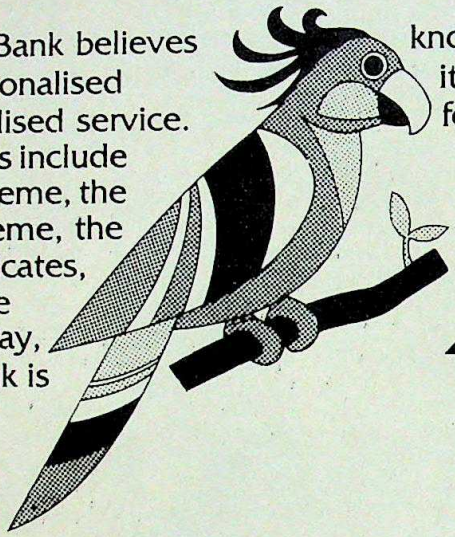

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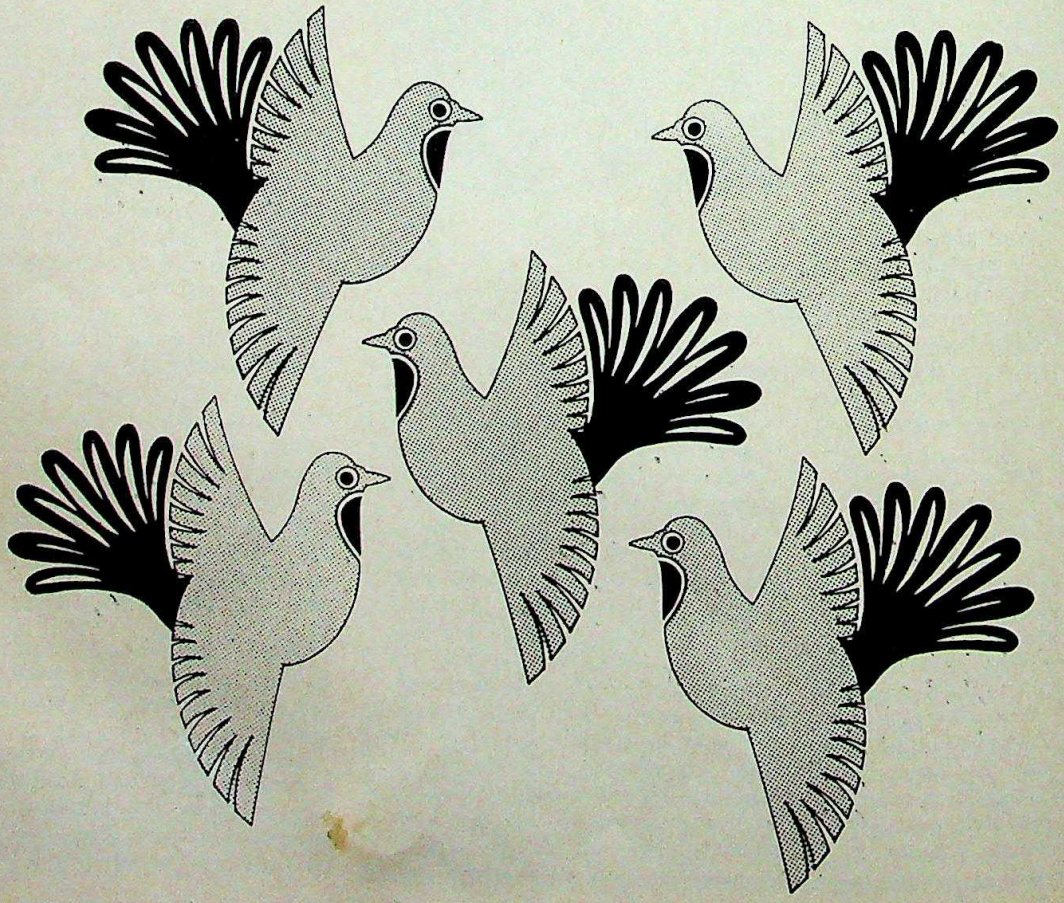

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MAA COMMUNICATIONS 903

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(whose name was later changed to Moresco) and AE Services. Moresco, the minutes said, was legally registered in Switzerland, and AE Services in the UK. Here the plot thickens, because the Swedes had, perhaps unwittingly, given away more than they should have.

The Hindu in documents published in April-June 1987, had mentioned these very companies as being the recipients of the payoff money, and had in fact, linked Pitco to the Hinduja family—a charge hotly denied by them. The Government had then asked CBI Director Mohan Katre to help the JPC investigate the authenticity of *The Hindu* documents. And then, four months later, the Swedes were officially confirming the existence of Moresco as a registered company that had received some of the payments.

The Ram-Subramaniam story suggests that Bofors and the Indian Government, nervous about where the trail would lead if they passed on details about the Moresco connection to the JPC, acted in tandem to suppress this information from the JPC. For on October 6, 1987, Bofors sent a letter to the Indian defence secretary stating that Moresco was not the name of the company but a

THE HINDU

Pangs of Change

"THE Hindu always reminds me of an old maiden lady, very prim and proper, who is shocked if a naughty word is uttered in her presence. It is eminently the paper of the bourgeois, comfortably settled in life. Not for it the shady side of existence, the rough and tumble and conflict of public life..."

THAT was Jawaharlal Nehru, many years ago, commenting on 'The Old Lady of Mount Road'. The sobriquet sits well on *The Hindu's* century-old shoulders. Even today, it continues its tradition of carrying a religious tract based on discourses by Hindu religious leaders on its last page. For its fiercely-loyal 22-lakh readership (circulation: 4,28,672) *The Hindu* is as much a part of Tamil culture and identity as *idli* and *sambar*.

For that, it has paid a willing enough price. Despite the paper's recent launch of a Delhi edition, *The Hindu* retains a powerful parochial image, an image that Tamil historian S. Muthiah once described as "the modern orthodox Madras conservative". Until Chitra Subramaniam and the paper's associate editor and part-owner Narasimhan Ram launched their series of sensational exposes on the Bofors scandal and radically altered the paper's image.

Last fortnight's press conference by N. Ram, attacking his uncle-editor, Gopalan Kasturi, for allegedly caving into government pressure, was rendered even more extraordinary by the fact that it was *The Hindu* that was involved. Screaming headlines, sensational exposures, dogged investigations and public family feuds are as alien to *The Hindu* image as was Ram's move. In a sense, the family differences are a reflection of the paper's own internal struggle, spearheaded by Ram, to shed its conservatism and gain wider editorial acceptance.

Ironically, *The Hindu's* early image was adventurous, even rebellious. In 1889 it became a daily and 16 years later, for the sum of Rs 75,000, passed into the hands of Kasturiranga Iyengar, an ambitious lawyer who was then the paper's legal adviser. His family, whose descendants still control majority shareholding, termed it a "mad venture". Iyengar, changed the paper from a vehicle for social reform into a strictly business proposition.

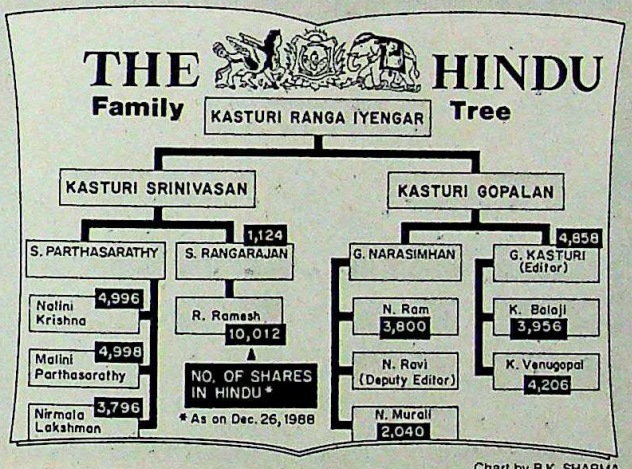

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

At the same time, from being a comfortable adjunct to the Tamilian's morning cup of filtered coffee, the paper acquired a more controversial aura, attacking the philosophy of Annie Besant and George Arundale. But *The Hindu's* finest hour was when it adopted the cause of Independence in 1918. From then, its growth and stature was inextricably linked with that of the nationalist movement.

The editors that followed from the family stable led to sharp fluctuations in the paper's editorial stance. After A. Rangaswami became editor in 1928, it witnessed an era of editorial moderation, striving to copy as closely as possible, its editorial guru, *The Times*, London: an emphasis on views rather than on news.

That legacy epitomises the current division in the family. G. Kasturi, the editor since 1965, is a conservative. N. Ram, quite the rebel: a Marxist background, married to an Englishwoman. In the family, he is resented for not being a "team player".

That could decide his future position in the paper. Kasturi denied that there had been any government pressure on the paper, saying that there was "nothing new" in the latest Bofors expose. Most of the paper's staffers disagree and feel that Kasturi is being pressured, if not by the Government, then by others named in the scandal.

However, at the meeting of family shareholders last fortnight to decide on aborting the Bofors reports, a majority of them, including Ram's younger brother and deputy editor, N. Ravi, backed Kasturi. This is not at all surprising for most of them, unlike Ram, are cut from traditional *Hindu* cloth.

There were other reasons for friction. Ram had declared publicly that Karunanidhi would be the next chief minister, a stand Kasturi took strong objection to. In public speeches, Ram has been stating categorically that Rajiv will lose the next election, another stand that Kasturi severely frowned upon.

After last fortnight, that relationship has reached breaking point. The family is deliberating now on whether to allow Ram to continue or ease him out. On that will also depend the future of *The Hindu*.

—DILIP BOBB

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reference (code) name for Moineao S.A. with which Bofors purportedly had an agreement since 1979. "With reference to the minutes dated September 19, 1987, we would like to give the following information: Moresco is not a company but a reference for Moineao S.A.," Morberg wrote to Bhatnagar. Moineao's address was listed in Geneva. Even *The Hindu's* sharp nosed team was initially misled by this false scent and started investigating Moineao, but they soon homed in on the real connection with Pitco-Moresco.

Mohan Katre

Gopi Arora

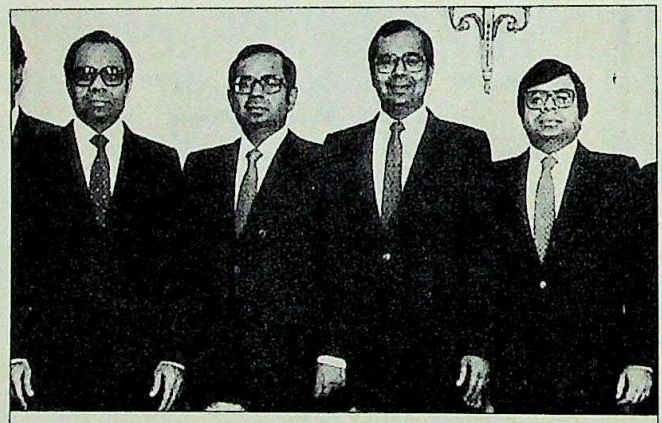
S.K. Bhatnagar

The exposes in *The Hindu* indicate that senior Indian officials appeared to be working in tandem with the Swedes in order to manage the crisis.

The JPC report says that the information given by the Swedes to the Indian delegation during the September meeting and recorded in the secret memo, was passed on to the committee. But a perusal of the report discloses that this was not so. What the Government gave the JPC was information contained in the October 6 letter in which Bofors, for the first time, substituted the name Moineao for Moresco. Nowhere does the JPC report reflect the contents of the September 1987 meeting in which Moresco is described as one of the recipient companies.

The purpose of this, *The Hindu* reports, was to deflect attention away from the Moresco-Hinduja connection. If the full details of the September meeting had been submitted to the JPC, then the investigating agencies under Katre would have had to probe Moresco's antecedents. Instead, Katre began to pursue the Moineao red herring. After several months, he reported to the JPC that "enquiries made at the Companies Registration Office in Geneva and scrutiny of all published information of all companies registered in Switzerland reveal that no company by the name of Moineao S.A. is registered. Similarly the names of Moresco and Pitco were also not found in these records."

It was true that Moineao S.A. did not exist. But an independent inquiry by *The Hindu* in September 1989, through a computer-aided search from the Central Federal Registry in Berne, confirmed the existence of Pitco and Moresco. The Ram-Subramaniam investigation is now zeroing in on the ownership of Pitco-Moresco as well as that of AE Services. According to Ram, there is solid information on the record showing that high-level Indian Government contacts were established with AE Services *several months before* the September 1987 meeting, at which the AE Services' name was officially communicated to the Indian delegation for the first time.



In June 1987, *The Hindu* published documents linking the Hindujas to the payoffs. By October 1988, CBI had confirmation of the documents' authenticity.

While Moresco was entitled to a solid 8 per cent commission on the value of the contract, *The Hindu* investigation details how Chadha and Svenska's 6 per cent was carved up, with Svenska retaining half and the remaining 3 per cent going to the mysterious last-minute entrant, AE Services which, on its own admission, had rendered no service in India in connection with the contract.

Chadha, in fact, was treated with kid gloves and deference by the Government even after the earlier censored SNAB report revealed that he had received substantial sums. He was allowed to leave the country and return on his own terms and was merely fined Rs 70,000 for technical violation of the foreign exchange regulations, a penalty he has appealed against before the FERA Appellate Board. Chadha was in Delhi when the latest storm broke but remained incommunicado.

In summary, *The Hindu* revelations are devastating. According to the paper, the total payoffs would have mounted to Rs 155 crore. It has revealed that contrary to the Government-JPC line, the Bofors deal had middlemen and commission agents; that information given to the Government that could have led to a line of inquiry against Moresco was withheld from the JPC which was fed, instead, the name of a non-existent company; that the Government knew, and officially confirmed in October 1988, that *The Hindu's* documents of April 1987, establishing the Pitco-Moresco-Hinduja connection, were authentic.

Government reaction was all too familiar. It pleaded for cooperation from the press and despatched officials to Switzerland for a new inquiry. In 1987 also, in response to the Hindu exposures, it promised action and sent its sleuths to Switzerland. Nothing came of it. Once again the ball is firmly in the government's court.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR with RAMINDAR SINGH

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In the coke ovens, closer monitoring of oven temperature, better control over fuel air ratio have improved the quality of coke and resulted in major energy savings.

In the blast furnace, the introduction of variable throat armour along with the rotating chute has substantially reduced the coke rate. Better coke quality, increased proportion of sinter and higher blast temperatures have all contributed to energy savings.

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Today, the introduction of stamp charging technology to produce better coke and the development of a new process to utilise blue dust in sinter making, clearly illustrate TISTECH's success in working out a relevant energy management programme that is appropriate to the Indian context. A programme that encompasses every operation from mining to steel making and processing. A programme that involves every mind at Tata Steel. A programme that is designed to contribute many more crores of rupees to the national exchequer in the years to come.

Not only machines and processes, TISTECH is working on minds too. Today people in the collieries are talking not only 'tonnes' but 'energy values' and 'ash contents'. Workers in blast furnaces are discussing 'calories' used for producing iron. In other words, a whole new philosophy is operating at Tata Steel.

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- **100°C higher hot blast temperature reduces input of coke**
- **Rs. 100 crore energy savings in the iron making stage alone**
- **Rotating chute and variable throat armour introduced to reduce coke rate**
- **Stamp charging technology introduced to produce better coke for blast furnaces**

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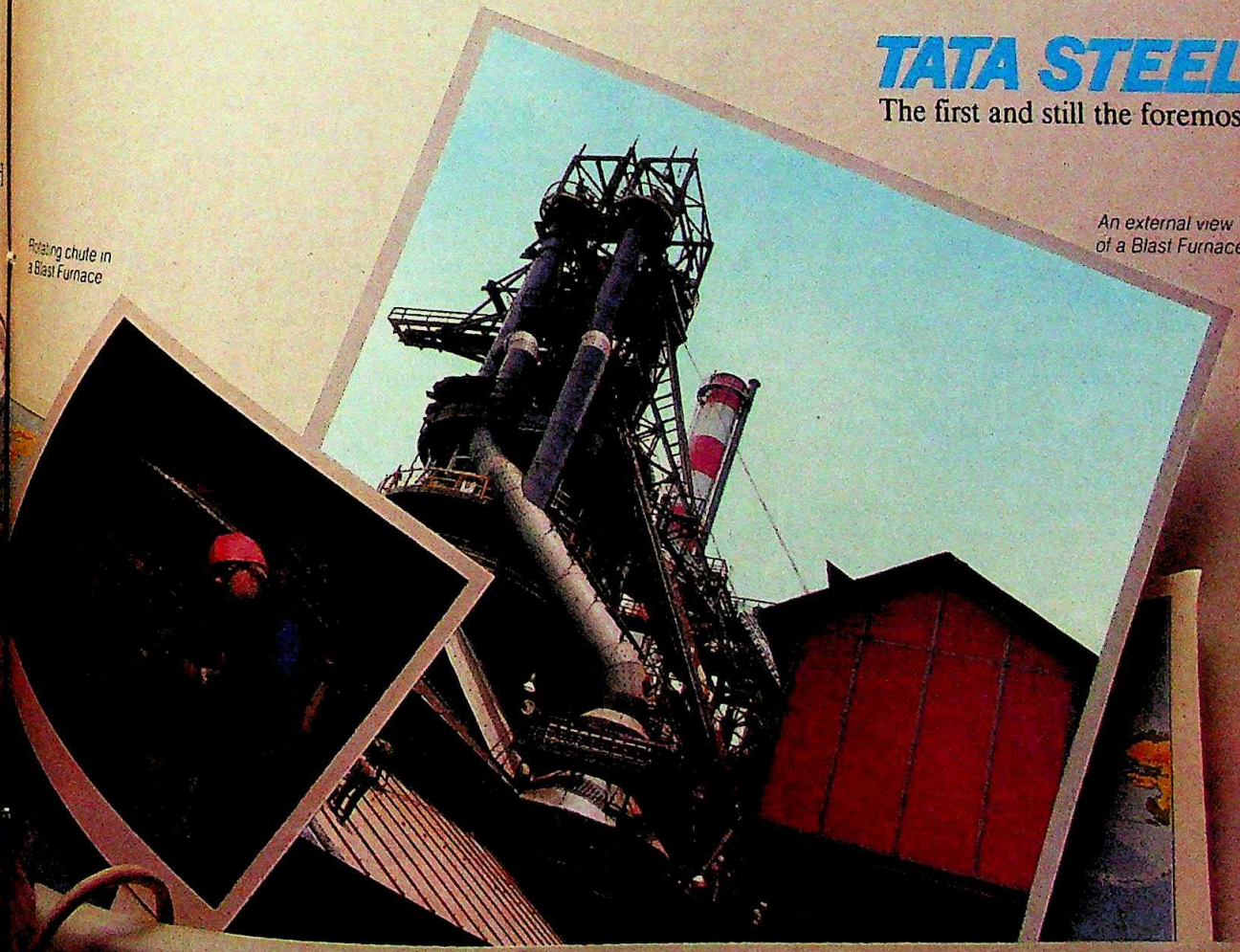

An external view of a Blast Furnace

Rotating chute in a Blast Furnace

HTA 3756

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RAJIV GANDHI

Flying Into Battle

Rajiv Gandhi is launching blistering attacks on the Opposition even as he attempts to refurbish his secular image.

In the last few months, Rajiv has criss-crossed half the country and laid foundation stones for about two dozen projects worth over Rs 8,000 crore.

WHIRLWIND trips to different parts of the country and the regular laying of foundation-stones in the months before the elections have been a political ritual for most prime ministers. Faced with a gritty battle ahead, Rajiv Gandhi is conforming to this practice with a new fierceness. Recently, he has been barnstorming the country, playing out a calculated strategy.

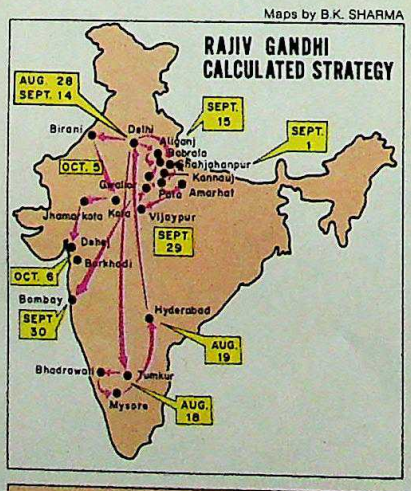
In less than six weeks, the prime minister has criss-crossed almost half the country covering over 200 Lok Sabha constituencies, addressing over 50 public meetings and laying the foundation-stones of about two dozen new projects worth over Rs 8,000 crore. He has also

Says Mulayam Singh Yadav, Uttar Pradesh Janata Dal chief: "Like his mother he has launched the election campaign on predictable lines, misusing public funds for purely political purposes." The ruling party, not surprisingly, has a different explanation. Says Ghulam Nabi Azad, AICC(I) general secretary: "The prime minister always liked to be amongst the people and Congress(I) workers. That is perhaps the most effective way of getting the feedback not only on the party but also on the implementation of the government schemes."

Undoubtedly, a well-defined objective underlies Rajiv's forays into the countryside. His visits were mostly confined to the Hindi heartland where he faces major threats from the BJP and the Janata Dal. Last month, he visited Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. The states were chosen after careful planning and the target audience was defined. While it was the slum dwellers in Maharashtra—in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the peasantry was the primary target.

A scrutiny of Rajiv's speeches during such tours points to the thorough homework done by his campaign managers to apprise him of the issues involved in the politics of the different states. The target for his attack varies, from the BJP in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat to the Janata Dal in Uttar Pradesh. If he promises a new package for the farmers in Rajasthan, assurances are given to the slum dwellers of Dharavi in Bombay that their living conditions would be improved.

Maps by B.K. SHARMA



In six weeks, Rajiv has addressed 50 meetings and covered 200 constituencies.

On October 5, he laid the foundation-stone for the Rs 103-crore Sidhmukh irrigation project at Birani in the Ganganagar district of Rajasthan. He told a rally that in the Parliament session beginning later in the month a package programme for farmers would be announced. Next day, hopping over to Gujarat, he accused V.P. Singh of opposing the Narmada river project, warning his audience that they could vote for the Opposition but at the risk of the dam project being reviewed. Interestingly, a day before Singh had clarified that with Rs 700 crore having already been spent on the project, it should be completed. Tempting the predominantly agricultural Rajasthan with the hope of a bonanza for the farmers he sought to politicise what was essentially an ecological controversy.

Briefed about the new grounds the BJP had gained in Gujarat, he charged the party with instigating communal violence and working for the 'Hindu Rashtra'. Shrewdly, he punctuated this attack on the BJP with an occasional praise for the communists. To keep the Opposition somehow divided is his major objective. He asked: "But why are the CPI and CPI(M) silent (on the proposed BJP-Janata Dal poll alignment)?" While he claims that many promises would be realised if the Congress(I) wins, Rajiv warns that there will be only chaos and confusion if the Opposition gets voted to power.

Addressing a public meeting at

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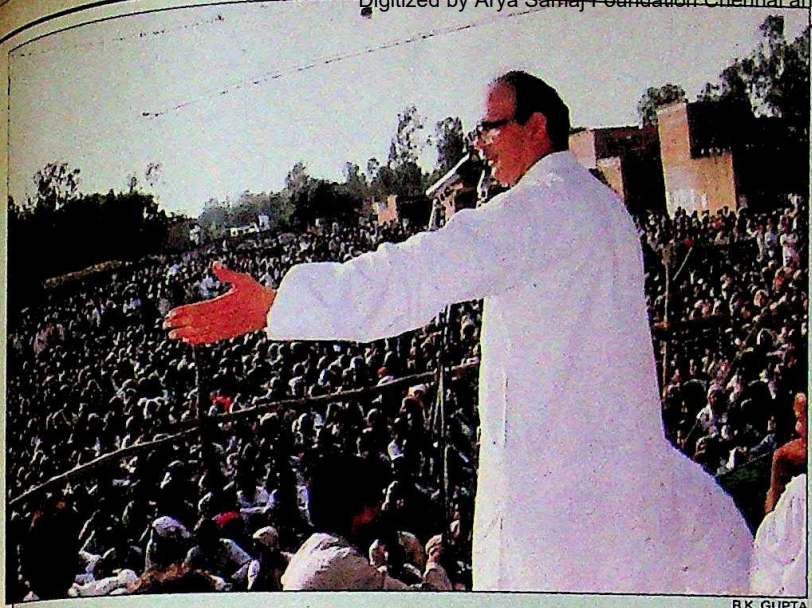


R.K. GUPTA

Singh addressing a rally: rapport

V.P. SINGH

Tenacious Campaign

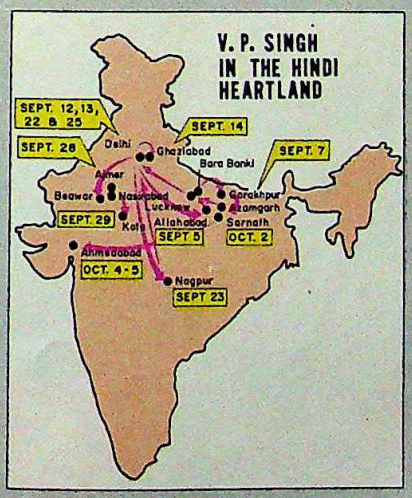
Visits to four states and 50 Lok Sabha constituencies in the Hindi belt. An endless series of rallies—of tribals, students, farmers and workers. And confabulations with leaders of his own and opposition parties. All in the space of one month. It is clearly campaign time for Janata Dal President Vishwanath Pratap Singh. Said he: "Removing the Rajiv Gandhi Government is the biggest challenge of my life. And all my energies are now being channelled to achieve that objective."

It's a tough objective. The odds are heavily against him. Pitted against him is the gargantuan might of the Government and the formidable power of the electronic media. At the same time, he has to reckon with the squabbling among various pressure groups in the Janata Dal. Yet Singh remains unfazed—pushing ahead with grit and rugged tenacity.

His rival used aeroplanes and helicopters—in themselves, successful crowd-pullers. Singh employed humbler means. In his own home state, Uttar Pradesh, he used a bicycle. The aim was obvious: to identify himself with the toiling masses. And the crowds responded. As they did to his puns and biting ridicule. Singh did not denounce Rajiv Gandhi. Nor did he hurl vituperation against Doordarshan. He preferred to call it "jhoothdarshan" or "Rajiv Darshan". The effect was more devastating. And instead of long-winded speeches, he threw questions to his audience who delighted in answering them. The rapport which the dialogue established was excellent.

The strategy was evident all through the last month. In a hectic one-month spell of campaigning beginning September 5, Singh participated in 17 big rallies including an excruciating bicycle rally in western Uttar Pradesh immediately after which he fell ill.

The first round of rallies was in eastern Uttar Pradesh. The state, Singh knows, could possibly decide the outcome of the elections. Even more, it could set the mood for the entire Hindi belt. Not surprisingly, he singled it out for special attention. And the move seemed to have paid off. The public response was impressive and political observers are already talking of a "VP wave" raging through the state.



During the past month, V.P. Singh addressed 17 rallies and visited four states.

After the first round of campaigning, he hopped to the capital on September 12 to address a lunch-time meeting of government employees along with BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee. It was a lethal combination—Vajpayee's oratory with Singh's question-and-answer dialogue with the audience.

The next day, it was the leftists who came in for attention. Singh, along with Devi Lal, held talks with West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, known to be the most pragmatic of the Marxist leaders. The objective: an electoral adjustment including both the left and the right that would confront the ruling Congress(I) with a single candidate in every constituency.

Next stop: Nagpur, where Singh addressed several rallies. Back in Delhi, Singh, with a galaxy of opposition leaders excluding the CPI(M), addressed a mammoth rally to celebrate Haryana Chief Minister Devi Lal's birthday.

Then, on to Rajasthan for a two-day tour along with Devi Lal. The rise in the prices of sugar and other essential commodities formed a major feature of his attack on the Government here.

Sarnath was next on the itinerary. The occasion: the centenary celebration of Acharya Narendra Dev, doyen of the socialist movement in India. And finally, a trip to Gujarat.

Indeed, Singh is like a man possessed—who believes that his destiny is to fight. And though his adversary has sophisticated weaponry at his disposal, Singh is slowly discovering that it can cut both ways.

Doordarshan, for instance. For Rajiv Gandhi, it provides access to a nationwide audience. And since fair play is not an article of faith with the ruling party, Singh can be freely attacked without fear of retaliation. But that very lack of restraint has boomeranged. An overkill of propaganda against Singh on Doordarshan has aroused, at the very minimum, curiosity, and often, sympathy for him. Unwittingly, the Government media has made a martyr out of him.

Also, unlike Rajiv Gandhi, Singh has neither VIP admirers nor rings of security personnel who prevent him from reaching out to the people. In the end, that could make a crucial difference.

—BHASKAR ROY

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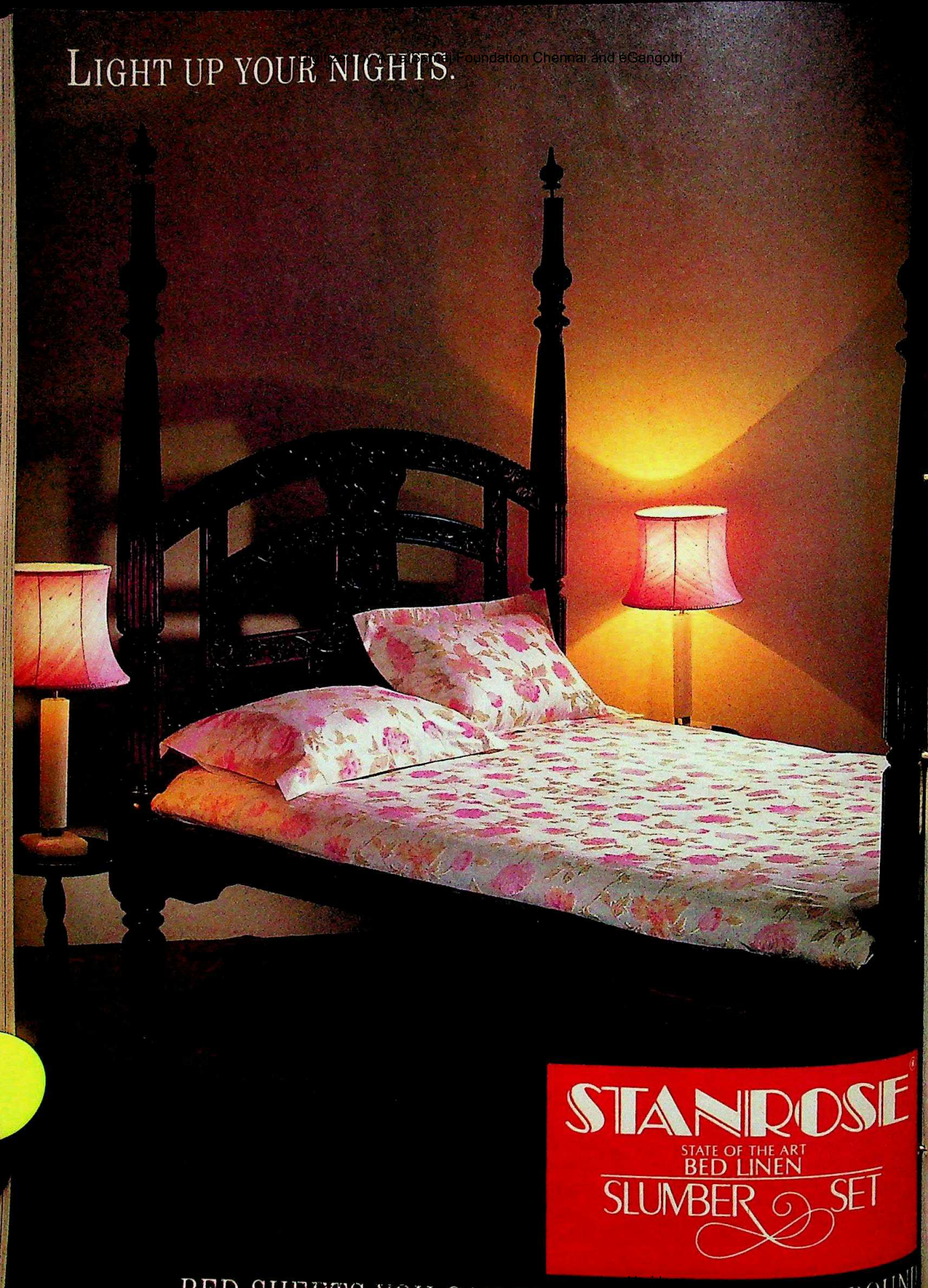

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Sanjay Photographers

Rajiv at Ambaji temple; laying the stone for a petrochemical project

Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh, he threatened the traders with stern action if they failed to check prices of essential commodities. Moving at great pace, the prime minister, during a two-day visit to Madhya Pradesh at the end of September, covered 12 constituencies. And in a spurt of public relations, he visited an ailing Mother Teresa in a Calcutta nursing home and former cricket star Lala Amarnath at New Delhi's Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital.

Rajiv's entire campaign strategy has been elaborately chalked out by a team comprising both bureaucrats and party functionaries. Immediately after the opposition members resigned en masse from the Lok Sabha, the AICC(I) decided that the prime minister should address a rally in every revenue division of the country. Even some experts were consulted for the kind of campaign Rajiv should spearhead. The prime ministerial think-tank was impressed by the fact that despite the certain edge the Democrat challenger Michael Dukakis had maintained in the beginning of the last US presidential election, George Bush surged ahead with an aggressive negative campaign attacking his opponent. AICC(I) General Secretary V. N. Gadgil admits: "Our campaign will be both negative and positive."

As the strategy unfolds, it seems the thrust is more on attacking the Opposition. The party bosses have realised that none of the much publicised programmes like the Panchayati Raj and Jawahar Rozgar Yojana is selling as well as was expected. So, the new strategy is: offence is the best defence. They know that the battle will be won even before the polling day if the Opposition can be kept divided. The communalism issue has become a useful weapon for Rajiv. With this one stone he is hoping to kill several birds—bring back the Muslims to the Congress-fold, drive a wedge into the Opposition and refurbish his own secular image.

Even in clearing the projects for which the prime minister is laying the foundation-stones in different states, norms are being increasingly relaxed. Two major petrochemical projects—Auriya of the Gas Authority of India Ltd and the Gujarat project of the Indian Petrochemicals Ltd—were cleared in just 48 hours to facilitate Rajiv's pre-election campaign. The two projects involved an investment of Rs 4,000 crore.

While sharpening the attack on his rivals, Rajiv still seems to believe in the efficacy of the carrot. In a bid to impress the rural electorate about the benefits of Panchayati Raj he has recently written a letter directly to the village sarpanchs intimating them about the schemes and projects for which the panchayats will receive finance. A controversy erupted when the Haryana Chief Minister Devi Lal, incensed by what he felt was an effort by the prime minister to bypass the state governments and interfere in their affairs, blocked the delivery of the letters. The promises made by Rajiv during campaigning are rarely kept:

- Haryana is yet to receive the Rs 1,500-crore oil refinery at Karnal which he promised before the June 1987 assembly elections. His assurance that the Sutlej-Yamuna Link canal would be completed for drawing the state's share of the Ravi-Beas waters still remains unfulfilled.
- He pledged additional projects worth Rs 1,000 crore to Jammu and Kashmir after his accord with Farooq Abdullah. So far, the state has received only Rs 150 crore.
- Out of a promised Rs 100 crore for slum development in Maharashtra, the state has received only Rs 35 crore.

But promises not kept is no deterrent to making fresh ones. So Rajiv moves from place to place holding out visions of the manna to come. Hoping that in the wild hyperbole that marks electioneering he will be forgiven the past, and be given a new lease for the future.

—BHASKAR ROY

Slab Spree

Rajiv lays foundation-stones on:

August 18: for a medical college at Tumkur and a beedi workers' colony at Mysore—both in Karnataka.

August 28: of Haj Manzil, Delhi.

September 1: of a Rs 695-crore fertiliser plant at Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh.

September 15: of pagasse-based newsprint factory at Aliganj, a fertiliser complex at Babrala, a road bridge at Pinhat Ghat, and the Rs 2,000-crore Auriya gas complex at Pata—all in Uttar Pradesh.

September 29: of M.P. Petrochemicals complex at Vijaypur, Madhya Pradesh.

October 5: of Sidhmukh canal at Birani and a benefication plant of the Rajasthan State Mines and Minerals Limited at Jhamarkota—both in Rajasthan.

October 6: of Rs 2,290-crore integrated gas cracker project of the Indian Petrochemicals Corporation at Dehej and a TV glass shell project of GNFC at Borkhadi—both in Gujarat.

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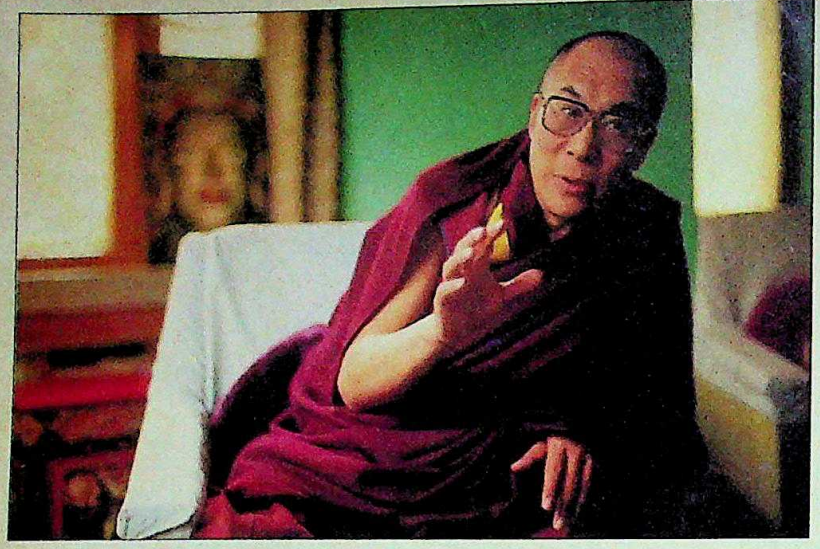

PHOTOGRAPH: CHARANJIT SINGH BAGGA

DALAI LAMA

The Politics of Peace

The Nobel Peace prize awarded to the Dalai Lama is an honour long overdue. But in the context of China, it has also acquired a sharp political edge.

THE scene was solemn and worshipful, the only sound, the rich baritone of the robed figure seated on a colourful throne delivering a sermon. Suddenly, in mid-sentence, the sermon abruptly stopped. The congregation looked up in surprise only to discover the real reason: an insect had crawled onto the lap of the bespectacled man on the throne. With infinite care, he manoeuvred the insect onto his finger, gently blew it into the air and watched it land safely on the floor with a broad smile on his face. Only then did he realise that the audience—many who had trekked hundreds of miles to hear his words of wisdom—was anxiously waiting for him to resume his sermon. "But this was more important than what I had to tell you," he exclaimed and immediately burst into loud laughter.

That one incident is more illustrative of the man who is worshipped by 6 million people as the 'living Buddha' than any of his philosophical discourses or his prodigious religious writings. In the most serious of situations, he bubbles over with laughter. Interspersed with his teachings on Buddhism, is his homespun philosophy. "If you believe these teachings, put them into practice," he once told an audience, adding, "if not, forget them." Revered by Tibetans as the reincarnation of Chen-Rezi, the God of Mercy, he calls himself "a simple Buddhist monk".

That unique mixture of humility and responsibility, preacher and reluctant politician, was nowhere more in evidence than last fortnight when the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize amid a storm of protest from China, the country that invaded Tibet in 1950, forcing Tenzin Gyatso, 54, the 14th Dalai Lama, into exile in India. Asked for his reaction, his answer was typical of the man. "My case is nothing special," he said, reiterating, "I am just a simple Buddhist monk. Nothing more. Nothing less."

Clearly, the Nobel Peace Prize Committee doesn't think so. Nor do the thousands of people across the world who hailed the decision and added to the wild celebration and all-night dancing in Dharamsala, or 'Little Lhasa', the hill resort in Himachal Pradesh that houses the Tibetan government-in-exile.

The Dalai Lama himself clearly was not expecting to be so honoured. When the announcement was made, he was in California attending a conference (*see interview*). But to the world, it was a recognition long overdue. As an apostle of peace and an inspiration to his people—and the international community—the Dalai Lama occupies a unique niche. *The Wall Street Journal* in an editorial, termed the award a "Nobel for the oppressed".

That is precisely what gives this year's award a bold political tint. The reaction from Beijing, terming it "interference in China's internal affairs", aroused speculation that the prize committee—a six-member group of Norwegian statesmen and academics—was making a political statement regarding China's crackdown on the pro-democracy movement.

Perhaps emboldened by the award and widespread acclamation, the Dalai Lama also used the occasion to denounce the Chinese leadership in harsher terms than he normally employs. Charging the People's Republic with "practising a form of genocide", he declared: "Tibetans today face the real possibility of elimination as a people and a nation."

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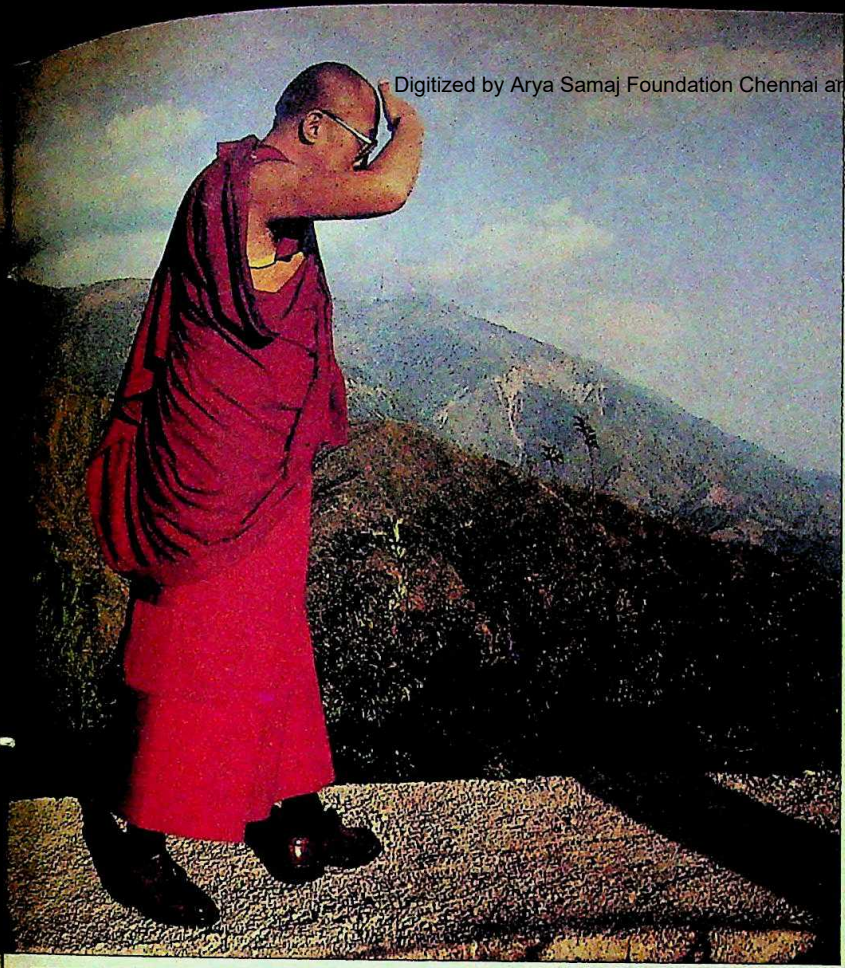

That uncharacteristic outburst, however, was also a testimonial to the shrewdness and skill with which he has played his other, lesser-known role: that of a political leader to 1.25 lakh exiles, the refugees the world likes to forget. Now, suddenly, the Tibetan question was resurrected on the front pages of the world's press, brought more sharply into focus by the global revulsion against the massacre at Tiananmen Square last June. China's violation of human rights in Tibet, largely ignored by most governments because of China's superpower status, was back as a live international issue.

To many, therefore, the recognition afforded to the 14th Dalai Lama, a line of succession that stretches back 600 years, was equally a tribute to his humanity as it was to the skill with which he has negotiated the diplomatic tightrope he has been forced to walk ever since he fled Tibet 30 years ago. Successive Indian governments have unofficially barred him from playing a political role or making any political statements from Indian soil.

Yet, such is his standing as a respected

■ **(Clockwise from below) The Dalai Lama at a religious ceremony; in his office in Dharamsala; and taking a walk**

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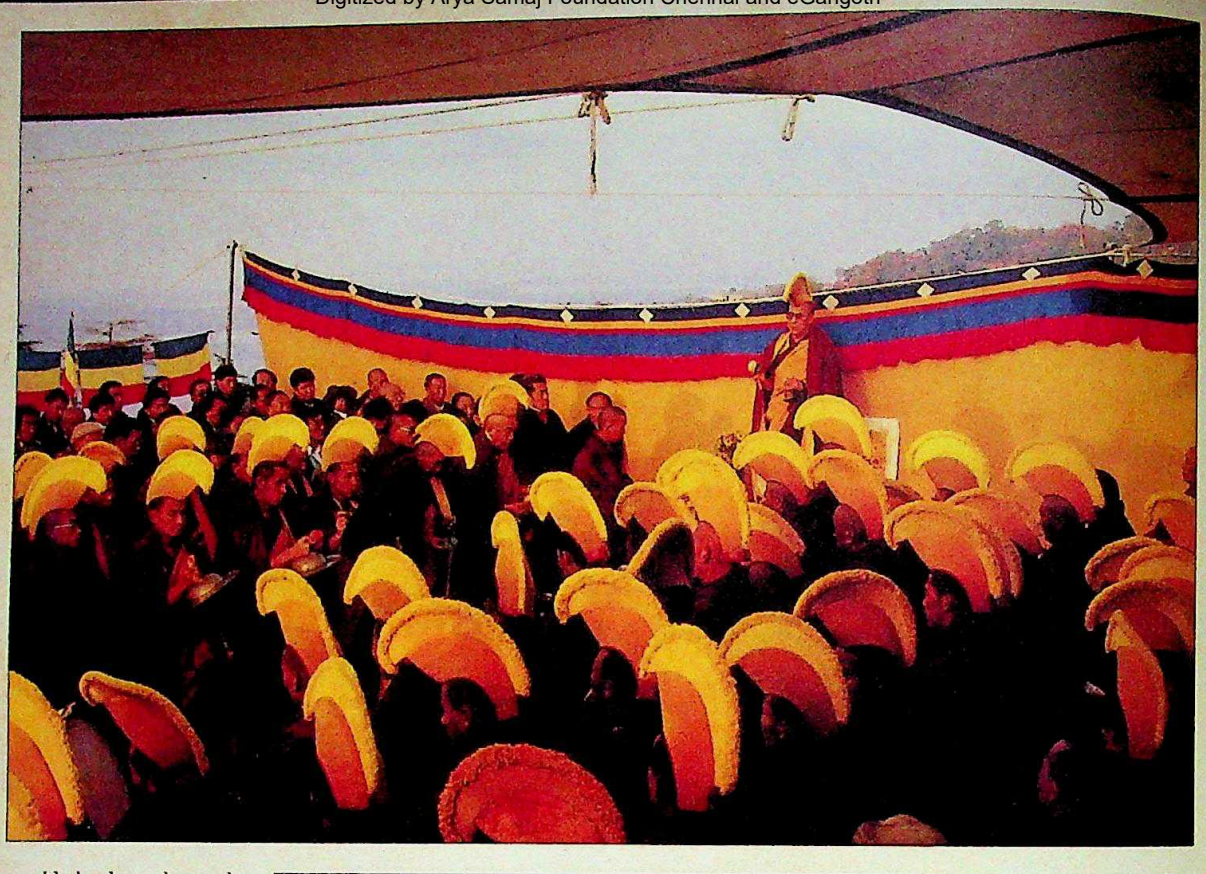
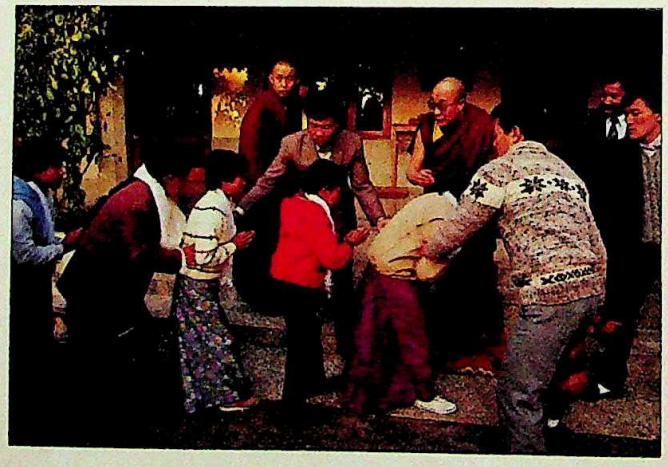


world leader—the only true heir to the mantle of the Mahatma who has been his inspiration—that in his own quiet and subtle way, the Dalai Lama has managed to wear his political hat with unobtrusive success. His steadfast stand on non-violence and the search for "peaceful solutions based on mutual respect" has harnessed the militant and restive Tibetan youth who would like him to play a more activist role on the Tibetan question.



■ **Dalai Lama addressing a congregation (top); people paying their respects**

But his adroit combination of western politicking and serene eastern mysticism has allowed his voice to be more forcefully heard. In the last two years, the Dalai Lama has been touring world capitals, lobbying the US Congress for his 'Peace Zone' plan or pressing for the compromise solution he enunciated at the European Parliament in Strasbourg in 1987—in exchange for ultimate Chinese sovereignty over Tibet and control of defence and foreign policy, the region would be granted internal autonomy.

Thus, to the majority of Tibetans and the worldwide followers of the Buddhist faith (including luminaries like Hollywood actor Richard Gere), the Dalai Lama has, in the circumstances, fulfilled his standing as "Protector of the Land of Snows", keeping alive the spirit of his ancient theocracy in Dharamsala where thousands of Buddhists converge to pay him homage and cherish his homilies.

It is here, in Dharamsala, among his own people and sustained by the spirituality which surrounds him, that Tenzin Gyatso reveals his real self, a man whose unassuming humanity and shrewd mind have coalesced to produce a truly extraordinary human being. Down to earth yet quixotic, he is a leader who sustains his mission in life with a bubbling vitality and self-deprecatory humour.

Last year, reminiscing about his early life in Tibet, he told INDIA TODAY: "In Tibet, whenever I saw farmers taking herds of sheep or yaks to the butcher, I would send my representative to buy the animals and send them to a special farm where they could live for the rest of their lives. I had bought more than 20,000 animals like this." And then that frothy humour surfaces: "Here, being a poor refugee, the best thing I can do is to close my eyes and recite 'mani' (prayers) for them. Don't you think 'mani' is more effective than money?" He spends his day reading, writing or in meditation. In between, he indulges in his favourite hobbies, gardening and gadgetry.

To his people, he may be the absolute spiritual and temporal head of Tibet. But at heart, he has remained a humble if

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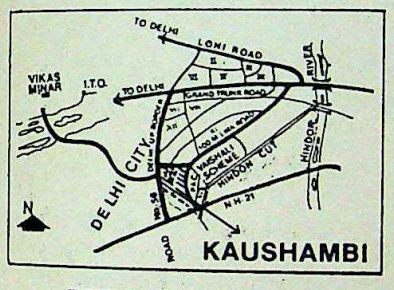

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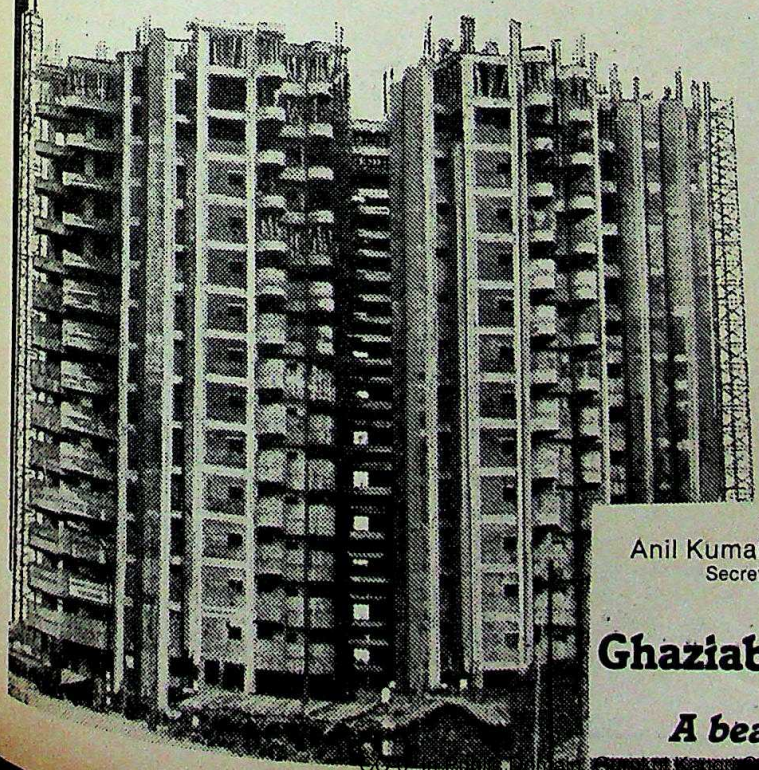

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charismatic Buddhist monk who loves laughter and the rustic simplicity of his home in exile. Even when flying abroad on his frequent diplomatic missions, he prefers to fly economy class, despite the fact that he is afforded the status of a head of state. Had China's ruthless suppression of the Tibetan uprising in March 1959 not taken place, the modern world would perhaps have seen a different Dalai Lama enjoying the powers due to a monarch, a pope, a dictator and a president, as his predecessors once did.

The Dalai Lama's innate humility is testimony to his humble origins. Born in a cowshed in the obscure farming village of Takster 54 years ago, Tenzin Gyatso was two years old when a party of monks arrived at his door led by Kewtsand Rinpoche, a senior lama of Lhasa's Sera Monastry. They were a search party, decreed by Tibetan tradition, to find a successor to the 13th Dalai Lama who had died in 1933. They had been led there by a series of auspicious signs and symbols.

THE two-year-old boy was shown an array of objects from which he unerringly identified the late Dalai Lama's eating bowl, spectacles, walking stick and other personal items. He also displayed the physical characteristics of a Dalai Lama. Taken in procession to Lhasa, he was installed in Potala Palace to undertake an 18-year course in metaphysics. In February 1940, he was installed on the Dalai Lama's Lion Throne. Though he remained a playful little boy with a mischievous streak, by the age of seven he was leading prayers before 2,000 monks. At the age of 15, he was plunged into international politics when Chinese forces invaded Tibet and he went to Beijing to negotiate with Mao Zedong. In 1959, disguised as a soldier, he travelled across the mountains of his beloved homeland to exile in India.

Even now, his self-deprecating attitude stands as a testament to his will and his inner strength. "Thanks to China, I am the first Dalai Lama to be interviewed by BBC or the world media," he chuckles, adding in a more sober vein, "but this is the darkest and the most crucial phase in the history of Tibet. That is why the present Dalai Lama has become the most needed, the most useful and the saddest Dalai Lama." And none more deserving of the Nobel Peace Prize.

—DILIP BOBB with VIJAY KRANTI

INTERVIEW

"My belief in non-violence is fortified"

AS Egil Aarvik, chairman of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee announced the Nobel Peace Prize for 1989 in Oslo last fortnight, Tibetan refugee communities all over the world celebrated with prayers, cheers and 'chang' (home brewed beer). But the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, 54—recipient of the prestigious award worth 3 million Swedish kroner (Rs 7.5 million)—was his usual serene self at the California University campus in Los Angeles where he was attending an east-west foundation conference. The Dalai Lama agreed to a telephonic interview with INDIA TODAY'S VIJAY KRANTI. *Excerpts:*

Q. ***Aren't you excited about winning the world's most coveted prize?***

A. Being a monk I should not be bothered about whether I get this or that award. But I do realise this prize has been given to me in recognition of my contribution towards peace and human rights. It has fortified my belief in non-violence, although I would have continued my efforts in this direction even otherwise.

Q. ***How will this affect the Tibetan cause?***

A. It should help everyone who believes in peace. And, of course, the Tibetan cause will get a better understanding from people who were earlier unaware of it. Now that the Dalai Lama has been selected for the prize, everyone in the world would like to know what is Tibet and who is this Dalai Lama. This will give my people fresh encouragement and determination.

Q. ***How do you intend to use the prize money?***

A. I have yet to make up my mind. I have given some thought to this question and I have some good ideas too. One is that a part of the money should be spent on a good programme to alleviate hunger in the world. I am quite aware that many of my fellow refugees have yet to be settled properly and that we could not do this for want of funds in the past. Yet, I strongly believe that more than the Tibetan refugees, our brethren in Africa and other parts of the world whose existence is threatened by starvation, need attention and help immediately.

Q. ***Do you have any other plans?***

A. Yes. Another idea is that I invest a part of this money on a programme which would aim at bringing peace to the world. We need a permanent solution to hunger. And once there is peace on this earth, there is no chance of any one dying of hunger. I think it will be a good investment.

Q. ***Do you have any specific organisation in mind?***

A. There are quite a few organisations which are seriously working along these lines. One is the Peace University in Costa Rica. There are many others. Then I also think it would be a good idea to have a global programme for people's education, especially the young. It should be education on peace and preservation of the environment. People who are seriously working in this direction would be invited to evolve a common programme.

Q. ***What about peace in Tibet?***

A. In the past two years, our people have been demonstrating for their due human rights. I am happy this movement has been non-violent. Even the Chinese students' non-violent movement has given me new hope about China and Tibet.

Q. ***But the Chinese Government does not believe in what you are preaching.***

A. Unfortunately, that is true. But I have faith in the path of ahimsa which Mahatma Gandhi showed. It has always inspired me. I hope Tibet's plight will be resolved in a similar manner.

Q. ***If the Tibetan issue remains unsettled for too long, don't you think the Tibetan youth may adopt the path of violence out of frustration?***

A. To such a question my answer is quite simple: if the situation goes out of my hands or if the Tibetan freedom movement goes against my philosophy, the only thing I can do is quit. Non-violence is the only way.

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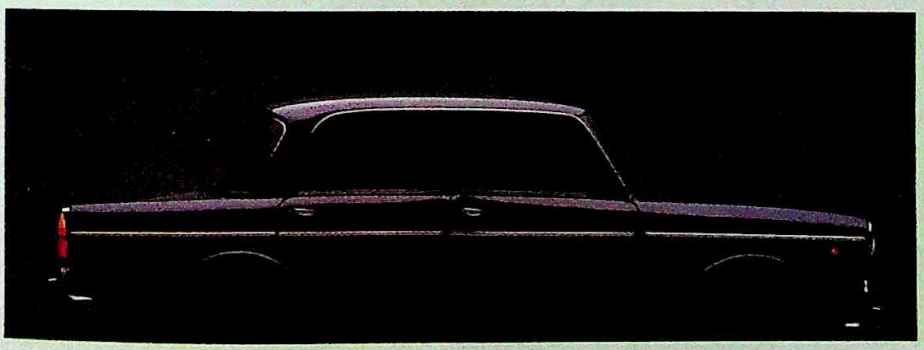

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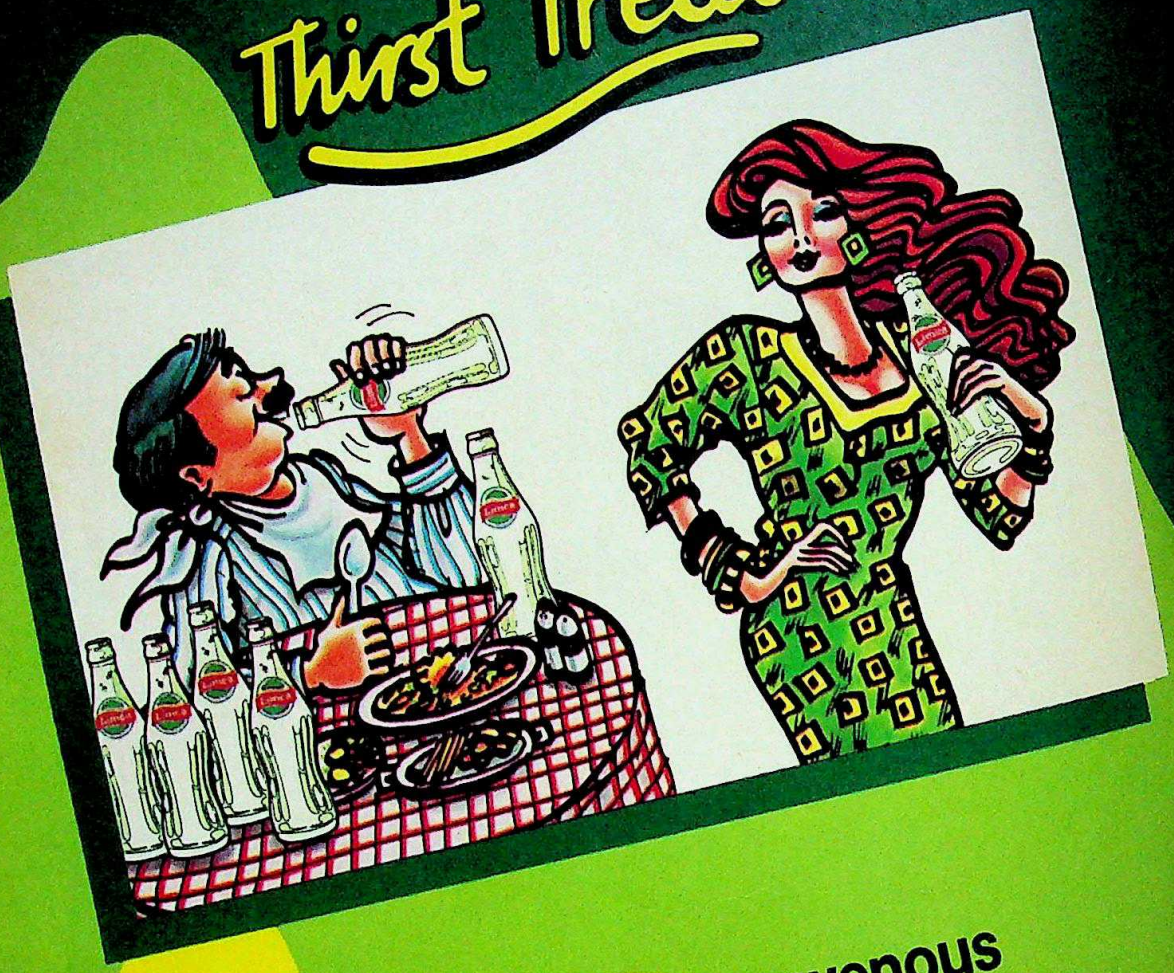

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J.F. RIBEIRO

A Disputed Legacy

As J.F. Ribeiro prepares to don diplomatic credentials in far-off Rumania, his reign in Punjab is under severe critical scrutiny. And his legacy of escalated violence finds more detractors today than votaries.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Ribeiro in the Golden Temple

THERE had been no police officer like him before. He had tamed the notorious smuggling mafia in Bombay, had throughout his career stood up to political pressure, and was known to walk taller than the 6 ft 3 in. he stood in his socks. So, when Julio Francis Ribeiro, in March 1986, came to arrest the deteriorating situation in Punjab, he was hailed with uncommon fervour.

And he did not disappoint. With transparent sincerity, flamboyant turn of phrase, and a confident, brave mien, he captivated the nation. The media too took to the man, and lionised him.

Three and a half years later, the tide has turned. Even as he prepares to don diplomatic credentials in far-off Rumania his reign is under severe critical scrutiny, with his detractors outnumbering his votaries. The Akalis who brought him to Punjab regret the decision, police officers describe him as "honest but naive", and his critics gleefully label him the "Super Flop". Even the accolades of the press have become considerably muted.

But then so has Ribeiro. As Punjab's director-general of police, he was a tough-talker and hard-fighter. He was known for his "bullet for bullet" policy, which he now denies having pronounced *(see interview)*. Though in an interview carried in the Hyderabad-based daily *Newstime* (May 6, 1986), he had said in response to a question about the bullet-for-bullet policy: "I made this statement, and I'm not going to explain to you why I did it. Go to the court and file a case if you want to."

Actually, the denial is part of the metamorphosis. Since his elevation to the rank of advisor to Governor S.S. Ray in April 1988, Ribeiro has been advocating a moderate and humane approach. Some put it down to his being a much

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misunderstood simple policeman who got carried away by the media hype around him: others declare that he is simply a big-talker who has conveniently somersaulted because of his failure to live up to his initial pledges on tackling terrorism. What no one disputes is that he leaves behind a legacy more controversial than his stay was.

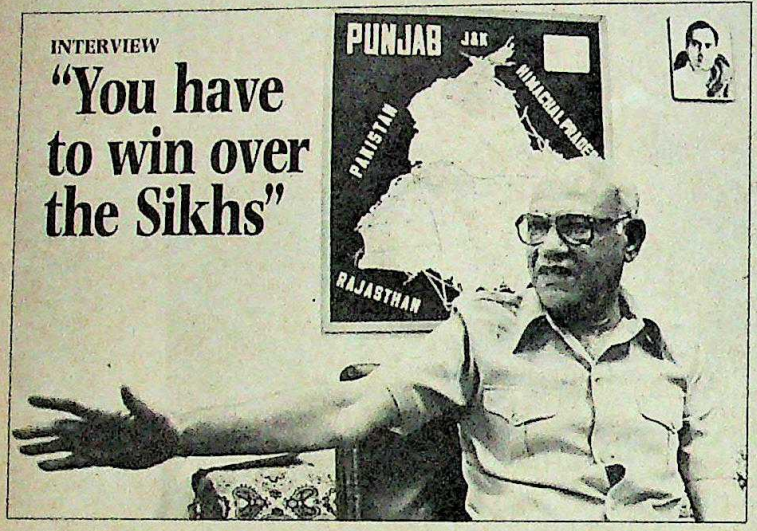
Ribeiro departs from Chandigarh a sad man. Last month, he said: "If the sufferings and miseries of the people were a little less than when I came, I would have felt happy." But that is not so. And several people hold the man himself responsible for his misery. Ribeiro came to Punjab with no experience of tackling terrorism, nor even a rudimentary knowledge of the state's people. He was a special secretary in the Home Ministry, when the Daresi Ground killings at Ludhiana on March 28 brought him to Punjab. He came in roaring. As veteran CPI leader Satpal Dang says: "Ribeiro came at a critical time and did much to improve the morale of the Punjab Police."

Sent initially only for three months to put the force in working order, he was fated to stay on and become a pivotal

BHAWAN SINGH

INTERVIEW

"You have to win over the Sikhs"



AS advisor to the governor, J.F. Ribeiro had been marginalised, shut out of the policy-making process. When Principal Correspondent KANWAR SANDHU *interviewed him a fortnight before his diplomatic assignment to Rumania was announced, the celebrated officer was not his usual self. Instead of being flamboyantly on the offensive, his reactions were defensive—as many as three times he fished out files to substantiate a point. Though articulate as ever, his demeanour had a touch of the melancholic. Excerpts:*

Q. ***What was your brief in Punjab?***

A. I was told to go there for three months to put the police force in working order and raise its morale. I never thought I'd be required to go as I had moved on to a higher rank.

Q. ***Did Barnala accept you?***

A. He was pressing for me. K.P.S. Gill's name also came up at the time. But it was for Barnala to decide.

Q. ***What was your perception of the terrorist problem at that time?***

A. When I first came, I had no experience of terrorism. It took time to realise what it meant, and to perceive it would take a long time to tackle it.

Q. ***You said then that there were 37 to 38 top terrorists—eliminate them, and there will be peace.***

A. Barnala himself gave me names of some terrorists from Gurdaspur. He said, neutralise them, the situation will change. We did, and things did change. But only for a while.

Q. ***Don't you think your 'bullet-for-bullet' call was misinspired?***

A. When seven policemen were killed at Jalandhar soon after I arrived, the press asked me what I would do. I said I'll teach the force to fight back. When somebody attacks, they should reply and take even more lives than they give. The press called it "bullet for bullet". I never used these words.

Q. ***You sought absolute powers.***

A. I did not. I only sought the power to shift and post my personnel. I do not crave for power.

Q. ***Didn't it send wrong signals?***

A. I have my way of working. If people get the wrong signals, how am I to blame? If anybody feels I am guilty of injustice, I will be very unhappy.

Q. ***How did you approach the job?***

A. I had never dealt with terrorism. But I knew how to deal with policemen, and how to motivate them. Both Gill and Chaman Lal worked well with me. I made the force fight.

Q. ***Do you agree your style eroded the civil administration's authority?***

A. This is wrong. I was always for consulting the deputy commissioners.

Q. ***That is the general impression.***

A. If IAS officers like S.P. Bagla and K.R. Lakhanpal say so, what can I do? They don't like policemen and I'm one.

Q. ***Were there covert operations?***

A. Covert operations are a part of police work, even in normal times.

Q. ***Does the law justify killing of people suspected to be terrorists?***

A. We need undercover groups to find out terrorists' movements. If they come up against each other, it's one man's life against another.

Q. ***But surely it's not so simple. You had one such group indulging in looting, and one agent killing an SSP.***

A. It is a question of control over such groups. In my tenure, they erred twice, and I disbanded both groups. I prefer not to get information, than to allow criminal acts.

Q. ***What about killing of innocents?***

A. Whenever innocents suffered, we ordered magisterial inquiries and provided compensation. I have always been for winning over the people.

Q. ***What is your perception of the terrorist problem now?***

A. I am convinced that such movements last for long. They never lack recruits due to the emotional nature of the issue. It has to be tackled at the emotional level. You must go for terrorists, but ensure there is no injustice to people. You have to win over the Sikhs. We must be moderate in our approach and not be in a hurry.

Q. ***Was your stay satisfactory?***

A. People's expectations were too high. They expected me to end terrorism, which was impossible.

Q. ***You built expectations.***

A. All I said was that we'll fight: put terrorism under manageable limits. The thing that makes me most sad is that some thought that I was here to suppress Sikhs. I wouldn't dream of that. It's not in my nature. It's never happened in my earlier postings. I can't believe it.

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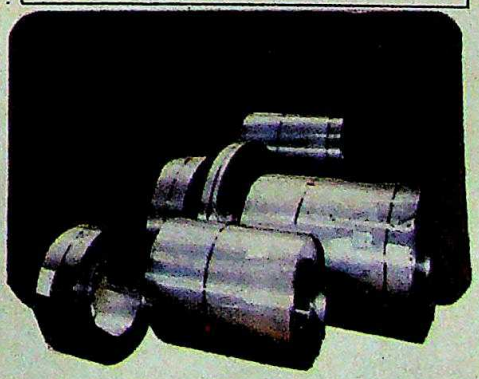

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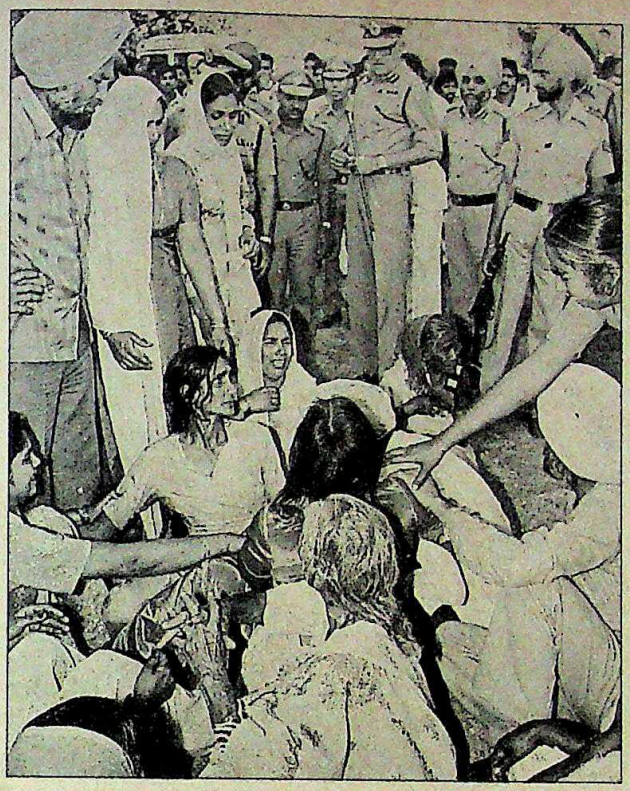
figure in the unfurling of Punjab's destiny over the next few years. His style of functioning created schisms in the shaky Barnala government. Ministers accused him of "oneupmanship". Finance minister Balwant Singh wrote to Barnala stating that his policy of "police absolutism had no place in a democratic set up". The letter was prompted by Ribeiro's interview to INDIA TODAY (May 15, 1987) in which he'd said that duality of control hampered anti-terrorist efforts, and had declared: "In an abnormal situation like this, I should have the powers of an army chief."

And he got them. In May 1987, President's Rule was imposed. But no dramatic improvements resulted. Criticised then MLA Jasdev Singh: "Since he attributed his failures to interference by jathedars, how does he explain the worsened situation now?" True, Ribeiro's shooting from the hip and mouth made little dent in the law and order situation. When he took over, the police records showed a total of 101 hardcore terrorists. In April 1988, when he handed over charge to K.P.S. Gill, the number had gone up to 178, even though during his tenure more than 800 suspected terrorists were killed by the police.



Ribeiro symbolised the state's stand against separatist forces, and he is the one who has given these forces a dangerous and indefinite impetus.

The march of events has shown that Ribeiro's initial functioning betrayed a poor understanding of the terrorist problem in Punjab. He escalated the level of violence, and started the system of huge rewards—even Rs 1 lakh—for wanted terrorists which gave the terrorists a new sense of importance. The immediate aim of all terrorists is publicity—good or bad. Ribeiro gave them plenty. Meantime, the dangerous consequences of rhetoric unsupported by statecraft began to tell. The feeling grew among Sikhs that he was out to suppress them.

Ribeiro's style also discomfited the civil servants. "He upstaged the IAS," says a joint secretary. He claimed a higher status vis-a-vis other IAS officers, leading to quibbling. And he developed an exaggerated sense of importance. In a letter to the governor in September 1987, over his lower placing in the officers' order of precedence, he wrote: "It was unfair on the people that for the last few days I have been mulling over such personal injustice." Ribeiro had severe problems with two senior IAS officers, S.P. Bagla and K.R. Lakhanpal. Bagla, in April 1987 as the secretary, information and broadcasting, had warned against the dangers of the Ribeiro policy.

TODAY as the tide turns, the policy of rapprochement he has been recently advocating fetches criticism. "Why did he not undertake it during his two years as DGP?" asks an officer. Barnala is more charitable, saying: "He tried to do more than he should have." But former MP, Captain Amarinder Singh, is unsparing: "Ribeiro's faulty policy of repression abetted terrorism."

The death knell of Ribeiro's era was rung with the successful completion of Operation Black Thunder. K.P.S. Gill came into the limelight, and his understanding of the situation impressed everyone. Ray started depending more on Gill and Ribeiro began to be shut out of the policy-making process in a manner that was humiliating. The fall-out of Ribeiro's eclipse was that his contact with the public and IAS officers increased, giving him a new perspective. Deprived of power, he began to see what lay on the other side of the fence and his attitudes softened. The turnabout became clear when he recommended that four IPS officers against whom he had received reports of corruption be shifted. Gill resented this. The governor asked Ribeiro to lay off the Police Department. His recommendations went unheeded.

Today, police officers are divided on his contribution to the police working in Punjab. Says an IG: "Only a tough-talking policeman like him could pull the police out from the slough of despondency in 1986." Others feel that Ribeiro's advocation of the "Chaman Lal Line" after the latter had differences with Gill, resulted in confusion in police functioning. Strident criticism has also come Ribeiro's way for the covert operations he initiated in Punjab and the unconstitutional means he adopted. District level officers say methods like elimination of terrorists after their arrest too received a new thrust during Ribeiro's tenure. Ribeiro, of course, denies this, declaring: "I have done no wrong. I stand responsible for what I did." Ribeiro is also criticised for not making structural changes in the state police, once he had realised that it was going to be a long-term battle.

During a talk at the IAS academy at Mussoorie last year, Ribeiro had compared terrorists to man-eaters. An officer, pursuing his analogy, said Ribeiro's response was that of an improvident hunter: "With his tall-talk and rough-shod policing he has left countless wounded—making them potential man-eaters." Ribeiro's legacy in the final count is one of tragic-irony: he is the one man who symbolised the state's stand against separatist forces, and he is the one who has given these forces a dangerous and indefinite impetus.

—KANWAR SANDHU

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ELECTIONS

Guessing Game

Speculation on simultaneous assembly polls

"WE will go along with what the chief ministers want."

—Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on being asked about the possibility of holding simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the state assemblies.

IN politics, the most innocuous and noncommittal of statements can trigger off intense speculation. Particularly if it is made by a prime minister, and more so if it deals with elections. So when Rajiv Gandhi made that guarded reply to a reporter's query in Bombay last fortnight, he set the cat loose among the political pigeons. Immediately, electoral arithmetic was being redone and new equations were emerging as political pundits tried coming to terms with the possibility—howsoever remote—of elections to Parliament and the assemblies taking place simultaneously.

The last time this happened was in 1967. Though officers at the Election Commission's headquarters in New Delhi's Nirvachan Sadan dismiss talk of simultaneous elections as nothing more than mere conjecture, Congressmen are taking the possibility far more seriously. The pros and cons of such an exercise are being carefully weighed by ruling party strategists. And many of Rajiv's advisors are doing their utmost to convince the prime minister of the wisdom of the idea.

Simultaneous polls, many Congressmen believe, will unleash a fresh wave of infighting within the Janata Dal. As it is, opposition unity hangs by a thin thread—which will be snapped by the renewed burst of infighting. Explains a Congress(I) leader: "They may somehow manage to distribute Lok Sabha tickets, leaving a big chunk for other opposition parties with whom they have seat adjustments. But they can't manage to peacefully distribute 2,000 assembly tickets." Factionalism in the Janata Dal, he predicts, will take on ugly proportions with the various group leaders jumping at each other's throats to ensure their candidates' nomination.

The ruling party's design is clear: renewed infighting means that the Janata Dal leaders, particularly the Congress(I)'s *bete noire* V.P. Singh, will get bogged down in taking fire-fighting measures. This would leave principal crowd-pullers like Singh and Devi Lal with little time to campaign.

There is another advantage that advocates of simultaneous polls are citing. They believe it would give Rajiv the opportunity to get rid of dissidents in the party—at both the national and the state level—at one stroke.

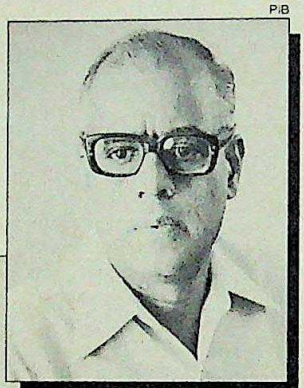
Not all Congressmen, however, support the proposal. Some believe that simultaneous polls will confuse local and national issues. And the Congress(I) strategy of presenting itself as the sole protector of national unity could misfire as issues like the nation's stability will get overshadowed by local concerns.

There is another reason for opposing the proposal. If the Lok Sabha polls are held before the assembly elections, state politicians aspiring for assembly tickets will have an incentive to campaign vigorously for the party. But once the assembly nominations are decided, many—particularly the disappointed aspirants—will take a back seat.

The political calculations apart, there are some downright practical reasons for holding the polls at the same time. While the term of the present Parliament expires on January 14, 1990, elections to as many as 17 state assemblies will be due soon after, by April 1. In fact, even before Rajiv's statement, speculation on this issue began in June this year when at a conference of chief electoral officers, the Chief Election Commissioner R.V.S. Peri Sastri, said: "General elections will have to be held in the near future for constituting a new Lok Sabha and for constituting as many as 17 legislative assemblies."

In fact, in the first annual report of the Election Commission submitted in 1983, the then chief election commissioner R.K. Trivedi had observed: "The commission is of the view that a stage has come for evolving a system by convention, if it is not possible or feasible to bring about a legislation, under which the general elections to the House of the People and legislative assemblies of the states are held simultaneously."

P.B



R.V.S. Peri Sastri

Speculation over simultaneous polls began in June when the Chief Election Commissioner R.V.S. Peri Sastri announced that both general elections and 17 assembly elections will have to be held in the near future.

If the two elections are indeed held together, the state exchequer will save about Rs 150 crore. According to the most conservative estimate, all political parties have given short shrift to the Election Commission's ceiling of Rs 1,000 crore that can be spent on a general election. With the campaign going hi-tech, expenses will skyrocket. But if the parliamentary and assembly polls are clubbed together, at least the doubling of expenses would be avoided.

Though technically the Election Commission can advance an assembly poll by six months in order to club it with the general elections, it cannot dissolve a state assembly before its term is over. But it is unlikely the commission will meet opposition on this count. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao—a prominent National Front leader—has announced that he is in favour of having polls along with the general elections. And the BJP has made simultaneous polls part of its draft election manifesto.

The Election Commission has now announced that state governments willing to hold the assembly polls along with the general elections should inform it before November 15. Eventually it is the Congress(I) chief ministers who will decide whether or not the nation will have simultaneous polls. The monetary advantages to the nation notwithstanding, the Congress(I) will only permit this if it works to the party's advantage.

—BHASKAR ROY

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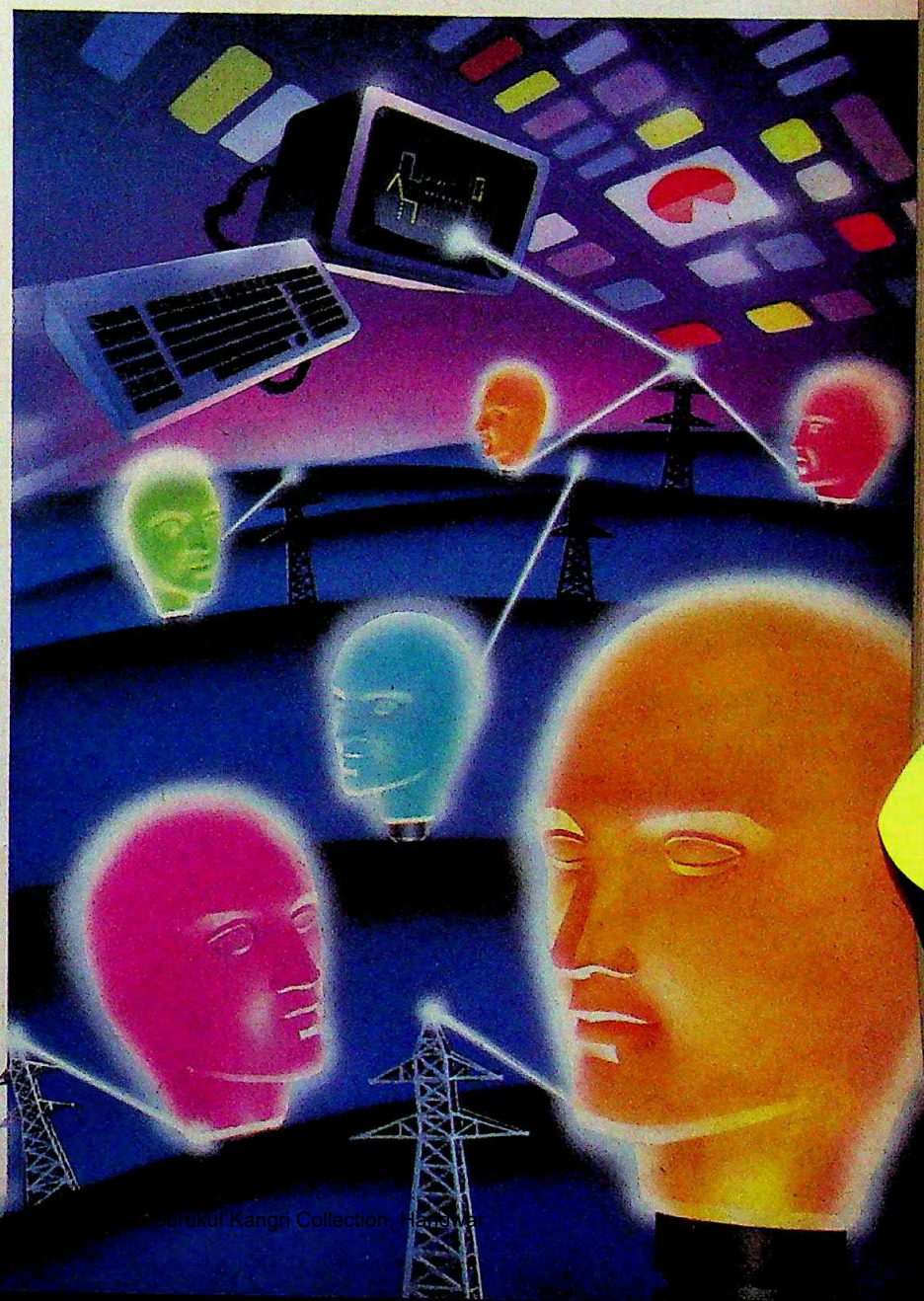

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MORARJI DESAI

Disappointing Verdict

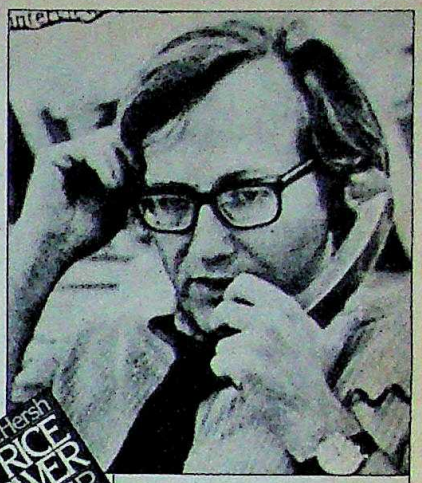
US jury acquits Seymour Hersh of libel charge

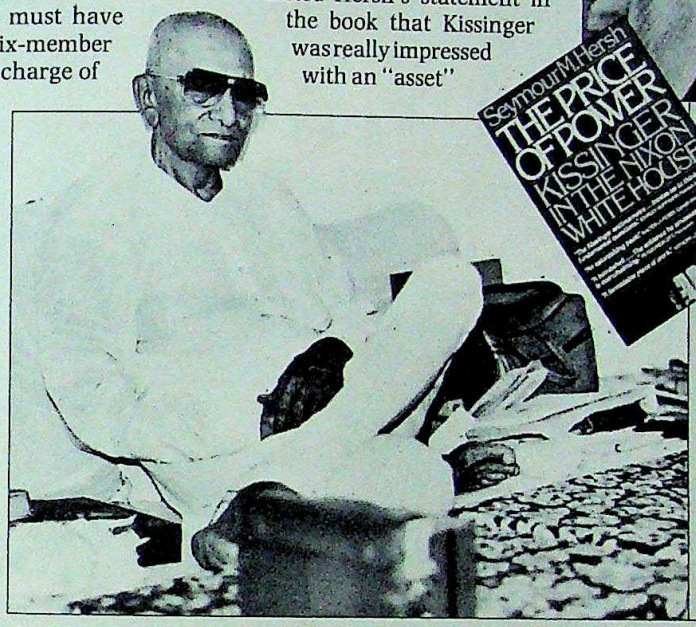
HE received the news with characteristic stoicism. But even for the austere Morarji Desai, 94-year-old former prime minister of India, the verdict delivered last fortnight by a US court on his libel suit against author-journalist Seymour Hersh, must have been a disappointment. A six-member jury acquitted Hersh of the charge of having libelled Desai by calling him a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) spy in his 1983 book, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House*.

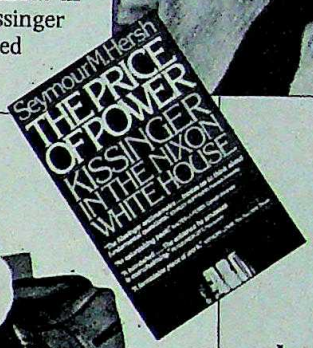
Even when the case was filed six years ago, it was clear to Desai and his Chicago-based lawyer, Cyriac D. Kappil, that the going would be tough. In the US, it is the plaintiff who has to prove that the defendant's allegations are false. Desai had to prove that he had never been a CIA "asset"—a difficult task as the agency is not in the habit of providing affidavits; that Hersh's information was false; that he had knowingly printed lies about Desai; and that he had doubts about the truth of his allegations.

"We always thought we had a good case," said a jubilant Michael Nussbaum, Hersh's attorney, "Hersh had six sources who were high officials in the US Government and each had identified Desai as a CIA agent." Hersh alleged that Desai had passed on sensitive information about Indian foreign policy and domestic politics to the CIA for $20,000 (Rs 3.4 lakh) a year during the Johnson and Nixon administrations. Desai's defence was that in the years he was said to be on the CIA's payroll, he was not in government and had no access to sensitive information. His lawyers, who'd asked for $3.5 million (Rs 5.5 crore) in damages, claimed Hersh had fabricated his notes.

Hersh's lawyers countered that a man who had won the Pulitzer Prize was unlikely to stoop so low. His case was strengthened when Federal Judge Charles Norgle Sr. ruled that while Hersh had to describe his sources, he needn't reveal them. The two weeks of courtroom drama had its high point in the unexpected appearance of Henry Kissinger. The former secretary of state testified that to his knowledge Desai was not a paid CIA informant. This contradicted Hersh's statement in the book that Kissinger was really impressed with an "asset" of Desai's stature.







Hersh (top); his book; and Desai: courtroom drama

Desai lost because US libel laws require him to conclusively prove that Hersh knew he was lying.

Neither Hersh nor Desai took the stand, though the Indian's testimony was videotaped. In it, Desai attempted to explain his philosophy of life, satyagraha and the ideals of the Bhagwad Gita. But the description of his disciplined life-style backed Hersh's lawyers' stand that Desai's life had not suffered after the book's publication—a fact which has to be established before claiming damages.

The dejected Kappil believes that they might have won if the Indian Government had been supportive. Before the book was published the then Indian ambassador to the US had gone through it and made corrections without mentioning the charge against Desai. Says Kappil: "Hersh led the jury to believe the book had the blessings of the Indian Government. When we required cooperation to challenge that, the response was not favourable."

Still, three years ago Hersh had tried for an out of court settlement. Nussbaum says he would have apologised for any trouble he might have caused Desai. And just three months ago, Hersh offered to pay lawyers' costs if a settlement was reached. "But," Nussbaum adds, "they asked for more than we were prepared to give." Kappil still believes this was a correct decision, "for if we had accepted, I would have been rich but Desai's name would still be tarnished".

Desai's son Kanti says the decision on whether to appeal would be taken later this week. But it could be a futile move. Ill-health will prevent Desai from appearing in person—a fact that could have affected the Chicago trial—and US libel laws stack the odds against him.

Meantime, Desai has repeated that Hersh's allegations were "totally baseless and wrong". In his typically self-contained manner, he is believed to have said: "My character does not change by what judges and juries think." In any case, Desai can draw consolation from the fact that few Indians believe he was a spy. Just as his Indian admirers can be comforted by the fact that as always, Morarjibhai appears completely unperturbed by the verdict. —DEEPA ARORA in Chicago and M. REHMAN in Bombay

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INDIAN AIR FORCE

Disastrous Display

Eyewitness account of aerobatics tragedy

FOR a breath-taking four minutes and 50 seconds, he held the audience spellbound. Applauding as he climbed, doing a high-G turn, a loop. Holding their breath as he did a Derry-turn, and wove a vertical figure of eight. And sighing as his nimble, delta-winged Mirage 2000 approached the parade ground, low and slow with a high-angle of attack, for the grand finale.

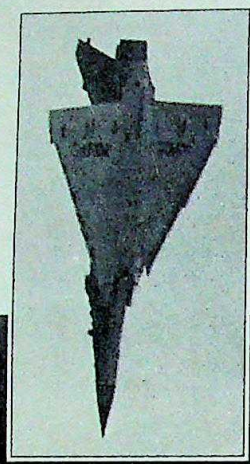
The nose cleared the front row of seats, the engine roared, flames leapt out of the afterburner, the Mirage rocketed vertically upwards, spinning as if its tail was the pivot of a top. Just as it seemed to disappear in a blur in the bright sunlit sky, Wing Commander Ramesh 'Joe' Bakshi, the 38-year-old pilot at the controls, flipped the 9.5-tonne jet on its back for the most daring feat of all: the execution of similar rolls while hurtling vertically downwards. One roll, second, third. Then, as there was a microsecond's hesitation, many among the legion of veteran aviators in the audience stood up, aghast. "What's he doing?" one shouted as the aircraft went into a fourth roll. And then it disappeared among the trees to the right of a water tank and, as everybody waited for the blast, its nose appeared for one fleeting moment over the trees. Then, an explosion, a fireball, a black mushroom cloud of smoke, flying debris, and panic.

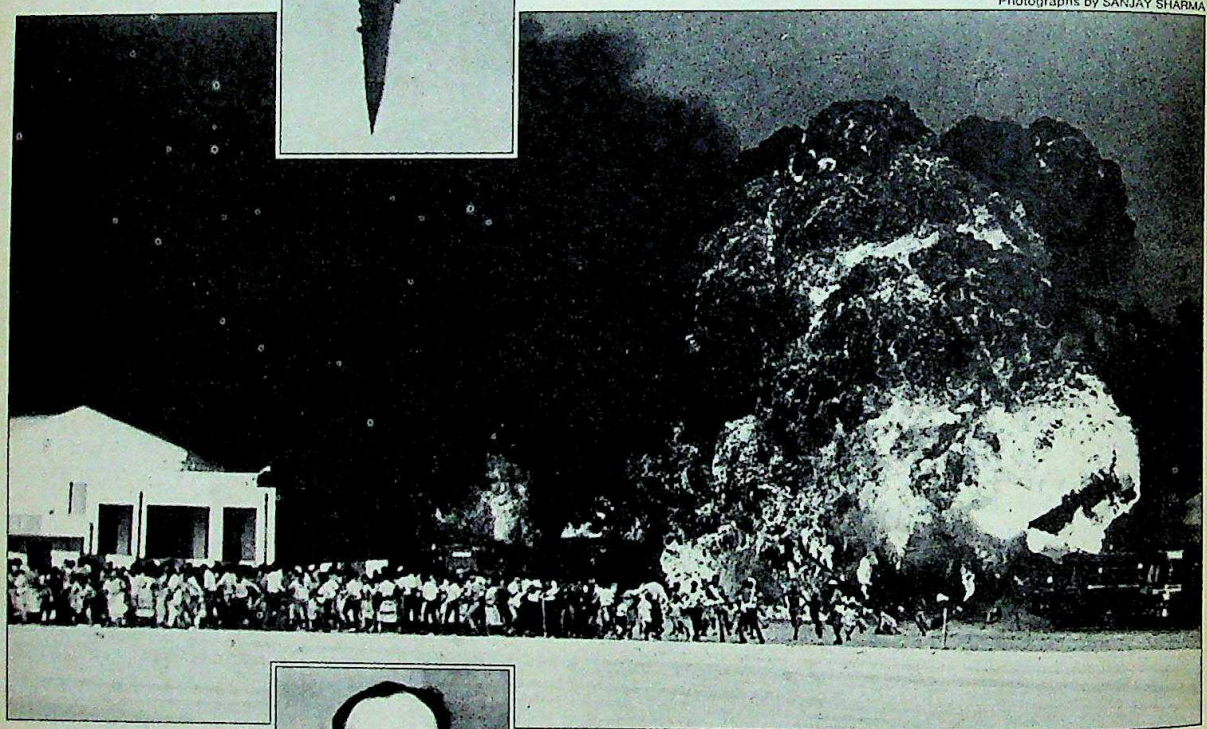
The applause turned into a cacophony of cries as thousands of people milled about in shock and confusion. The scene was surreal: many screamed, others clutched their children and rushed to the car park, even as a truck and the bus that had taken pressmen to the aerobatics display caught fire. And just when the panic began to subside, there was another explosion as the cartridges placed under the pilot's ejection seat went off, sending the crowds scurrying again. In four roller-coaster seconds, the Indian AirForce's 57th anniversary celebration at New Delhi's Palam Air Force Station on October 8 had ended in a shattering tragedy. The fires caused by the disintegrating fighter left at least a dozen persons injured—one succumbed the next day—and scores of huts in a heap of ashes.

Yet, a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions had been averted. A clump of trees and the empty building of the Movement Control Unit (MCU), which took much of the impact of the crashing jet, prevented the debris and the burning fuselage of the plane from reaching the parade ground where top brass of the armed forces and other VIPs were seated. "The tragedy here could have surpassed the destruction at Ramstein several times over," said a senior IAF officer, referring to the catastrophe that occurred last year when three aerobatic jets had crashed into a crowd of onlookers in West Germany, killing 69 of them.

How close a shave it had been was evident later as IAF experts traced the path of the Mirage's last journey. After hitting an empty patch of ground near the water tank, it bounced forward

Photographs by SANJAY SHARMA





(From top) the Mirage hurtles downwards; explodes on crashing; and Wing Commander Bakshi: tragic death

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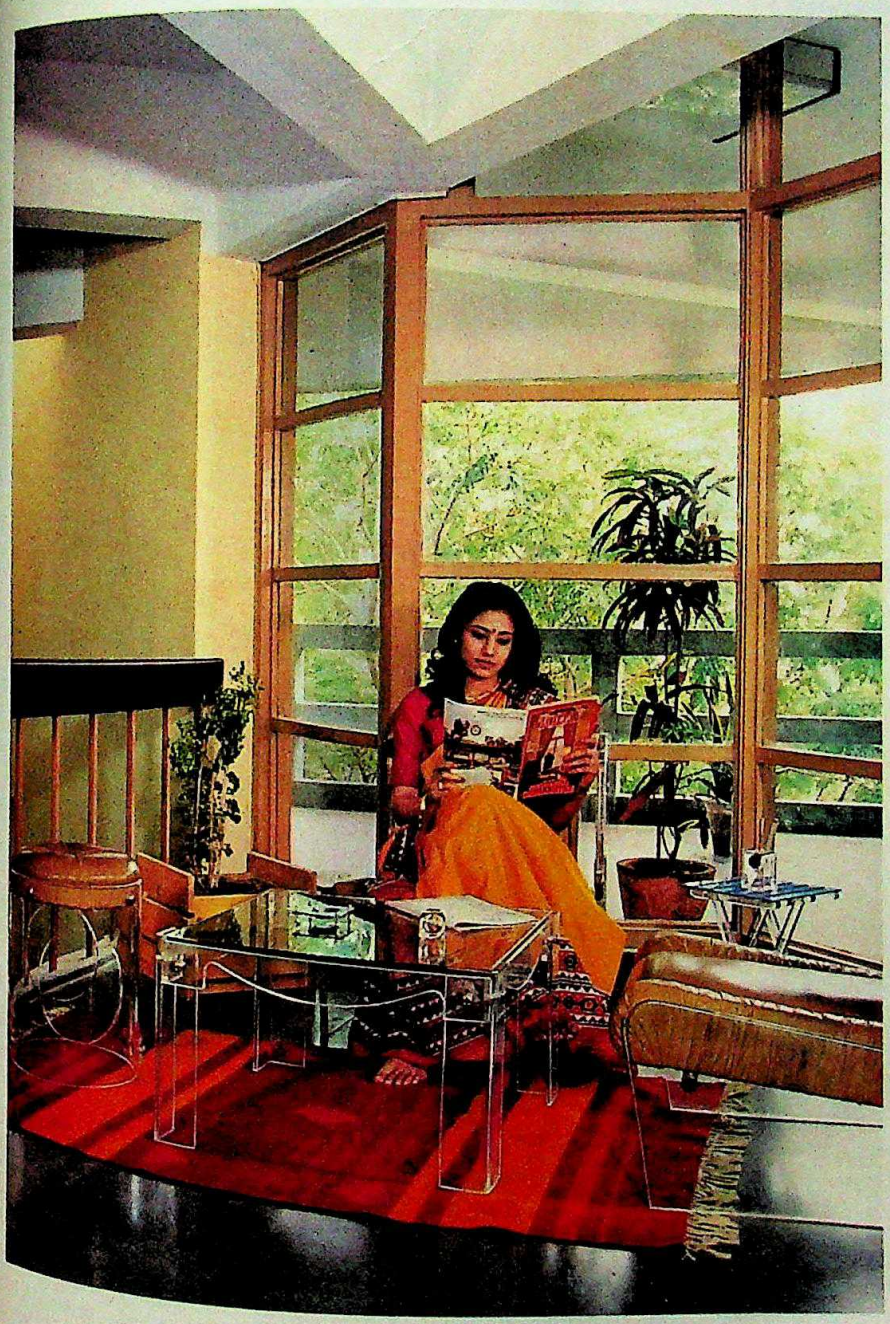

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going over a clump of huts, then hit a bund along a nullah, bounced so high as to clear the Palam village road and the 10-ft high angle-iron fence of the air force station, finally landing on the roof of the MCU building where it exploded. A grove of trees blocked its destructive journey towards the parade ground where, according to experts, it would have just skidded on the asphalt, ploughing into hundreds of onlookers.

The air force officers recovered from the shock first. The top brass held a quick conference and decided to put up a brave front. "We are extremely sorry that this happened," said Air Chief Marshal S.K. "Polly" Mehra. But, he said, the IAF had no intention of stopping aerobatics for "the show must go on" and because "such things happen in aviation". He blamed the crash on "an error of judgement by the pilot", and most aviators present on the spot agreed.

Senior IAF officials confirmed that on his last downward dive, Bakshi seemed to hesitate after the third roll. "He seemed to have either lost count of his rolls or thought he had the altitude to do a fourth, unscheduled one," surmised a senior official. The fourth roll brought him close to around 3,000 ft from the ground. Veterans say this was too low an altitude to pull out from, as by this time, the pull of gravity had already increased his speed to around 450 knots. Senior officials say they noticed he was pulling at the stick desperately, as the plane's nose lifted a little. But the downward inertia and velocity by then were too strong. A preliminary study of the point of impact indicates that he had indeed been able to straighten the plane by that time. "The point of initial impact seems as if the plane touched down flat, skidding as if in a planned crashlanding without the undercarriage," said an officer, indicating that if the pilot had had another 6 metres before he hit the ground, he may have pulled it off and saved his own life. "All evidence indicates he was pulling desperately till the last moment, which is an example of incredible nerve," said a senior officer, explaining that by initiating his pull-out so late, Bakshi got into a 'mush'—a situation where an aircraft is unable to gather adequate lift.

How exactly did he get into such a tragic predicament, is a question experts can't answer just yet. The Mirage 2000, unlike fighters of the past, is equipped with a flight data recorder which the court of inquiry will study, along with the flight profile and fractures in the aircraft body. "The fact is, Bakshi must have had a reason why he chose to do a fourth roll when he did not have the height or the time for it. But who is to answer for him now?" remarked one of his juniors in the IAF's No. 7 squadron (the redoubtable Battle-axes), which he commanded at Gwalior.

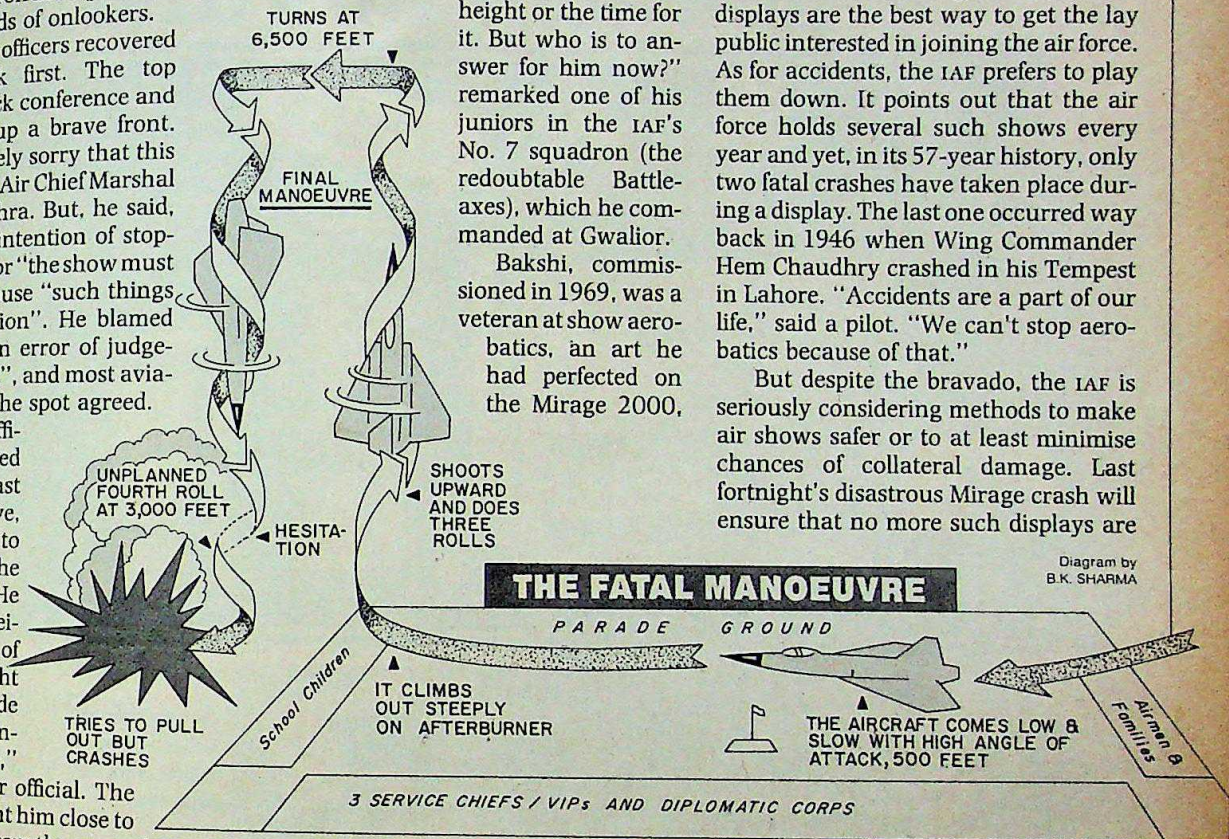
Bakshi, commissioned in 1969, was a veteran at show aerobatics, an art he had perfected on the Mirage 2000, considered extremely agile and safe for aerobatics because of its fly-by-wire system which ensures the plane almost never spins out of control or stalls. If a pilot tries to subject it to stress the aircraft is incapable of taking, the computer prevents him from doing so. Equipped with such an aircraft, Bakshi was a master at the game.

LAST year, on the IAF's 56th anniversary, he had performed a similar show at this very air force station. Also, on September 29 this year he displayed his skill to a visiting team of experts from the National Defence College at the Ambala Air Force Base. And only three days before his fatal flight, he held a full rehearsal for 250-odd Delhi Public School students who happened to visit the Hindon air-base. "Joe was the best, so we were happy to show him off," said a senior official. But some of Bakshi's squadron-mates remember that he had complained of a backache the day before the crash. His wife Aruna, now left alone to bring up their two children, was too distraught to say anything, but others who flew with him do not think the back trouble could have had anything to do with the disaster.

The destruction of the Rs 30-crore fighter and the death of an ace combat pilot serve to focus on the debate on whether such air shows should be banned. The IAF's logic is that such displays are the best way to get the lay public interested in joining the air force. As for accidents, the IAF prefers to play them down. It points out that the air force holds several such shows every year and yet, in its 57-year history, only two fatal crashes have taken place during a display. The last one occurred way back in 1946 when Wing Commander Hem Chaudhry crashed in his Tempest in Lahore. "Accidents are a part of our life," said a pilot. "We can't stop aerobatics because of that."

But despite the bravado, the IAF is seriously considering methods to make air shows safer or to at least minimise chances of collateral damage. Last fortnight's disastrous Mirage crash will ensure that no more such displays are held at Palam which is particularly unsuitable. The high hangars and trees to the east of the parade ground, and the fact that displays take place in the morning, force the pilots to fly straight into the sun. Aviators point out that at the moment Bakshi made the fatal flaw, he too was facing the sun. If the pilots were to come over the trees and hangars, they would arrive much too suddenly over the ground, reducing the display to a blur. Also, to come from the east they have to overfly large parts of the capital which include forbidden airspace around VIP residential areas. Says a senior official: "Since we can't shift the trees, the hangars, or for that matter, the sun, we will perhaps change the venue of the displays." But, unless they are forced by a political decision, the IAF top brass is not inclined to ban air shows. The IAF's answer is: why don't we first ban mountaineering, diving and, of course, coal-mining—the only profession considered more risky than fighter-flying?

—SHEKHAR GUPTA



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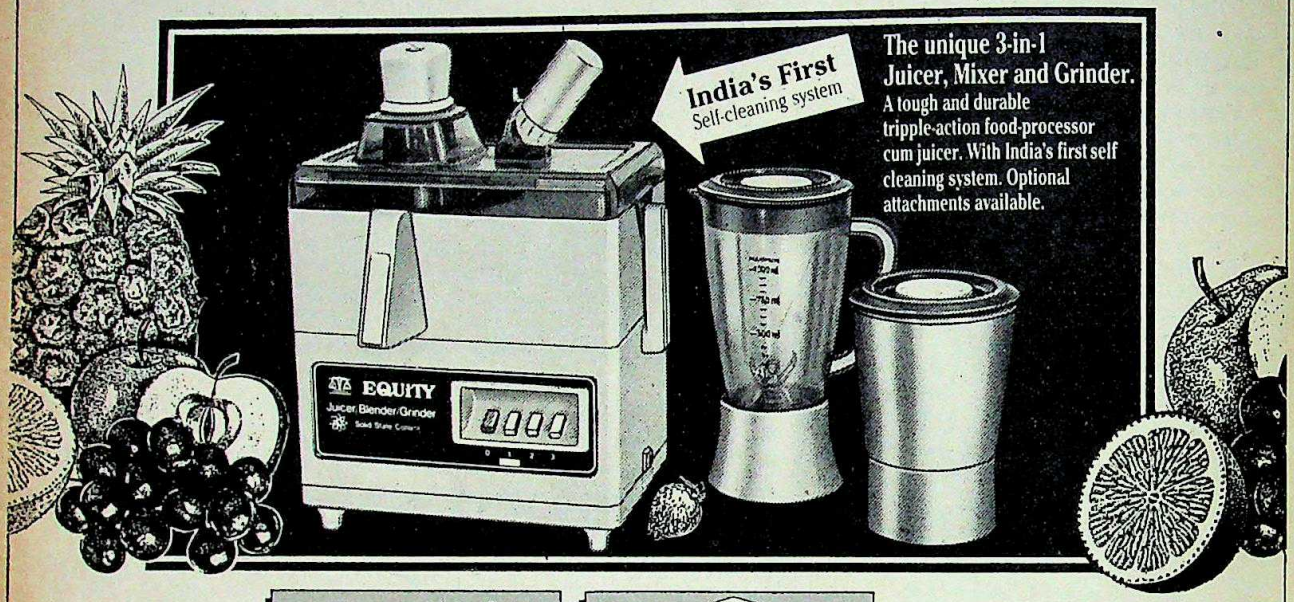

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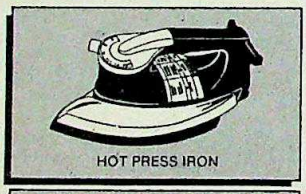
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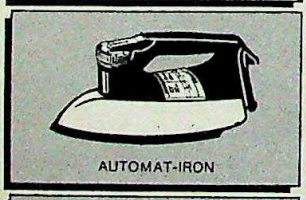
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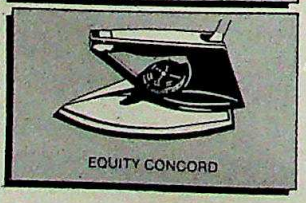
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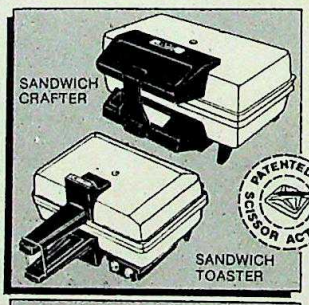

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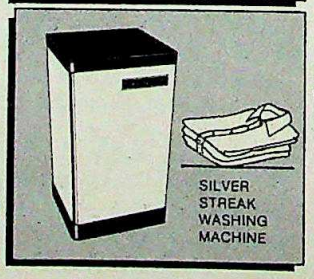

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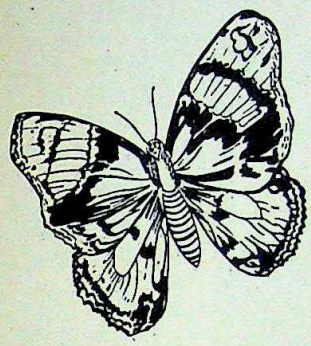

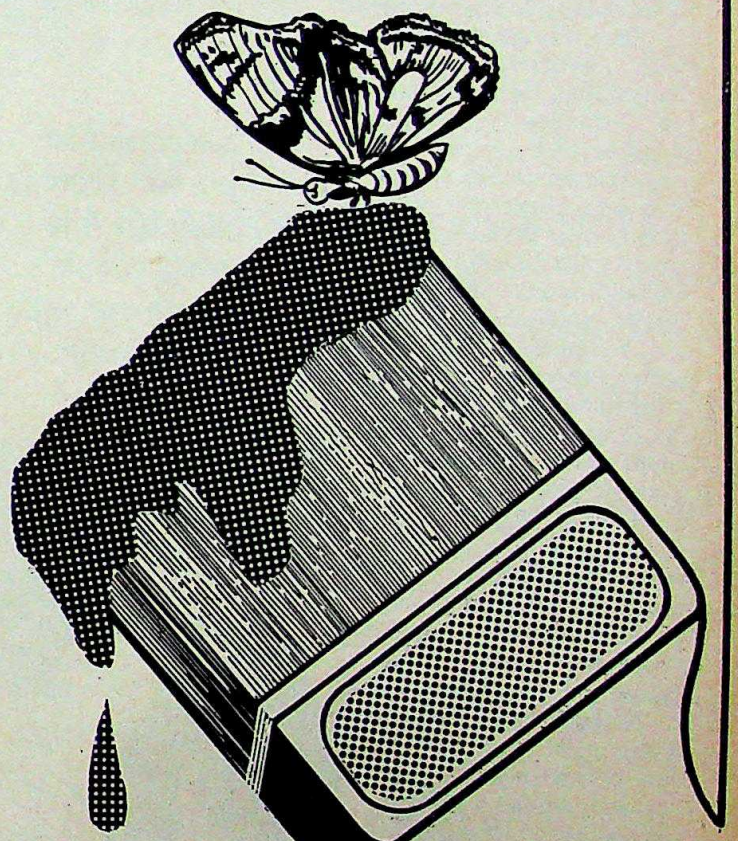

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J&K

Militant Might

Outcry over Shabir's arrest

MISHANDLING of a volatile situation and official misfeasance have made a martyr out of a militant in Kashmir. Shabir Ahmad Shah, the 37-year-old leader of the rabidly separatist People's League, is fast becoming a cult figure in the valley, a people's hero. The sharp public outcry that followed his sudden and dramatic arrest last fortnight served to drive home this frightening fact.

Shah was arrested along with another militant, Mohammad Nayeem Khan, on September 28 near Ramban, on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway. The two were apparently planning to cross the line of control near the Rajouri Poonch sectors and enter Pakistan. Accounts of Shah's arrest differ. According to one, the state police nabbed him after being tipped off by one of his close aides who was not happy with his growing power. Another version has it that Shah was arrested by IB sleuths, who had planted some men in his inner circle. Either way, it was the biggest breakthrough for the state authorities in their battle against growing separatism.

The public response to the arrest made it abundantly clear that Shah was the undisputed supremo of the secessionists who have wreaked havoc in Kashmir over the past two years. A spontaneous bandh was observed for four days throughout the valley. Normal life was completely paralysed and few ventured out of their homes. Violence broke out in a number of places: worst hit were Anantnag—Shah's hometown—in south Kashmir and Sopore town in the north. Indefinite curfew was clamped and the army called out in both towns. In Anantnag, three persons were killed in police firing, while in Sopore one youth fell to police bullets. In Srinagar too, the police indulged in indiscriminate firing which resulted in the tragic death of a nine-year-old boy, Zahoor Ahmad, who was struck by a bullet while he was watching the bedlam in the street from a second floor window.

All lingering doubts about Shah's growing sway over the people of the valley were quelled about a week after his arrest, when rumours about his death in police custody broke out. Thousands of men, women and children poured out into the streets of Srinagar, beating their breasts and praying for the jailed extremist. So explosive was the situation on the evening of October 5 that the authorities were forced to make repeated announcements over radio and television that Shabir Shah was unharmed and very much alive.

Shah's interrogators are, in fact, yet to use third degree methods to extract information from him as his health is poor and the state Government cannot risk anything happening to him. And Shah—who is incarcerated at the Hariniwas complex, opposite Srinagar's Dal Lake—is reported to have revealed nothing of value as yet. Prison is a familiar place for Shah who has been behind bars for 11 of the 17 years that he has spent in active politics.

This time round, Shah behind bars has proved as potent a threat—if not more—as he was while a free man. And both the state and the Central Governments have only themselves to blame. For if a secessionist like Shah has become something of a hero, it is because of complete disillusionment with the mainstream leaders, the dismal performance of the state Government, the Centre's repeated bungling on the Kashmir issue, and Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah's obvious ineptitude.

Repressive police measures and blatant misgovernance have only added to the groundswell of support for the separatists, and made extremists out of moderates. For instance, secessionist activity gained momentum early this year after Shah's father, Ghulam Mohammad Shah, died in police custody in Anantnag. The riots that followed shot Shah into prominence and he soon emerged as the most influential of Kashmir's many underground secessionist leaders.

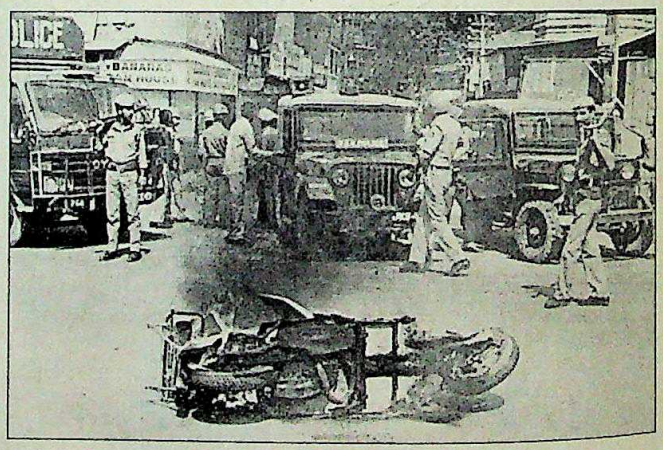
Photographs by MERAJ-U-DIN

If a secessionist like Shah has become a cult figure it is because of people's disenchantment with the mainstream leaders.

Aside from police hamhandedness, the Centre's misguided policies are also responsible for making a hero out of the extremist. Some believe that in order to neutralise other secessionist leaders, the Centre had at one point propped up Shah. In a way, just as it created Bhindranwale in Punjab, the Centre has created Shabir Shah in Kashmir.

Now, both the Centre and the state Government can only watch helplessly as villagers in remote corners of the valley get together to pray for Shah's health and longevity. And Farooq Abdullah can merely despair but do nothing to stop people from calling Shah's mother, Habla Begum, *madri meharban* (kind mother)—a title once reserved for his mother, Sheikh Abdullah's widow, Begum Akber Jehan.

—ZAFAR MERAJ in Srinagar



Shabir Shah; arson in Srinagar; and Habla Begum: dangerous drift

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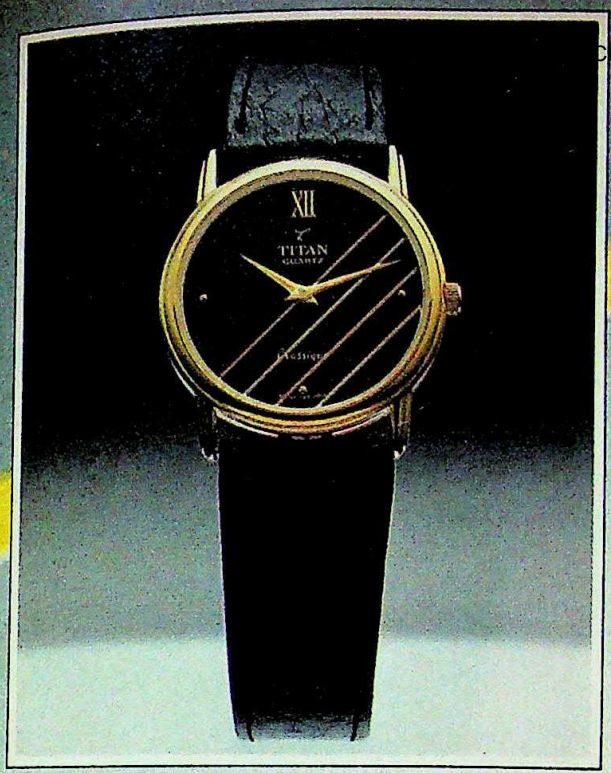

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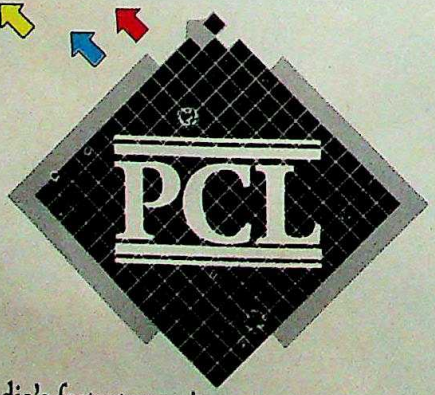

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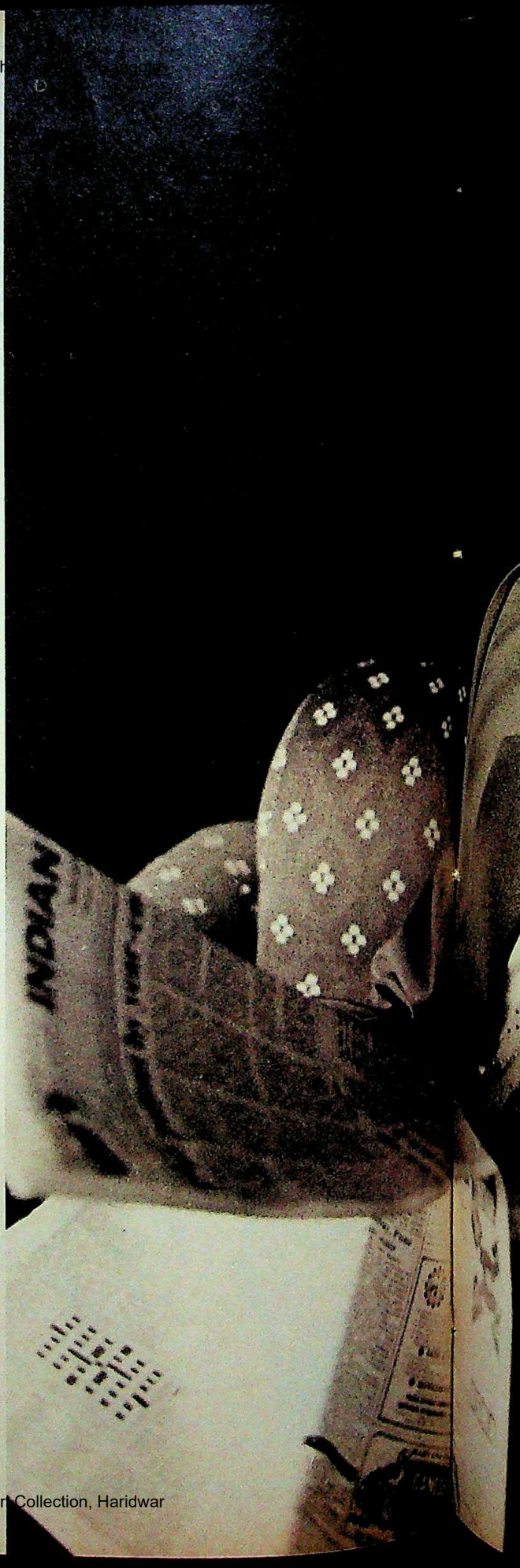

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ANDHRA PRADESH

New Energy

Congress(I) hits the streets

THE 'no stock' signs in front of khadi shops in the state last fortnight best symbolised the new-found enthusiasm of the Congress(I). More than six years after the Telugu Desam whirlwind swept them out of office and into a state of shock, Congress(I) activists with new Gandhi caps and khadi shirts once again swarmed the streets.

For three alternate days beginning Gandhi Jayanti, they picketed mandal, municipal and state government offices to protest against "the failures of the Rama Rao Ministry" and courted arrest. Ex-ministers, MPs and MLAs of the party, rarely seen in public, visited their constituencies and rubbed shoulders with workers. It was a remarkable show of unity.

On the last day of the agitation, October 6, APCC(I) President M. Channa Reddy along with his wife, sons and grandchildren picketed the office of a deputy commissioner of police. The agitation was peaceful, except at Siddipet in Medak district where some activists stormed the revenue divisional office. In the police firing that ensued, 20 partymen were injured.

All those who took part in the jail bharo agitation signed a pledge listing 16 charges against Rama Rao including nepotism, corruption, abuse of administrative machinery, rise in the number of lock-up deaths and misuse of Central funds.

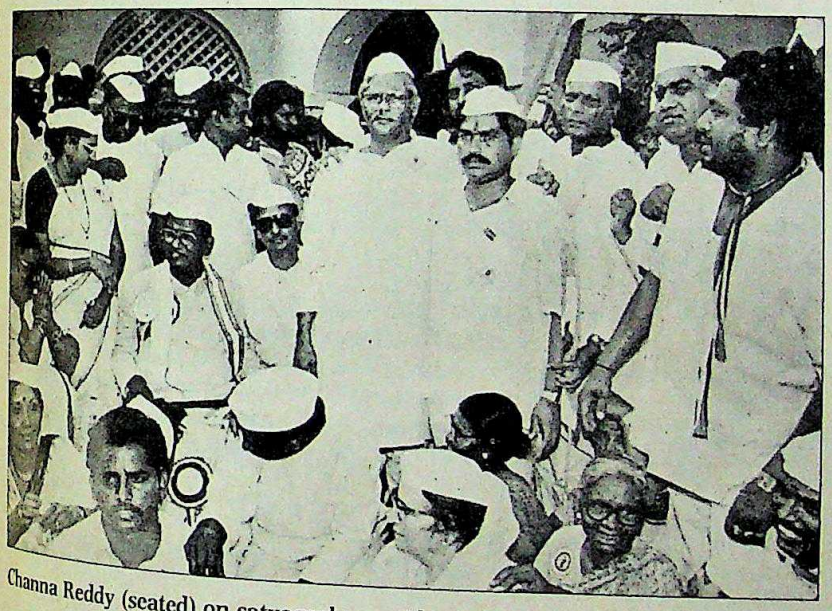
The campaign is part of the strategy of Channa Reddy, a shrewd organiser, to close ranks and gear up the party machinery for the elections. Earlier, on September 7, he mobilised truck-loads of flag waving party supporters who presented a memorandum with tens of thousands of signatures to President R. Venkataraman at the Rashtrapathi Nilayam, Secunderabad, his official residence in the south.

Rama Rao was surprised by the remarkable response to the jail bharo campaign. But not to be outdone, he announced the formation of his party's election propaganda committee and thought up new ways to woo the electorate. As a party member admitted: "It will not be a cakewalk for us."

Of course all was not smooth for the Congress(I). In one of those inevitable side-shows, party General Secretary K. Keshava Rao and other party men from the backward classes accused Channa Reddy of a communal bias and demanded that he step down from the office of PCC(I) president. Neither Reddy nor other party office-bearers took the threat seriously. As a party secretary put it: "They are people who will not leave even if they are thrown out of the party. It is only a nuisance."

The confidence seemed well-founded. For the unexpected involvement of a large number of workers in the voluntary arrests campaign has energised the party. The Congress(I) obviously is no longer willing to play the passive onlooker to Rama Rao's blusterings.

—AMARNATH K. MENON



Channa Reddy (seated) on satyagraha

GUJARAT

In the Dock

Supreme Court indicts police

WITH the arrest and subsequent bail of five Gujarat police officials responsible for beating up and handcuffing Chief Judicial Magistrate N.L. Patel of Nadiad, the dangerous confrontation building up between the judiciary and the police seems to have been defused, if only temporarily.

Last month, the police action against Patel, apparently in retaliation for strictures passed by him against the police, had touched off a wave of indignation country-wide, and lawyers and subordinate judicial officials struck work. Seeking punishment of the culprits, B.P. Munshi, Gujarat Judicial Service Association's president, said: "The self-respect and independence of the entire judiciary is at stake."

YOGENDRA C. PATEL

Patel in handcuffs: police excesses?

Clearly, the police assault on Patel had a double-edged message: to discipline him and to serve as a warning to others critical of police high-handedness. With incident after incident highlighting the state police's predilection for excesses, Bhaskar Tanna, senior Gujarat high court lawyer, pointed out: "The time has come to evolve a machinery to probe police atrocities in Gujarat."

The state Government lay itself open to charges of shielding the guilty officials

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when Chief Minister Amarsinh Chaudhary went on record in the Assembly that Patel was drunk and had misbehaved with a police official. Patel's version is that his clothes were doused with liquor and he was tied up with ropes. Interestingly, photographs of the incident established the police torture, and handcuffing of Patel in violation of Article 21 of the Constitution.

Adding another twist to the controversy, the local police failed to execute bailable warrants against the five police officials issued by the Nadiad court on the basis of a private complaint lodged by Patel. It was eventually left to the Supreme Court to intervene after numerous telegrams were received from various judicial service and lawyers' associations.

Admitting the case as a public interest litigation, a three-judge bench led by Chief Justice E.S. Venkatramiah directed the state Government to furnish details. Yet, the state Government refused to act. It was only when the court virtually issued an ultimatum directing the arrest of the policemen within two days, that the five policemen presented themselves in the Nadiad court.

Says Justice B.J. Diwan, former chief justice of the Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh high courts: "At the root is the criminalisation and politicisation of the police force. The state Government should have taken immediate steps against the policemen." Adds N.H. Bhatt, a retired judge of the Gujarat High Court: "The policemen behaved like agents of a monarch."

While the truth of the ugly episode will emerge only once the inquiries instituted into the case are completed, it once again brought into sharp focus the nexus between the police and politicians.

—UDAY MAHURKAR

BOTTOMLINE BY D. BUNKER

Poll Puzzle

THE bugles have sounded, the loins have girded, and all is set for the Great Electoral Battle. While the BJP *and the Janata Dal struggle to adjust their seats, the ruling party has already launched its campaign with its Supreme Leader Rajiv Gandhi storming through the countryside and scattering his opponents, left and right.*

The only ones who aren't quite ready are the ones who have to make the Supreme Decision, the voters, all 500 million of them. Specially in the rural areas where Doordarshan has succeeded in befuddling them no end. Seeing all the golden harvests and proud progress on the screen, they are naturally a little confused by the bleak landscape immediately around them. To gauge their electoral mood, INDIA TODAY *commissioned the well-known pollsters, GRAM, to find out whether they would vote for the ruling party or the Opposition led by V.P. Singh. Here's how the polling went:*

GRAM: Excuse me, sir. Who are you going to vote for?

First villager: Nehru.

GRAM: Nehru? You mean Arun Nehru?

First villager: No I mean that chap who is always on Doordarshan.

GRAM: But that is Jawaharlal Nehru. He's been dead for a long time.

First villager ***(surprised):*** Really. I thought that anyone who gets so much coverage on Doordarshan must be standing for elections. He seemed like a nice chap to vote for.

GRAM: Anyway, does that mean you will vote for the Congress(I)?

First villager: What has the Congress done for me that I should vote for them? In the last five years, all they have offered me was 10 rupees and a packet of gram to attend some *neta*'s meeting.

GRAM: And you sir, what is your opinion?

Second villager: Everybody says this government only looks after the rich. Us poor people have no future. It's all very sad.

GRAM: How about you, young fellow? What do you think?

Student: The unemployment situation is terrible. Even educated people cannot get a decent job. Things are very bad.

GRAM: And you madam?

Woman: They keep announcing all these fancy schemes for women. But nothing has happened to improve my life in the last five years. I have five more mouths to feed.

GRAM: Let's ask a farmer. You sir, what is your feeling about the elections?

Farmer: I wish they would put me on Krishi Darshan. I could tell them it is all rubbish what they are saying. Us farmers are very badly off. Only madmen like that Tikait are reaping the benefits.

GRAM: My God, it looks like a wave. V.P. Singh is going to sweep the polls at this rate. Let's get a larger cross-section of people. You sir, what do you have to say?

Shopkeeper: I have nothing in stock. But I can get you sugar for 16 rupees. Tea, 13 rupees. Dal, 10 rupees. I'm sorry, but thanks to this government, everything has gone up and is selling in black.

GRAM: We are not customers. We want to interview you for the elections.

Shopkeeper: The Congress is the best party. We will all vote for them. They have made us all very happy. Prices have come down. Is that what you want me to say?

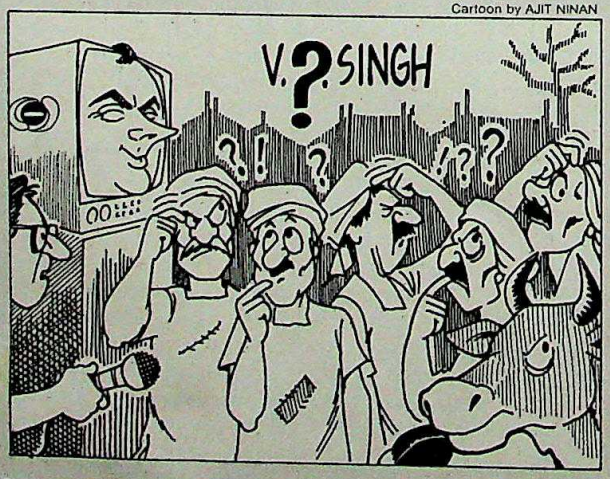
GRAM: No. We want you to tell us truthfully who you will vote for.

Shopkeeper: Oh! I thought you were from Doordarshan. They are the only people who come here and tell us what to say.

GRAM: This is incredible. This wave is bigger than 1977. All these people are going to vote for V.P. Singh.

Villagers (in chorus): Who is V.P. Singh?

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



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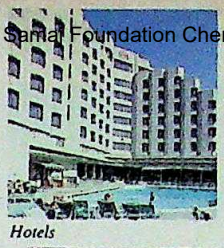
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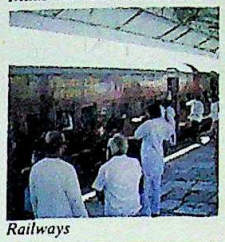
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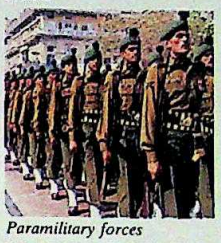
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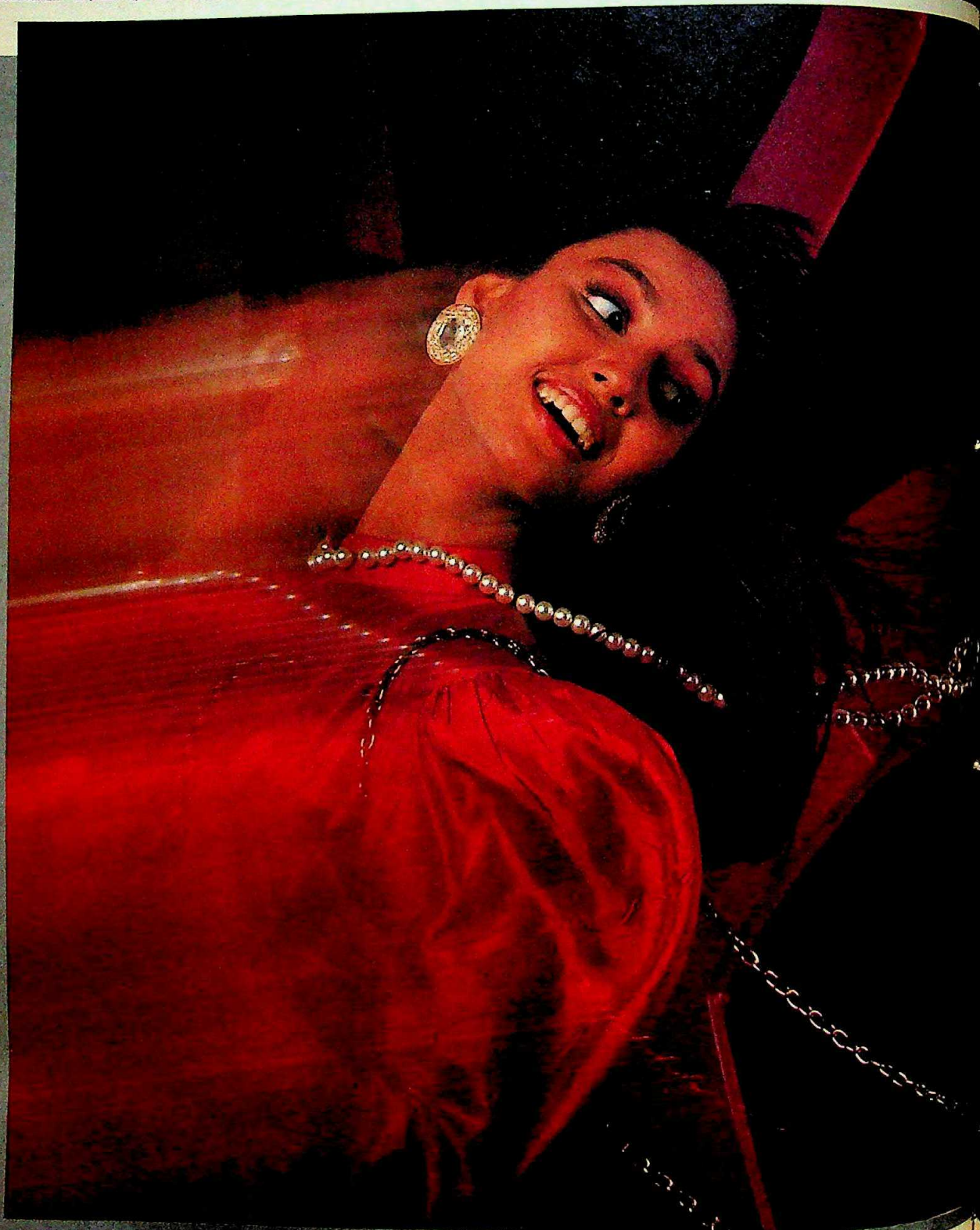

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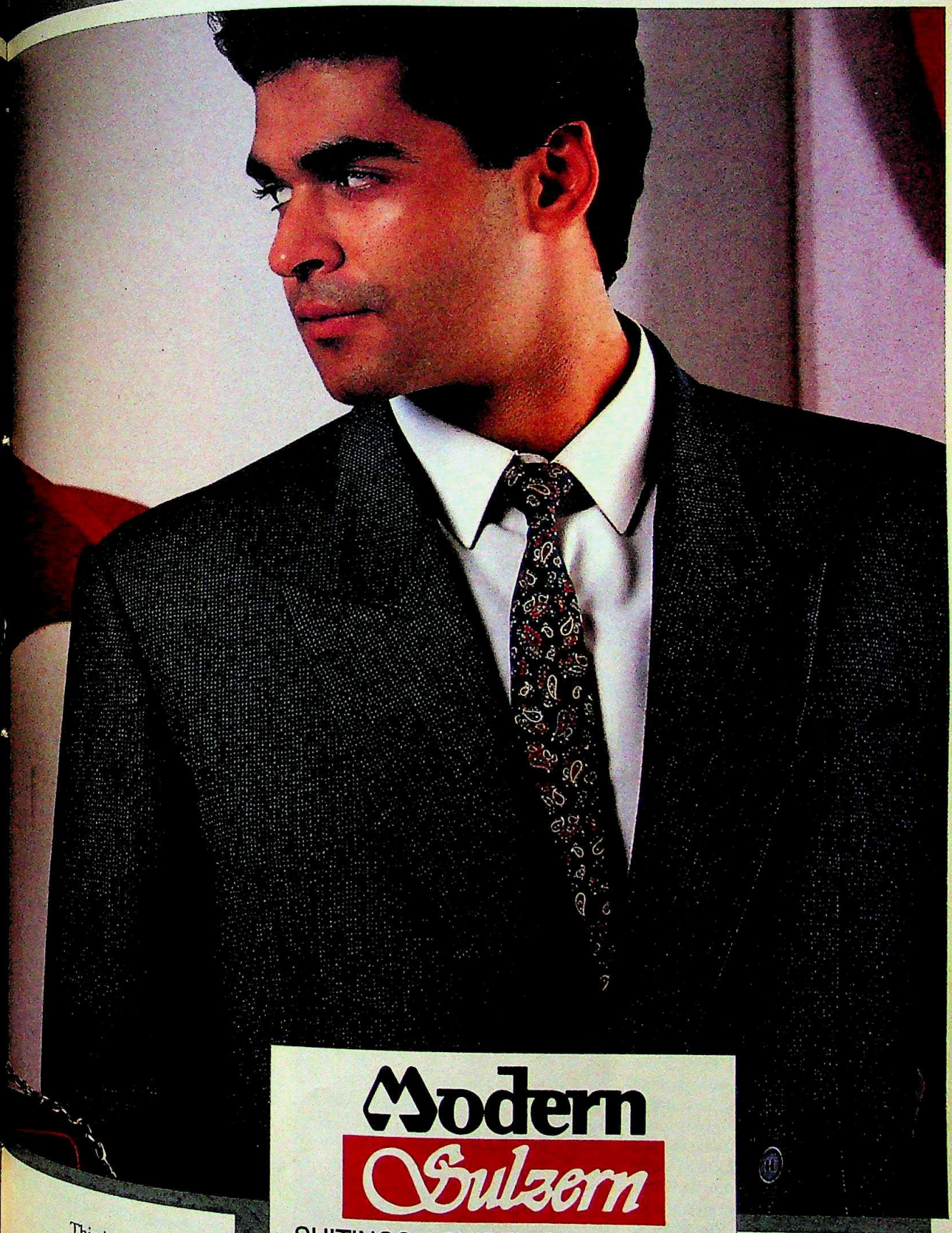

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FRINGE LEADERS

Increasing Importance

Mahendra Singh Tikait, Syed Shahabuddin and Kanshi Ram have established pockets of influence in the Hindi heartland, the crucial battlefield in the next election. They now represent a powerful electoral triumvirate.

WITH the general elections round the corner, their shadows are looming large on the political horizon. Like vandals capable of wrecking the fortunes of the major contenders, a strange triumvirate—Kanshi Ram, Mahendra Singh Tikait and Syed Shahabuddin—has staked its claim to the electoral sweepstakes.

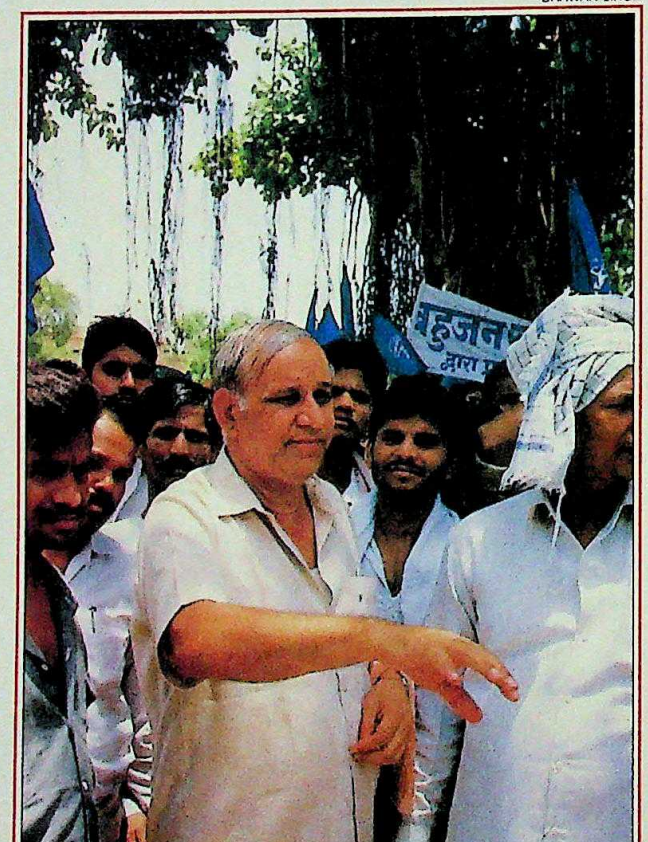
The trio have little in common except for the ability to cut into the votes of both the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal and upset the applecart of the principal bidders for power in the forthcoming elections. Though obscure figures a few years ago, the three are now weighing heavily on the psyche of leaders of the major parties.

And with every passing day, their stock is rising in the pre-election political bazaar. Emissaries from both Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Janata Dal President Vishwanath Pratap Singh have made a beeline for their doors in a desperate bid to win them over.

Aware of their crucial role, the three are proving to be hard bargainers. They admit as much. Shahabuddin, president of the Insaaf Party which he recently launched, says: "I am waiting for the market to rise. And of course mine is a seller's market, not a buyer's one."

For the record at least, leaders of both the mainline parties maintain a brave front and try not to betray the fact that they are worried by the peripheral politicians' increasing clout. They dismiss as a mere myth the ability of these leaders to swing the votes of the social groups they claim to represent.

BHAWAN SINGH



KANSHI RAM
Leader, Bahujan Samaj Party

Kanshi Ram's parochial campaign has radicalised Harijan politics. He now has a strong Dalit base.

Says AICC(I) General Secretary V.N. Gadgil: "Harijans are not a monolith. Though not strictly in the Marxist sense, class consideration transcends caste consideration. What is really important in elections is what the Americans call the misery index—unemployment and inflation in our context." Janata Dal leader Satyapal Malik accuses the trio of pursuing "wrong politics that isolates a particular caste or community".

Away from media attention, Kanshi Ram has worked tirelessly—and launched a sheerly parochial campaign—to radicalise Harijan politics over the last five years. He now has a strong Dalit base that cuts across several states. The successive poll performances of his Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) point to a growing sway over the Harijans.

The BSP got a mere 2.4 per cent of the total votes polled in the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections in March 1985. In the Uttar Pradesh by-elections held in March 1987, the BSP polled an impressive 26.7 per cent. Kanshi Ram again demonstrated his clout in the prestigious Allahabad parliamentary by-election last year. Pitted against the combined opposition candidate, V.P. Singh, and the Congress(I)'s Sunil Shastri, he polled over 72,000 votes. "You can guess the tremendous growth of my support base from the fact that during the December 1984 general election my candidate got just 1,716 votes in Allahabad," says Kanshi Ram. Admits a Congress(I) leader: "Of the three, Kanshi Ram can do the maximum damage."

Tikait, the dour kisan leader—who laid

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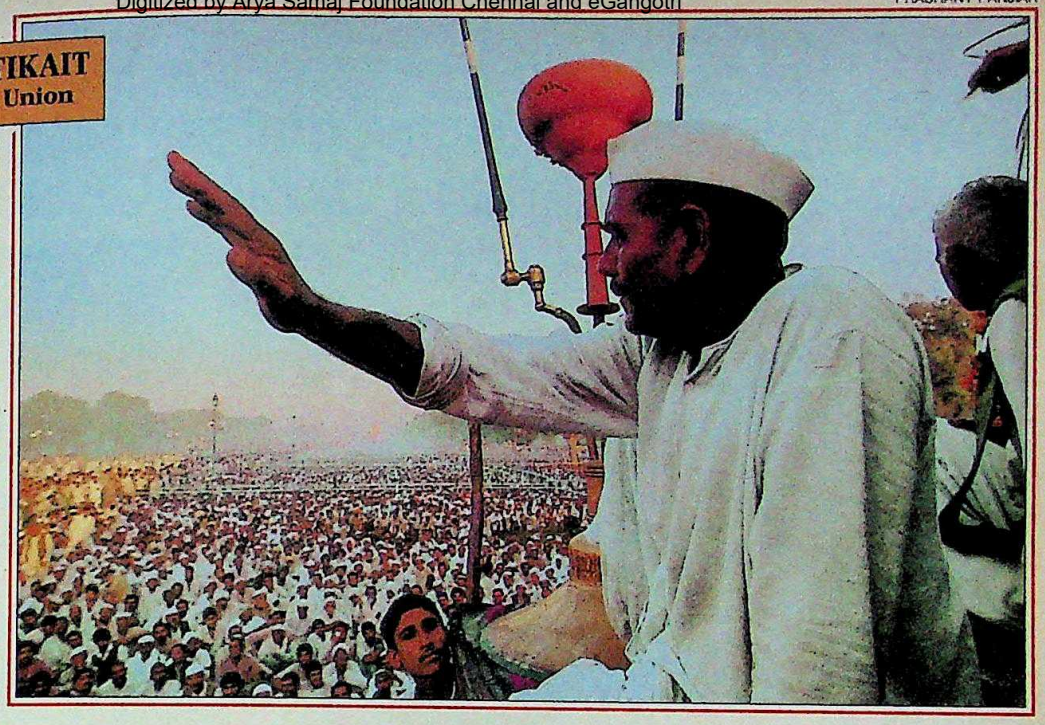

MAHENDRA SINGH TIKAIT
Leader, Bharatiya Kisan Union

Tikait is keeping his options open—negotiating with both Rajesh Pilot of the Congress and emissaries of Janata Dal strongman Devi Lal.

siege to Delhi's Boat Club grounds last year when he led a prolonged dharna of farmers there—might not agree with that calculation. The stronghold of his Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) is western Uttar Pradesh, where it could tilt the balance in a dozen-odd Lok Sabha constituencies.

So could Shahabuddin, who yields considerable clout over Muslims throughout Uttar Pradesh and Bihar—both electorally crucial states. By taking a rabidly militant line on key issues affecting the community—the Muslim Women's Bill, the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute and Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*—Shahabuddin has tried to project himself as the messiah of the Muslims. Though he claims to be a "graduate from the Janata University", Shahabuddin attributes his incompatibility with the present Janata Dal to the party's decision to have seat adjustments with the BJP. In the event of a poll-eve polarisation on communal lines as a result of the recent flare-ups in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, Shahabuddin certainly stands to gain.

Interestingly, though the fringe leaders may not be able to ensure the victory of their own candidates, they can wreck the chances of either of the mainline parties. For instance, in the Punjab assembly elections in September, 1985, though the BSP polled a mere 2.2 per cent of the votes, its presence sealed the fate of the Congress(I) which lost the polls by less than 1 per cent.

That is why, immediately after the Allahabad by-election, both Congress(I) and opposition leaders started wooing Kanshi Ram. A number of Central ministers, including well-known negotiators like Sheila Dikshit and Rajesh Pilot, held talks with him. Kanshi Ram says that he declined the offer of a berth in the Union Cabinet in lieu of the BSP merging with the Congress(I).

THE ruling party's concern is understandable. Kanshi Ram has succeeded in denting the traditional Congress vote-bank which comprises Brahmins, Harijans and Muslims. With the Muslims still alienated from the party, the loss of Harijan votes will prove disastrous for the Congress(I). Basking in the glow of this new-found importance, the BSP leader makes it a point to mention that a dozen-odd ministers and senior Congress(I) leaders have so far approached him. During the recent parleys, AICC(I) General Secretary Ghulam Nabi Azad, Pilot and the prime minister's man Friday Satish Sharma urged him to meet Rajiv, claims Kanshi Ram.

The wily BSP leader is learnt to have agreed to the proposal. Though Kanshi Ram has suggested seat adjustments with the Congress(I), he is cautious about the outcome. He candidly admits: "My votes are transferable, but not those of the Congress(I)." Sitting in his dingy party headquarters in Delhi's Karol Bagh area, he outlines his strategy to reach his ultimate goal and "rule at Delhi". Says he: "By deciding to concentrate in the large states of the Hindi heartland, I wanted to take the enemy by the neck." He moves a stick over the contours of the Hindi belt on the map pinned up on a wall and claims that of the 240 parliamentary seats in the region, the BSP will bag about 80. "Both the Congress(I) and Janata Dal are status quoist parties. We are for change. While others buy votes, I in fact made it a point to collect a rupee from everyone who intended to support me. One vote, one note—that was my slogan in Allahabad."

Kanshi Ram says that one of the ruling party's proposals is to field backward class candidates (not Harijans) in constituencies where he is not confident of victory. The design is clear: use Kanshi Ram to cut into the Janata Dal's votes as the backward classes have consolidated behind the Opposition. The BSP leader has promised to put up one such candidate in the prime minister's constituency, Amethi to crush the Janata Dal challenge to Rajiv. Kanshi Ram's disarming smile cannot conceal his penchant for boasting. This bragging, however, is not an end in itself. It aims at inflating his importance at the hustings.

It is precisely for this reason that he has floated the Parivartansheel Morcha along with Deve Gowda's truncated Janata Party to "bring about fundamental, structural change" in the country. Kanshi Ram says that the morcha will provide an alternative to both the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal. As they happened to meet at the airport the day after the morcha was launched, V.P. Singh told Kanshi Ram that they could join hands in bringing about *parivartan* (change) in a more sweeping manner.

Shahabuddin too is caught between the devil and the deep sea. Despite an offer from V.P. Singh to become a member of

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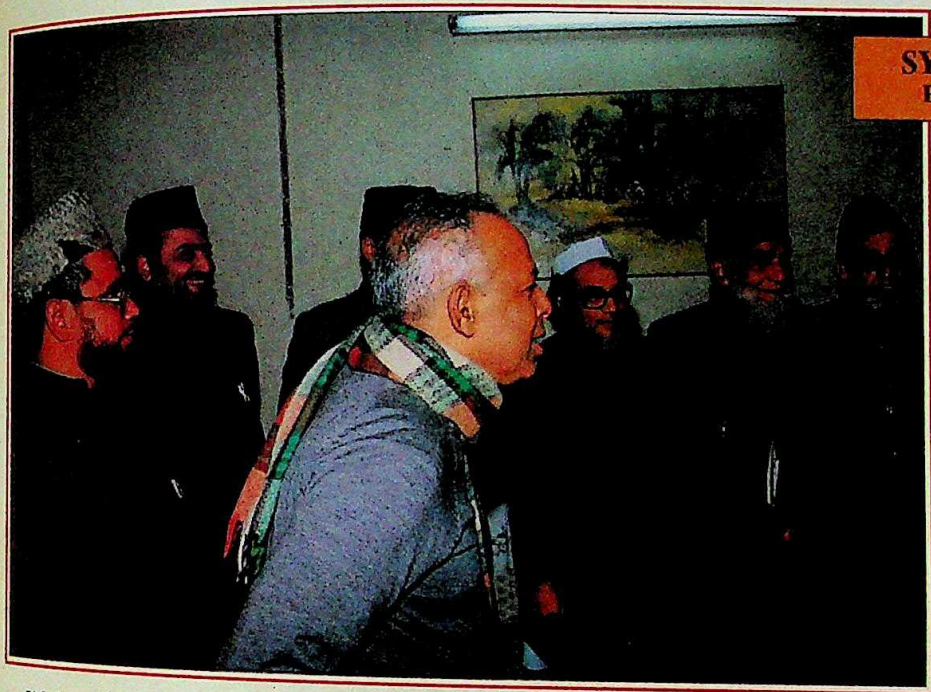
the Janata Dal Parliamentary Board, Shahabuddin balked at the party's decision to have seat adjustments with the BJP which "represents Hindu chauvinism". Taking umbrage at the idea of being bracketed with other fringe leaders, the articulate parliamentarian remarks: "It is rather the BJP that has shrunk into a fringe party." The Congress(I) bosses have also been trying to win him over to their side. Ali Siddiqi, a sycophant of the Gandhi family, was among those deputed to persuade Shahabuddin to align with the Congress(I).

demands. He says he will issue a *fatwa* (edict) to his followers a couple of days before the polls. Entrenched at the BKU headquarters in Sisauli near Muzaffarnagar, Tikait has given short shrift to consistency in declaring war on the Delhi durbar one moment and praising the prime minister the next. Tikait-watchers, however, discern a method in this madness and point to his shrewdness as a bargainer.

Certainly, in the race for enlisting the support of the fringe leaders, the Congress(I) has an edge over the Opposition.

Dal has offered its symbol to its candidates. The response to this proposal is not yet known.

Nevertheless, it may not be all that easy for these fringe leaders to deliver the votes of a particular group at the door of any party of their choice. For instance, Tikait has inherited the Jat constituency of the late Chaudhary Charan Singh. Jat farmers, traditionally anti-Congress(I), may not oblige if he issues a diktat to vote for the party. While Tikait is looked upon as a leader of the farmers' movement, Charan Singh's political mantle has fallen on his son, Ajit Singh.



SYED SHAHABUDDIN
President, Insaaf Party

Syed Shahabuddin's militant stance on key issues has won him considerable support among Muslims in the Hindi heartland.

While still being urged to reconsider his decision by his old socialist comrades in the Janata Dal like George Fernandes, Jaswant Sinha and Surendra Mohan, the Muslim leader seems to have veered round to the view that for the minorities, the Congress(I) is the lesser evil. Says he: "The major issue in the next elections is the rising wave of Hindu chauvinism, which must be contained. To me it does not matter who becomes the next prime minister."

'Mahatma' Tikait with his rustic wisdom is also keeping his options open—holding negotiations with both Rajesh Pilot and Haryana Chief Minister Devi Lal's emissaries. In the heady days of 1987, when the Jan Morcha juggernaut was rolling all over western Uttar Pradesh, Tikait himself sought a meeting with V.P. Singh. However, lures from the Congress(I) in recent months have proved irresistible. He brags: "Elections or no elections, I alone can ensure that the Congress(I) will remain in power provided they concede our

The Government can easily announce concessions or implement an old pledge to appease any section of the electorate. The Opposition at best can only make promises. Says Pilot: "We will try to take help from everyone without compromising our ideology." Some significance is also being attached to Shetkari Sanghatana leader Sharad Joshi's recent meeting with Rajiv Gandhi.

THE Janata Dal's negotiations with these leaders, on the other hand, are being hampered by the intense group rivalry in the party. Devi Lal, during a prolonged meeting with Kanshi Ram, reportedly remarked: "Your supporters are naked, mine are in loin cloth. Why don't you team up with me?" Clearly the Haryana strongman's effort is to extend his own base rather than enhance the electoral chances of the Janata Dal. However, the party in its talks with these three leaders has proposed seat adjustments. Since the BKU is an apolitical organisation, the Janata

Says Janata Dal National Executive member Som Pal: "He (Tikait) must size up the popular mood."

Similarly, Shahabuddin will find it difficult to convince the Muslims to vote for the Congress(I), whose government has been held responsible by the community for the ghastly Hashimpura carnage in 1987. Kanshi Ram too will have to tread cautiously since he has built up his base solely on the anti-Congress(I) plank. Says Malik: "If these leaders decide to align with the Congress(I), they will lose their base."

The hectic parleys establish two facts: the importance of the trio who hold sway over crucial regions; and the vulnerability of the mainstream parties. The three leaders of course have an inflated sense of their own importance and stress that it is they, rather than the national parties, who represent mainstream politics. But the line of demarcation between the fringe and core of Indian politics seems to be getting increasingly blurred. —BHASKAR ROY

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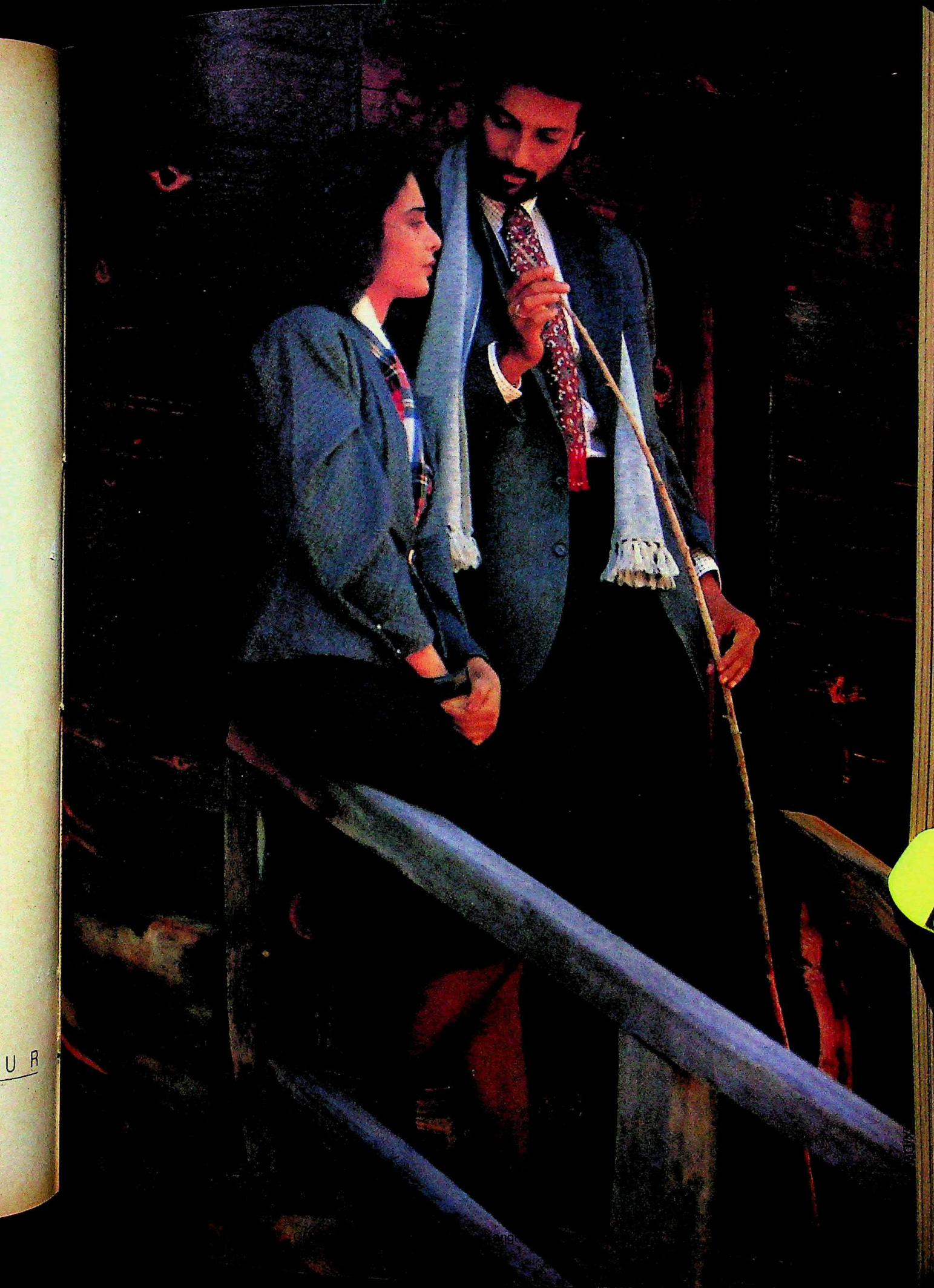

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LUDHIANA

The Spirit of Success

Enterprise, a few natural advantages, the readiness to build upon them and a booming export market have transformed Ludhiana from a once-sleepy town into one of India's premier industrial centres.

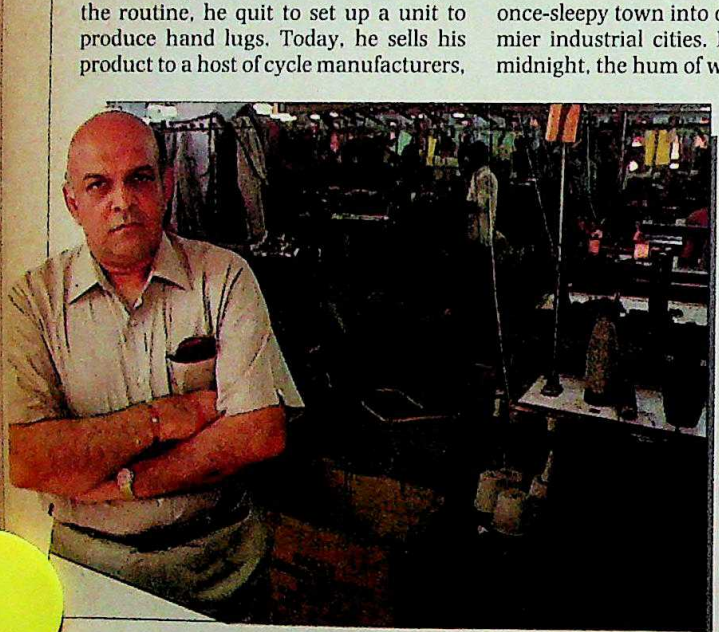
FIFTY years ago, M.S. Bhogal came from Jabalpur to set up a small machine-repair shop in Ludhiana. Soon he realised there wasn't much of a future in that line. So he started a small unit to manufacture cycle parts. Today, Bhogal Sons is one of the country's largest manufacturers of cycle parts. Last year's turnover: Rs 12 crore.

For more than 15 years, Gurcharan Singh worked as a foreman in Ludhiana's Hero Cycles factory, checking the quality of cycle parts and exhorting his fellow workers to produce more. Then, tiring of the routine, he quit to set up a unit to produce hand lugs. Today, he sells his product to a host of cycle manufacturers, among them his former employers. Annual turnover: Rs 40 lakh.

Unusual rags-to-riches stories? Well, not in Ludhiana. Success tales abound in the Punjab city. In fact, Bhogal and Gurcharan are just faces in a crowd of wealthy entrepreneurs. And new ones are constantly popping up, in little nooks and crannies, wherever there is place to set up a factory shed, and sometimes where there isn't. Local technical expertise, a docile labour force, the easy availability of inexpensive power and a booming export market have combined to transform this once-sleepy town into one of India's premier industrial cities. From dawn until midnight, the hum of weaving machines can be heard from the dimly lit first floors of houses that double as factories. To call Ludhiana a university for entrepreneurs would hardly be an exaggeration.

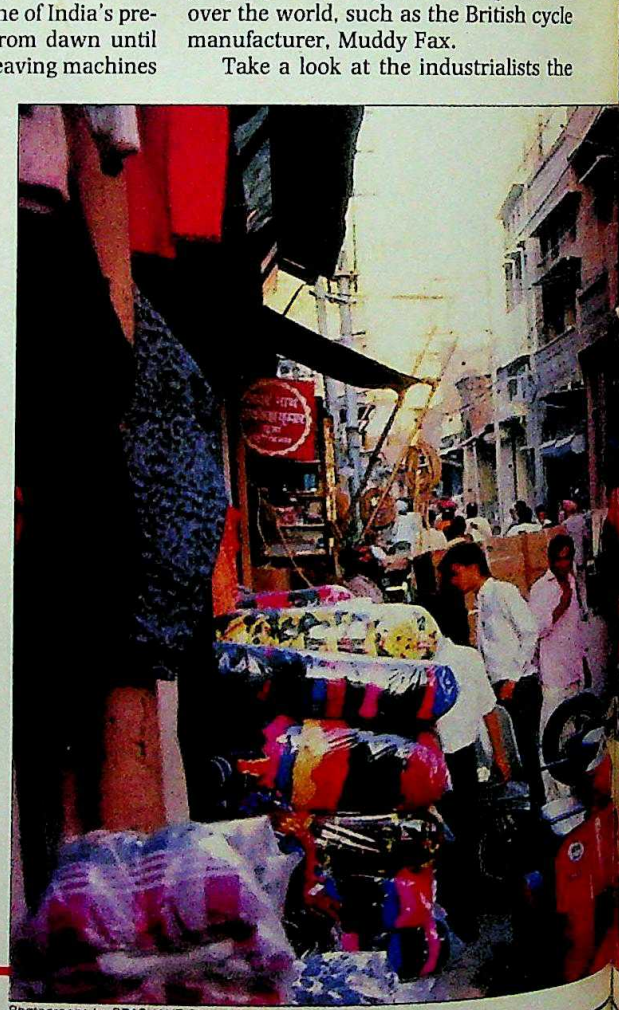
Says Satish Dhanda, managing director of the Rs 2.2-crore Sadem Industries, a 100 per cent export-oriented unit: "I would be a failure if I go anywhere else. The cost of production is at least 20 per cent cheaper here than in any other city. You have everyone here in one little city—from manufacturers of nuts and bolts to coating units." Dhanda's company exports cycle parts to companies all over the world, such as the British cycle manufacturer, Muddy Fax.

Take a look at the industrialists the



■ Jawahar Lal Oswal, Chairman, Oswal Woollen Mills: very upbeat about the city's spirit of enterprise and good labour relations

Entrepreneurship, Oswal says, runs in Ludhiana's blood. Everyone wants to set up on their own rather than work for someone else.



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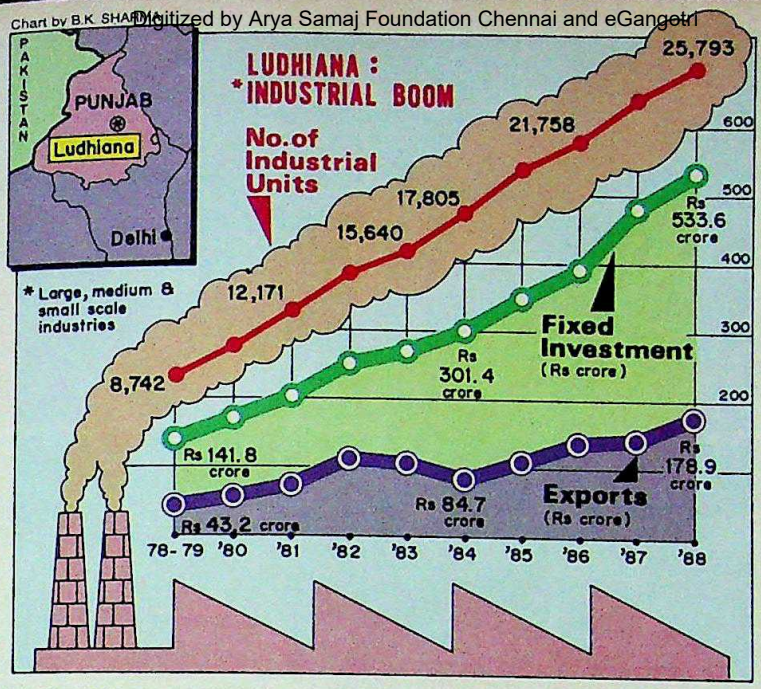


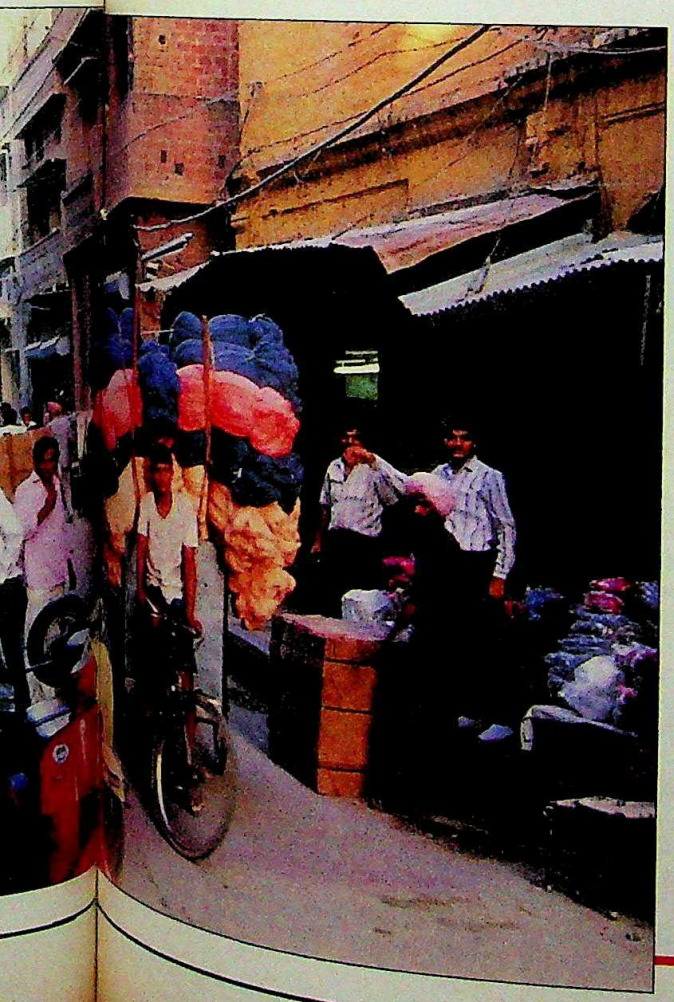
city has spawned: the Munjals of Hero Cycles fame (annual turnover: Rs 208 crore), the Abhey Oswal group (turnover: more than Rs 300 crore), the Arihant group (turnover: Rs 75 crore), Metro Tyre (Rs 100 crore). Even the Thapars began their journey to the top of the industrial big league from Ludhiana though they're no longer headquartered there. And many of the others are now spreading their wings, looking beyond the city that nurtured their enterprise.

The statistics illustrate Ludhiana's success story. Ten years ago, the city had 8,700 large, medium and small-scale units with a turnover of Rs 400 crore. Today, 47,000 units turn out woollens, hosiery, cycle parts, cotton yarn, sewing machines, auto parts, even steel. Total annual turnover: Rs 4,000 crore, a full 60 per cent of the state's industrial production. A sizeable portion of this is exported.

That's not all. The city is a force to reckon with in certain products. It accounts for 95 per cent of the hosiery produced in India, 85 per cent of its sewing machines and 60 per cent of its cycles and cycle parts. Ludhiana also supports nearby towns: 10 new satellite industrial conglomerations like Philour, Budawal and Khanna have grown around the city.

Other figures reveal even more clearly Ludhiana's pole-vault into the industrial big time. In the last six months, over 10 Ludhiana companies put out public share issues. Total value: a whopping Rs 2,700 crore. And the Ludhiana Stock Exchange's turnover has risen from Rs 2 crore when it was set up in 1983, to Rs 200 crore today, making it India's fifth largest. During the same period the number of scrips listed rose from a mere 15 to 158.

By any yardsticks, it's a remarkable economic miracle—and one that shows no signs of coming to an end. The city's big entrepreneurs are pitching for the mega league. Small entrepreneurs are thinking bigger. And unknown ones are leaping into high-tech areas like electronics.



■ Hosiery market in the heart of Ludhiana; and M.S. Bhogal: boom town where rags-to-riches tales have become commonplace

From a small unit to one of the country's largest manufacturers of cycle parts—Bhogal's is a typical success story.

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■ B.M. Munjal, Satyanand Munjal; (above) Gurcharan Singh and sons

His former employers encouraged Gurcharan to set up on his own.

Says Jawahar Lal Oswal, chairman of the Rs 210-crore Oswal Woollen Mills group: "It's a booming industrial city where everyone aims to become an entrepreneur, rather than work for someone else. Entrepreneurship is in everyone's blood."

That's no exaggeration. The city is dotted with hundreds of small units turning out a variety of products—many of them ancillary units supported by big enterprises. Says Brij Mohan Munjal, chairman of the Rs 160-crore Hero Cycles: "It has been our policy to encourage ancillaries. It helps us because we don't have to invest in producing these components." Hero Cycles supports over 100 ancillary units whose total turnover runs to Rs 40 crore.

One of these is the Rs 7.5-crore Surpal Cycles Ltd, run by Anil Surpal, which produces cycle handles exclusively for Hero. Says Surpal: "The Munjals helped us get the land and the loan. Today we are planning to set up another unit in Ghaziabad to cater to Hero Cycles' factory there."

Other big manufacturers too have helped ancillaries—and benefited from the relationship. Vardhaman Spinning Mills used to buy paper tubes for its reeling machine spindles from manufacturers in south India. Then an electricity board employee suggested he could manufacture the tubes and asked Vardhaman to help him set up a unit. It did. The unit shaped up well and encouraged by its success, three more have come up.

The spate of entrepreneurs has thrown up another ancillary industry of sorts—chartered accountants who, for a commission, help uneducated entrepreneurs negotiate loans and deal with the paper work involved in starting a unit. Says R.D. Khanna, one of them: "Small-scale units were always short of funds. They did not go to the institutions fearing they would lose control over their firms. I went to the state financial institutions and got working capital loan for Ralsons, a cycle manufacturing unit here. Today everyone is coming to us."

ALL this despite the fact that much of the city's raw material—wool, steel, chemicals—come from outside the state. Semi-finished products are drawn from farther away—the wooden bodies of sewing machines come from Batala, semi-finished auto parts from Phagwara and rough yarn from Amritsar and Jalandhar.

The political turmoil in Punjab seems scarcely to have affected Ludhiana. "On the contrary," says Rakesh B. Mittal, managing director of Bharati Telecom Ltd, "Sikhs from other parts of the country have set up units in the city after the 1984 riots, primarily to have a base in their own state."

Ludhiana's entrepreneurs have of course had advantages. Freely available power from the Bhakra Nangal power plant, for one. And since it is hydel power, it is priced low—much cheaper than in neighbouring Haryana. A more important factor has been its docile migrant work-force—60 per cent of the workers come from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Says Oswal: "We hardly have anything called strikes. Eighty per cent of the workers in our factory are paid on a piece-rate basis. If I offer a worker a permanent job for eight hours he may not want to work for me because he would be earning less money." The gates of Oswal Woollen Mills are open throughout the day. Workers can enter at any time. Some work 15 hours and take home wages of Rs 2,000 a month.

Pramod Kumar came to Ludhiana from Uttar Pradesh 15 years ago. Working more than 13 hours every day as a labourer in a hosiery factory, he put away enough money to buy six flat-bed hosiery machines. He has rented out five of these to others at Rs 500 a month. At the same time, he continues to work in a factory, using his own machine for which he is paid 25 per cent higher wages. Pramod is not certain about his future plans—he only knows there is no going back to his village. That's not surprising. His monthly earnings: Rs 4,000.

The city's entrepreneurs of course have built on their advantages. Overheads are low in the tightly controlled family-run industries, wastage is minimal and the typical Ludhiana businessman works on low margins. Hero Cycles, for instance, prices its cycles 20 per cent cheaper than competitors. And the Rs 7-crore C.R. Auluck & Sons, manufacturers of Luxmi sewing machines—one of the largest manufacturers in the city—tags its product Rs 100 less than others. Expectedly, buyers crowd the market. Sixty per cent of Luxmi's sewing machines are made for big companies like Usha and Merritt who find it cheaper to buy than produce on their own. And big cycle manufacturers like Atlas and Avon buy their tyres and cycle parts from the city.

Much of Ludhiana's remarkable growth has taken place in the last decade. But the beginnings go back about half a century. Ludhiana was then a small town with a few cycle and machine-repair shops. During the cold winter months, Kashmiri Muslims used to descend on it, making shawls and woollen goods.

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The beginning of the Second World War in 1939 changed all that. To conserve resources, the colonial government banned the import of cycle parts, woollen goods and sewing machines. The result was a massive shortage of these items and of spare parts.

That was when Ludhiana stepped into the breach. Small factory sheds sprouted everywhere churning out woollen goods and imitations of imported spare parts. The need for woollen yarn gave rise to yarn manufacturers and even machine tool manufacturers. Some innovative entrepreneurs set up mini steel plants to meet the demand in Ludhiana for tools and spare parts, and in Gobindgarh, 30 km away, centre of the re-rolling industry in Punjab. Says Munjal: "Ludhiana was able to provide an alternative. The commercial acumen of the Punjabis and the technical expertise of the Ramgaria Sikhs played a crucial role in the success of the city."

The Ramgaria Sikhs, many of them handsmiths and mechanics, are famed for their mechanical ability. They are known to turn out replicas of imported machines—at a fraction of the cost. Bhogal, a Ramgaria Sikh, proudly exhibits the forging plant he built with his own hands, using only foreign catalogues for guidance. It cost him Rs 2.5 lakh. The cost of a comparable Japanese machine: Rs 25 lakh.

Man Singh, managing director of Metro Tyres Ltd, has an equally impressive story to narrate. "We are investing Rs 150 crore to set up a tyre plant, which is half the cost of a plant one of our competitors is planning to set up. The only difference is that while their machines will be imported, ours will be made by the Ramgarias."

Nowhere have these tremendous cost advantages been as well exploited as in the export market. As much as Rs 150 crore worth of hosiery goods—one third of the city's total production—is exported to the Soviet Union. The city accounts for 20 per cent of the world's exports of cycle parts.

■ Avinash Auluck, Managing Director of C.R. Auluck & Sons

With low overheads, companies like Auluck can sell products cheap.

So export houses have mushroomed. Five years ago, the city had just two of them. Today there are 30—exporting a variety of goods to the Soviet Union, the US, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East. Total value: Rs 200 crore.

What makes such achievements all the more impressive is that they have been accomplished with the barest of infrastructures. Take Bhogal Sons, one of the country's largest manufacturers of cycle parts. It has neither management experts nor trained engineers. Archaic machines churn out parts while uneducated Ramgaria Sikhs supervise the work. Most companies are tightly controlled by the families which own them. At Hero Cycles, for instance, all the key positions are controlled by family members.

But there are signs of change. A decade ago, few Ludhiana industrialists would have considered a public share issue. Today, many have successfully hit the market and there are several others waiting in the queue. Says S.P. Oswal, managing director of Vardhaman Spinning and General Mills Ltd: "Everyone is looking for faster growth."

Faster growth has also meant many Ludhiana industrialists are seeking to expand outside the city and even outside Punjab. One reason: as in other growing industrial centres, labour is becoming expensive. Other explanations are offered for the shift to other parts of India. Says K.L. Jain, managing director of the Rs 40-crore Arihant Fabrics: "Ludhiana is not getting new industrial licences. Nor does it have resources like gas on the basis of which large projects can come up here." So Arihant Fabrics is starting a Rs 100-crore acrylic fibre plant in Haryana. And Bindal Agro is putting up a Rs 695-crore gas-based fertiliser plant in Uttar Pradesh.

Inevitably, Ludhiana displays all the less pleasant sides of an industrial explosion. The city is bursting at the seams. Industries have sprung up haphazardly. The roads are congested—Contessas vie with cycle rickshaws for right of way. Hotels are overbooked and flights to and from Ludhiana are nearly impossible to get at short notice.

So, will Ludhiana go the way of many other cities in India—slowly but surely asphyxiated by its own growth? Or will it succeed in regulating growth and building up amenities to keep pace with the soaring demand for them? Going by the experience of other cities, the future seems uncertain. But then Ludhiana is not just another city.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA
in Ludhiana and Chandigarh

■ Rakesh B. Mittal, Managing Director of Bharati Telecom

Political turmoil, says Mittal, hasn't affected industrial growth.

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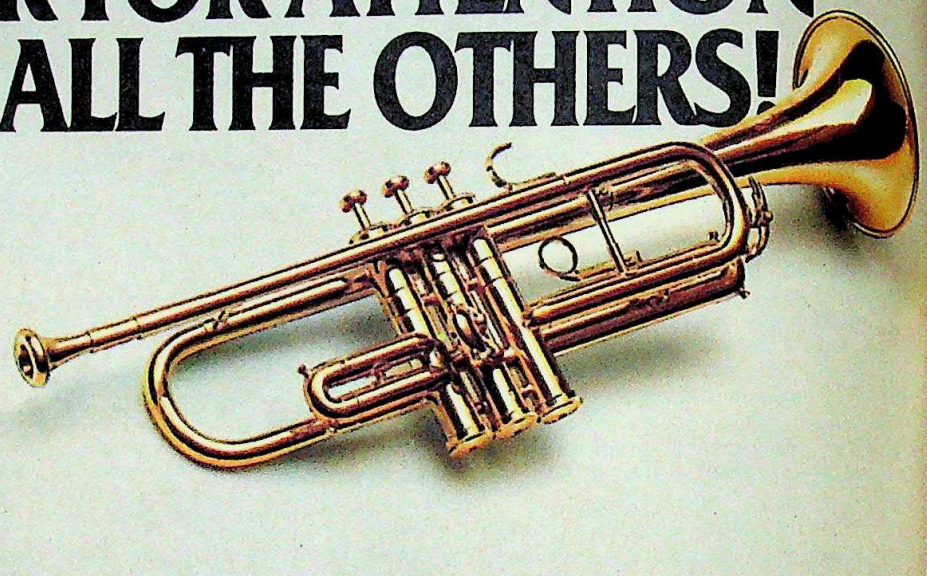

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TRADE TANGLE

THE US Trade Representative's (USTR) citing last June of India's so-called restrictive trade practices as possible grounds for future trade retaliation has evoked a number of responses from US companies. Caterpillar Inc and Colgate-Palmolive Company have joined Citibank in defending India. In a letter to the USTR, construction equipment manufacturer Caterpillar (which has a joint venture with the Birlas' Hindustan Motors) said it expects sales in India to rise sharply. Colgate-Palmolive pointed out that India could be provoked into retaliating against US companies, and that India has never discriminated against foreign-owned businesses in applying import control and other regulations. So, is a groundswell of business opinion building up in India's favour? Not quite. The US Chamber of Commerce remains critical of India's so-called trade barriers.

DRIVE-IN BANKING

THE latest geegaw the banks are tooting is the automated teller machine (ATM) drive-in—clients drive in, insert a card into a machine and withdraw cash, all without getting out of their vehicles. Indian Bank introduced one in Madras last fortnight, after obtaining Reserve Bank of India (RBI) permission over a year ago to instal 25 ATMs. Vijaya Bank has expressed an interest in setting up an ATM drive-in in Bangalore. Nevertheless, some ambivalence persists in official circles on ATMs. Some months back, an RBI committee recommended that banks should not introduce ATMs, on foreign exchange considerations (ATMs are now imported). Yet New Delhi has encouraged HMA Data Systems, the Madras company that installed the Indian Bank ATM, to manufacture them, though this will call for initial imports. The NRI-promoted enterprise has signed an MOU with Diebold Inc of the US. And in Bombay, Wellman Hindustan which has tied up with National Cash Registers of the US to turn out ATMs has received government permission.

A BUSH IN HAND

INDUSTRIALIST Satish Kumar Modi has pulled off a deal that has top echelons in the Government rejoicing. Last May, Modi Overseas Investment Ltd signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Bush Resources Inc, a real estate company headed by US President George Bush's elder brother Prescott S. Bush Jr to build a Rs 90-crore housing complex in Delhi. Modi met Prescott Bush along with Indian Ambassador to the US, Karan Singh, last month. The project involves building 180 swanky bungalows for non-resident Indians (NRIs). Cost: Rs 34 lakh to Rs 58 lakh each, to be paid in foreign exchange. Last fortnight, Modi Overseas submitted the building plans prepared by Bush Resources to the Delhi Administration for approval. A plot near Palam Airport is to be acquired and Modi hopes to start construction early next year. Now that's called construction diplomacy.

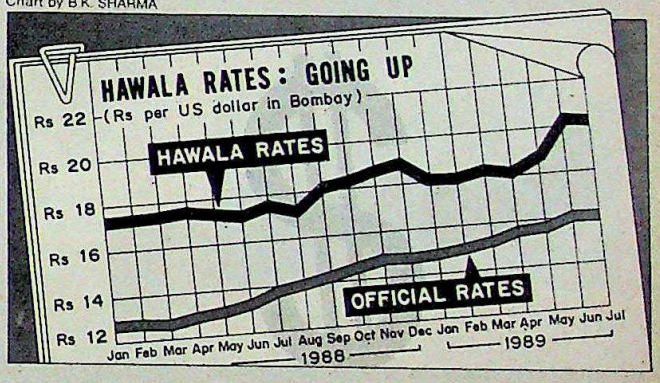
CHANGING STARS

INDIAN hotels have long sported star ratings. Now, a Tourism Department committee is thinking of a new system with classifications like those abroad: deluxe, first class, standard and plain budget. Some of the current five-star deluxe and five-star hotels will fall in the deluxe category, while other five-star and all four-star hostelries will get first class rating. Most three-star and four-star hotels will be budget hotels.

WIDENING GAP

THE gap between the official foreign exchange rate and the unofficial or *hawala* rate has been widening over the last few months. The *hawala* rate hovered at around Rs 18 for a dollar between January and April this year but climbed to almost Rs 21 in June and July (*see chart*). The official rate rose from roughly Rs 15 to almost Rs 16 between January

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



and April, and by July was just above Rs 16. Obviously, there's been a sudden spurt in the demand for illegal foreign exchange. Official sources attribute this to increased smuggling of gold and silver (buyers are having to fork out more foreign exchange for bullion) and to manipulation of invoices by businessmen. Others point to the coming elections. Just before previous elections, foreign exchange stashed away abroad, it seems, used to be converted into rupees to finance campaigns. This time, they claim, the reverse is happening.

QUICK WORK

THE Government that works faster is at it again. In 1986, the Centre had sanctioned Rs 2.96 crore for the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) to build a new customs building near Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport. So the customs took a 10,000 sq m plot on lease from the International Airports Authority of India (IAAI). Then, wrangling broke out. Dispute one: the height of the proposed building. The IAAI said it would have to be scaled down since aeroplanes land at the airport. The matter was settled. Dispute two: the fee. That too was resolved. Then came dispute three: IAAI wanted its contractors to put up the building, the customs wanted the task entrusted to the Central Public Works Department. The customs won. Finally, the financial adviser to the CBEC objected to the marble flooring proposed; he wanted cheaper flooring material. The outcome of all this: the building's cost has soared, from Rs 2.96 crore to almost Rs 5 crore.

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DCM LIMITED

Speech by Shri Bansi Dhar, Chairman at the Annual General Meeting of the Company held on September 27, 1989 at New Delhi.

Shri Bansi Dhar

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I extend to you a very warm and cordial welcome. The Directors' Report and the Audited Accounts of the Company for the period ending 31st March 1989, have been with you for some time and, with your permission, I will take them as read.

In view of the amendments in the Income Tax Act, the financial year of the Company has been changed from July-June to April-March. Accordingly, the Annual Report for the period ending 31st March 1989 covers a period of 9 months. It is for this reason that the AGM is being held in September rather than in December, which all of us have been used to.

Your Company is 100 years old. Looking back, we can be proud of its growth into one of the most diversified Corporations in the country. I am sure that you will join me in paying tribute to our founding fathers and all those who nurtured and brought up this Company to a position of eminence. In this connection, I would like to make a special mention of the contributions made by Lala Shri Ramji but for whose vision, the Company could not have reached this level.

OPERATIONS

Friends, you are aware that the Company has been facing numerous problems in the past few years. Even though the returns have not been commensurate with the investments, we were still able to give some dividends. Lately, however, even this was not possible.

The continuing deterioration had generated a certain amount of pessimism and led to some quarters even having reservations whether the Company would be able to survive against such heavy odds and return to the path of growth. It is, therefore, very gratifying that during the period under review, the Company has made a gross profit of Rs. 15 crores as against a loss of Rs. 8 crores last year. If annualised, this is the best achieved in the last 5 years.

Even though we are on the path of recovery, we still have some way to go. We have to clear liabilities, reduce the interest burden and, most of all, ensure that our investments bear results.

In the last Shareholders' Meeting, I had mentioned that we have taken various steps to reverse the situation. On the basis of current performance, we expect that this trend towards improvement will continue.

A feature of the results is the addition to the reserves of the Company by over Rs. 3.5 crores as against a substantial erosion in 1987-88. The improvement that has been brought about is largely due to sustained efforts in cost-reduction on all fronts, tighter financial management, and better operating efficiencies. I am sure that all of you will join me in acknowledging the assistance, support and dedicated efforts of all the employees for enabling the Company to achieve this turnaround.

There has been an improvement in the operations of the Fertiliser, PVC, Caustic Soda, Rayons, Sugar, Vanaspati and Foundry Plants. A major contributing factor to improved performance was better power availability, particularly at the Kota complex, leading to record utilisation of capacities. Exports also registered an increase, on an annualised basis. The only areas which are still in the red are Textiles and Electronics. All efforts are being put in to reverse the trend and bring them back to a state of health.

A significant event in the current year has been the closure of Delhi Cloth Mills at Bara Hindu Rao with effect from 1.4.89. This Mill was incurring heavy lossess for the last several years and with its closure, the drain on the Company's profitability can be avoided. The Company is poised to enter into the business of Real Estate Development and we look forward to expeditious approvals by the authorities concerned so that the work can proceed.

There is a need to conserve resources to enable the Company to optimise its existing operations and meet pressing commitments in the long-term interest of the Company's health. All these factors were considered at great length by the Board of Directors and it has been decided not to pay any dividend this year despite a disposable surplus. I am confident that we can count on your support and encouragement so that we can return to a path of progress and growth.

As in the previous years, the Company continued to lay emphasis on controlling pollution to make the environment cleaner. This is a continuing exercise and your Company is committed to this objective. Every year, we will have to continue our efforts in this direction. In this context, I would, once again, request the Government to take the initiative in working out a new approach in co-ordination with the States and industry. I would also request that a package of measures and incentives to encourage and facilitate industry in

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meeting the exacting standards and implementing the required programme in phases should be seriously considered.

RESTRUCTURING

In the last AGM, I had informed you of the proposal of restructuring the Company.

Over the years, DCM Ltd. has become a large conglomerate with multifarious and diverse operations. Each of the units is large enough to be a fair-sized independent company. Because of its diverse nature, however, there were conflicting priorities and lack of focus in management of some of the operations, resulting in an unsatisfactory overall performance.

Your Directors have given a lot of thought to this matter and have also held discussions with the Financial Institutions. It has been felt that restructuring DCM Ltd. into smaller companies would result in giving a greater thrust to various areas of operations.

To run the business more effectively and profitably, it is therefore proposed to restructure DCM Ltd. by dividing it into four companies, namely, DCM Shriram Industries Ltd.; DCM Engineering Industries Ltd.; Rath Foods Ltd.; and DCM Ltd.

DCM Shriram Industries Ltd. will comprise of Shriram Rayons, Daurala Sugar Works and Hindon River Mills;

DCM Engineering Industries Ltd. will comprise of Shriram Fertilisers & Chemicals, Shriram Cement Works, Swatantra Bharat Mills and DCM Silk Mills;

Rath Foods Ltd. will comprise of Shriram Foods & Fertiliser Industries and Mawana Sugar Works;

DCM Ltd. will, from the date of restructuring, comprise of DCM Data Products, DCM Engineering Products, Delhi Cloth Mills Land Development, Hissar Textile Mills and the investments in Shriram Fibres Ltd. and DCM Toyota Limited.

The four companies formed will have the same shareholders as in the present DCM Ltd. Under the Scheme worked out, each shareholder of DCM Ltd. will have one equity share of Rs. 10 each in each new Company as fully paid up for every four equity shares of Rs. 10 each held by them in the present DCM Ltd. You will be approached shortly with the detailed scheme for your approval. However, you can rest assured that in this exercise, your interests are of paramount importance to us and shall be fully protected.

This restructuring is bound to result in the consolidation and growth of various operations. Since these will now be smaller companies to be managed and operated independently, the shareholders can look forward to improved prospects.

It will be easier for the management of each of the smaller companies to improve the performance, productivity and profitability further and to make the company grow and expand. Each of the companies has the managerial and technical talent and expertise available to make good use of business opportunities in the coming years. I, therefore, have no reservation that this restructuring will be in the long-term interest of all those who have a stake in the company.

By breaking through the constraints of the last few years and re-orienting ourselves to the changing times, we will be able to grow and prosper and thus contribute to the socio-economic development of our nation.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

During the last 5 years, the economic policies of Government have been very positive and pragmatic. As a result, last year GNP grew by 8.5%; industrial production went up by 9.3% and yet inflation was contained at 6%. These increases, in spite of the unprecedented drought of 1987 and other aberrations in the initial years of the 7th Plan, is an indicator of the inherent strength and speaks well of the overall management of the country's economy. With the impetus given by the Government in the last 5 years, the economy has achieved rapid growth and it augurs well for the future.

During the 8th Plan also, there will be abundant opportunities for growth and expansion. There are already indications that the Plan, which is still under formulation, envisages a more significant role for the private sector in the economic development of the country. The share of private sector outlay has been increased, and several thrust areas have been identified for their participation.

I am sure that the private sector in general, and the management of the new companies in particular, shall respond vigorously to these challenges. The measures of liberalisation of the regulatory system by the Government during the past few years has already proved that the approach is in the interest of economic growth and upliftment of the country and its people. I therefore hope that further relaxation of various industry and financial controls shall be continued in the coming years also.

There is also, in my opinion, scope for simplifying and rationalising various systems, policies and procedures without diluting the regulatory control as considered essential in the context of the socio-economic development. I take this opportunity to request the Government to undertake this exercise urgently and take necessary steps along with the commencement of the 8th Plan period in April, 1990.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Before concluding, I would like to express my gratitude to my colleagues on the Board for their support, guidance and advice to tackle the problems that we were faced with. We could not have improved the Company's performance without their help and assistance.

My grateful thanks are also due to the Financial Institutions and our Bankers, who have given their unreserved support and co-operation to us during a very difficult period.

I must also express special thanks to my colleagues at all levels in the Company for their hard work and dedication in improving the operations under difficult conditions.

Most of all, I extend to you, dear shareholders, my sincere and heartfelt gratitude for your continued confidence and co-operation which has been a source of immense strength and encouragement to me and my colleagues.

Thank you.

Note : This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

DCM

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RELIANCE INDUSTRIES

The Big Push

The country's third largest corporate group—known for its closeness to the ruling party—is embarking on a massive, Rs 4,000-crore expansion drive, despite the controversies it's caught in and the uncertainty in the political climate.

FOR weeks, they've had their backs to the wall, furiously fighting court cases. Their names have been dragged into a sensational criminal case that stunned the business community. Their take-over of a giant engineering enterprise has been the subject of devastating investigations by a national newspaper chain, their attempt to raise money from the public has faced a series of legal challenges. As if this was not enough, for the first time in the history of independent India, the future of a business empire seemed intertwined with the fortunes of the ruling party at the hustings.

To the troika that is in the eye of the storm, all this has a familiar ring. Reliance Industries Chairman Dhirubhai Ambani, 56, and his sons Mukesh, 32, and Anil, 30, have been in the thick of controversy before. But the going seems tougher this time round. Leading lights of the Opposition are gunning for the Ambanis, and Dhirubhai himself is not quite the man he was. A stroke he suffered in 1986 has taken its toll: his right arm is paralysed.

Worse, the *Indian Express* has front-paged every Reliance move and every favour the Government has allegedly granted the group *(see box)*. As a result, Reliance has had to face public interest litigation filed by Bombay lawyer Harish Jagtiani questioning L&T's take-over and seeking a stay on L&T's Rs 820-crore convertible debenture issue. Earlier, senior Reliance executive Kirti Ambani (no relative of Dhirubhai) was arrested and later released on bail by the Bombay Police in a conspiracy case to murder the Ambanis' arch rival, Nusli Wadia, chairman of Bombay Dyeing Industries. The stock-markets have reflected popular perceptions: the Reliance scrip has languished in the Rs 105 to Rs 110 price range, a far cry from the Rs 393 of 1986.

All this seems to spell trouble for the country's third largest business group. Yet the mood at the plush corporate headquarters of Reliance Industries at Bombay's Nariman Point is anything but gloomy. The pressures and the media attacks haven't affected the Ambanis. On the contrary, they exude an air of supreme confidence. Late last week, Anil and Mukesh celebrated with a night out in town. Reason: the L&T issue showed every sign of having been oversubscribed. As per official rules, the company will be allowed to retain 15 per cent of the excess sums collected. Quite simply, the Ambanis will have a hefty Rs 953 crore, to do with virtually as they please.

They've never quite fully explained what they intend to do with the cash. One

Principal business: Textiles, polyester filament yarn, polyester staple fibre, purified terephthalic acid, linear alkyl benzene.
Financial: 1988-89 sales: Rs 1,169 crore. Net Profit: Rs 79.37 crore. Total Assets: Rs 1,502.76 crore.
New Projects: Ethylene cracker. Cost: Rs 750 crore. Export oriented purified terephthalic acid unit. Cost: Rs 750 crore. Oil refinery: at Jebel Ali export processing zone, Dubai. Cost: Rs 1,120 crore. Expansion at Patalganga: polyester staple fibre, linear alkyl benzene, purified terephthalic acid. Cost: Rs 1,000 crore.
Total Investment: Rs 3,620 crore.
Future: Projected sales in 1990-91, Rs 1,472 crore. 1991-92, Rs 1,598 crore. 1992-93, Rs 2,027 crore.

Reliance Petrochemicals Ltd
New project at Hazira, Gujarat
Cost: Rs 750 crore
Commissioning: 1990

RPL will be the largest manufacturer of mono ethylene glycol, used to produce synthetic yarn, poly vinyl chloride and high density polyethylene both key raw materials for making plastics.

MUDRA

Mudra Communications
Advertising Agency.
Billings: 1988-89, Rs 50 crore. Ranked fifth in billings.

COMMERCE

Commerce Publications Ltd
New five-edition financial daily
Launch: end-1989

Dhirubhai's vision is of an integrated group that will refine oil, extract raw materials for producing a range of intermediate items.

Larsen & Toubro Ltd

Principal business: Engineering, cement, shipping, construction.
Financial: Sales: Rs 1,107 crore. Net Profit: Rs 42.48 crore. Total Assets: Rs 565.82 crore.
New Projects: Tyres capacity: 3 million. Cement expansion: 3 million tonnes.
Future: Company will have 10 per cent share of tyre market, 7 per cent of cement market.

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explanation: L&T will extend Rs 300 crore as suppliers' credit to Reliance Petrochemicals Ltd (RPL). Also planned: a Rs 120-crore refrigerators and washing machines project.

The Ambanis are embarking on a Rs 4,000-crore expansion drive over the next five years. Undaunted, Dhirubhai Ambani is still thinking big. His vision is one of an integrated group that will refine oil, extract products like mono ethelyne glycol (MEG) and purified terephthalic acid (PTA)—raw materials for producing synthetic yarn—and a host of other products that go into the making of plastics, from the oil. The gambit will give the group control of raw materials, enabling it to produce a range of intermediate items. Indeed, Ambani confesses that his ambition is to follow the path of the "Seven Sisters," the integrated oil multinationals who first went into oil exploration, then into refining, distribution and finally into petrochemicals. The Ambanis, however, hope to do this in reverse order. "That's our dream," admits Dhirubhai.

The plan is to enter markets where the

> "Reliance Industries is now a concept in which the Ambanis have become irrelevant."
>
> DHIRUBHAI AMBANI
> *Chairman, Reliance Industries*

RAGHU RAI

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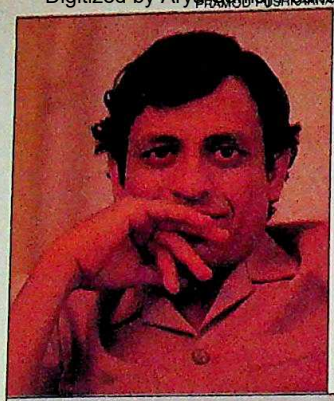
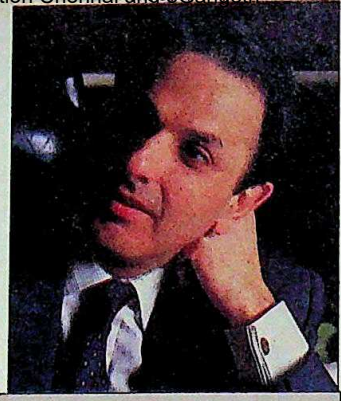
Ambanis will quickly become leaders, always cocking an eye at national needs. With foreign exchange scarce, exports are a priority, and the group has set a Rs 1,000-crore export target. And since there's a shortage of housing, the Government is bound to back a foray into mass house construction. Here, engineering and construction giant L&T will play a major role. So L&T has a 3-million-tonne cement expansion project on the drawing-boards (apart from a 3-million-tyre project).

Also in the offing is a Rs 750-crore unit to crack ethylene, a basic raw material for plastics, at Hazira in Gujarat. The Government has also cleared a Rs 750-crore export oriented unit for the manufacture of PTA. Even more ambitious is a push overseas—Reliance is to set up a 6-million-tonne refinery at the Jebel Ali export processing zone in Dubai. The $700-million (Rs 1,120 crore) refinery will be financed entirely overseas. "International banks are queueing up to finance the project," Anil Ambani claims.

Last but not least is an ambitious media plan. Commerce Publications, the company owned by Dhirubhai's son-in-law Dattaraj Salgaocar, is coming out with a business daily in December. The ultimate goal is to establish a total presence in the information business. If all these plans materialise, Reliance may well emerge as a formidable Rs 5,000 crore group over the next five years.



PRAVEEN PUSHKARNA



GANGADHAR BHOJANI

Gurumurthy's exposes and the arrest of a Reliance employee for conspiring to murder Nusli Wadia have been big embarrassments for the Ambanis in recent months.

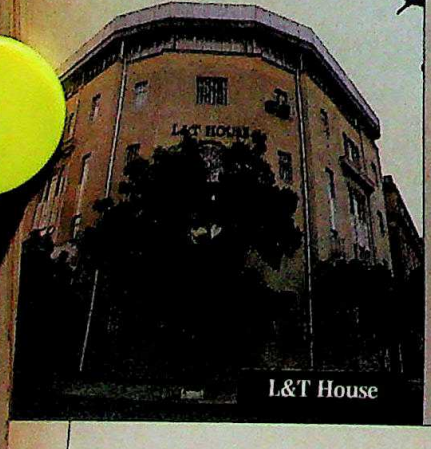
OBVIOUSLY, the money for all this will be raised from the public. Since going public in 1977, Reliance has collected an estimated Rs 2,500 crore from the stock-markets—in convertible debentures. The group has followed the classic financial strategy of converting debentures into shares—to reduce the interest burden—at a high premium. The premium money collected is then tucked away in reserves, bolstering the company's net worth (reserves and surplus). This keeps the company's debt: equity ratio at negligible levels (0.62:1 last year) and enables it to borrow more money for expansion. In fact, Reliance can easily raise another Rs 1,400 crore from the markets.

It's against this backdrop that the Ambanis insist that the attacks by *Indian Express* are no more than irritants, and that the outcome of the elections is of little concern. Dhirubhai Ambani says *(see interview)*: "Reliance is now a concept in which the Ambanis have become irrelevant." Reliance executives also privately argue that the costs to the country of stopping the group in its tracks are too high.

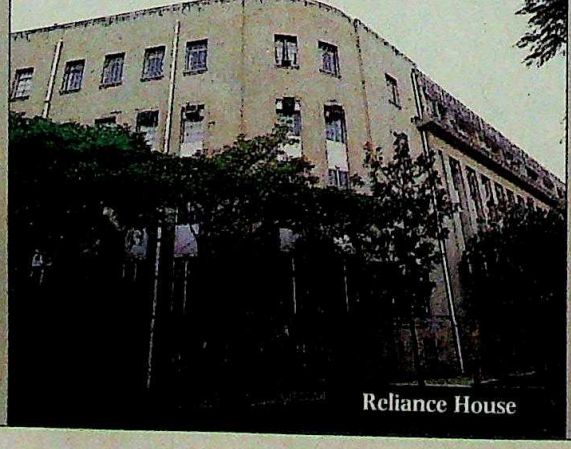
The Ambanis are clearly banking on their dominance in industry, and on their constituency, the 3.9 million investors of Reliance and of Reliance Petrochemicals. Reliance Industries Executive Director Mukesh Ambani stresses that: "Reliance is a market leader. The group accounts for nearly 1 per cent of the indirect taxes collected in the country and saves Rs 1,000 crore a year in import substitution. We are also planning to achieve Rs 1,000 crore a year by exporting manufactured goods. I am sure you will consider this a sizeable presence."

The key element here is the investor.

The Ambanis have in the recent past been snapping up multi-storeyed complexes in Bombay. One example: ICI's Crescent Building which is being renamed Reliance House.



L&T House



Reliance House

RPL House

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Two out of three investors in the country are Reliance group shareholders. Together, Reliance, Reliance Petrochemicals and L&T stocks account for 11 per cent of the total value of shares in the stock-markets today. The government-owned Life Insurance Corporation of India and the Unit Trust of India depend on stock-market operations for a good chunk of their income. So if the Reliance share price plummets, it could pull down the values of other shares too—and chew into the income of the two investment institutions. *Indian Express* Financial Advisor S. Gurumurthy backs the point when he says: "These institutions have a vested interest in keeping the Reliance share price high. If the share price index falls, there is panic all around."

Right now, the Ambanis also have other grounds for optimism. The Patalganga complex, which had been ravaged by floods recently, is back on its feet. The Reliance group itself is on a roller-coaster ride. Sales for the nine-month year of 1988-89 are up by 26 per cent, from Rs 1,770 crore in 1987-88 (18 months) to Rs 1,112 crore in 1988-89 (9 months). Net profits have shot up by almost 100 per cent (both on an annualised basis), from Rs 81 crore (18 months) to Rs 79 crore (9 months). This contrasts with the net profit of Rs 14 crore in 1986, when V.P. Singh was finance minister.

Reliance Money Machine: Where Rs 2,500 crore has gone.

Company	Issue/Yr.	Size	Purpose	Status
Reliance Industries	Series "E" Convertible Debentures (1984)	Rs 80 crore	Modernisation of textile division	Implemented
Reliance Industries	Series "F" Convertible Debentures (1985)	Rs 309 crore	Expansion of polyester filament yarn (PFY) division, PSF and PTA projects	PFY expansion implemented, PSF, PTA projects delayed by three years
Reliance Industries	Series "G" Convertible Debentures (1986)	Rs 500 crore	LAB/MEG/HDPE PTA projects	Cost escalation in PTA project, (Rs 268 crore to Rs 550 crore). LAB plant delayed. Both commissioned in early 1988
Reliance Industries	Rights Equity (1987)	Rs 198 crore	Increase in capital	
Reliance Petrochemicals	Convertible Debentures (1988)	Rs 593 crore	MEG/PVC/HDPE projects	Slated to be commissioned in end-1990
Larsen & Toubro	Convertible Debentures (1989)	Rs 820 crore	Suppliers credit to RPL and other undisclosed projects	
Total		Rs 2,500 crore		

INDIAN EXPRESS

Fiery Exchange

Reliance

Charges

- The Ambanis antedated letters of credit for the import of Rs 100-crore worth of PTA. The CBI recommended prosecution. No government action as yet.
- Reliance obtained licences for the manufacture of MEG, PVC and HDPE in mid-'84. Not implemented after five years.
- There have been massive cost escalations in all the key projects.
- Reliance has been raising money again and again for the same project. In October 1986, it raised Rs 500 crore for various projects, including the LAB and the MEG ones.
- Reliance Industries transferred the licences for MEG and HDPE to RPL. Excess amount raised for these projects after implementing the PTA and LAB projects: around Rs 300 crore.
- Though the original cost of three RPL projects was estimated at Rs 345 crore, they cost Rs 700 crore.
- Reliance has huge unsold stocks of PSF and LAB. Capacity utilisation of PSF is 55 per cent, while that of LAB is 60 per cent.
- Reliance annual profit is less than the aggregate of excise and customs duty concessions it has got from government. As against Rs 280-crore bounty, its profits are only Rs 112 crore.

Replies

- Since there was no truth in the allegation, the case was dropped after seeking a report from various expert bodies.
- Not true. Final locational clearances given in 1988. Projects could not be completed according to original schedule.
- Cost-overruns due to delays in customs clearances, foreign exchange variations over which company had no control.
- The company never raised money for the LAB project. It was for the MEG venture. Reallocation of funds for ongoing projects has been done after obtaining government approval.
- The extra money was used for expansion and ongoing projects with the approval of the board, the shareholders, the financial institutions and the Government.
- The original cost was worked out in 1982. It was revised after three years. The MRTPC order in 1988 says Rs 700 crore.
- The company has only two weeks of inventory. In fact, PSF capacity utilisation is 105 per cent today.
- All financial concessions meant for the industry as whole. No concession given to Reliance only. All concessions passed on to consumers.

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With all this going for them, the Ambanis have been buying up real estate in Bombay, including the ICI India building which will be renamed Reliance House.

Yet there is no denying that the group's image has taken a beating, and that several questions have been raised about the group's practices, and not by the *Express* alone. For instance, it's often accused of raising money for the same project several times *(see box)*. Says a Bombay banker: "The Reliance group has acquired a certain arrogance. It feels that if it can pay a reasonable dividend to shareholders and keep the price of the share high, nobody will question it."

There have been rumours that the money raised from the public issue was utilised to finance the take-over of L&T. There's considerable speculation today that the Ambanis are eyeing Premier Automobiles and Bombay Suburban Electricity Supply, which they deny.

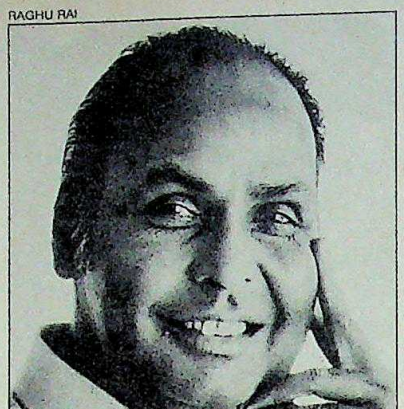
The Ambani juggernaut could be heading for more serious problems. The Ambanis have a 48-per cent share of the polyester filament yarn (PFY) market—the product contributed Rs 421 crore to sales last year—but a glut is building up in the industry. The story is repeated in polyester staple fibre (PSF), where Reliance controls 35 per cent of the market. Together, these products contributed to almost half of Reliance's sales. Anil Ambani, however, argues: "Reliance is a multi-product company and will be able to weather any storm."

While it may or may not weather upsets in the market-place, it will have a hard time living down the *Express* charges of official favouritism. "Nobody looks at favours granted to other business houses. Why pick on Reliance?" Anil asks. Taking his case further, he says that Reliance has had its fair share of misses: it lost out on bids for the Saleempur aromatics project, a gas cracker in Gujarat, the refinery in Madhya Pradesh, and a power project in Gujarat. "This clearly disproves the sustained propaganda that Reliance gets whatever it wants," says Anil. Gurumurthy of the *Express*, however, doesn't buy the line: "The Birlas and the Mundhras were close to the Government in the past. But never before has a business house actually dictated terms."

If Reliance is to ride out the latest storm, it will have to overcome that common perception. And for all their statements to the contrary, what is also clear is that the fate of the Ambanis will hinge on the political, rather than the financial environment—proving once more that politics and economics don't make such strange bedfellows after all.

—S.N. VASUKI

RAGHU RAI



DHIRUBHAI AMBANI

"Success is my worst enemy"

HIS ideas race ahead of his words. Barely has he finished with one idea before he's on to the next, his mind a cauldron bubbling over.

Reliance Industries Chairman Dhirubhai Ambani may have suffered a stroke, and may even be under fire, but he's supremely confident. And there's certainly a lot of that old Ambani magic around. It surfaces in the way he talks excitedly and loudly, in his quick bursts of laughter, in his friendly approach, and in his rapid-fire conversation which is punctuated with an explosive kya *(what)—a pet word.*

The ideas range from the bizarre to the brilliant. Some of them are more prime ministerial in their approach than those of an industrialist looking to make a buck. He talks animatedly of the country's need to export, of the falling value of the rupee vis-a-vis other foreign currencies, of the eighth plan and of modernisation. He's concerned about India's need for energy, and offers solutions. "Every Indian has a gambling instinct, kya*? So many crores are spent on* matka *every day. Why not use this for the benefit of the country,* kya*? India needs so much more oil, so tell people they can invest in oil exploration but give them good odds, say 10 to 1, and make the earnings tax free. I guarantee you'll get hundreds of crores,* kya*?" Like the man, his* kya *has many meanings—do you agree, so what, do you have anything to add.*

But the relaxed style is deceptive. The key to the man lies in his eyes. They are the eyes of a superb poker player. His unblinking stare takes in everything, coolly sizes up every detail around him, without giving anything away. They light up only on the mention of Ramnath Goenka and the Indian Express*, describing its campaign against Reliance as journalistic terrorism—another favourite phrase.*

Ambani wears his wealth lightly, without arrogance. Like his manner, his dress is informal—a plain white bush shirt and trouser. Indeed, the Ambanis regard themselves as different from other businessmen. Unlike many other industrialists, Ambani and his sons Mukesh and Anil, don't fit into Bombay's club culture. They're workaholics who put in 14 to 16-hour days and think business round the clock.

Riled by the growth of the new industrialised countries like Taiwan, Dhirubhai believes that he'd be 10 times his present size if he'd had the same opportunities. For all that, he's set a scorching pace of growth—which some of his rivals haven't been able to. His answer to that: "Everyone had the same opportunities available to them, and I'm being made out to be Duryodhana." Last fortnight, the controversial industrialist broke his over two-year-long silence in a 4-hour exclusive interview in Bombay and New Delhi with Senior Editor PRABHU CHAWLA. *Excerpts:*

Q. *Are you spending more time defending Reliance than managing it?*

A. There is no controversy. There is only a campaign; a one-sided campaign of corporate character assassination in one chain of newspapers, *Indian Express*, a campaign being conducted at the behest of some business adversaries. The campaign has now become so hackneyed that I do not think it necessary or useful for me or for the paper's readers to defend myself against all the lies, half-truths and distortions which it keeps printing.

I believe my best defence is my deeds, my projects. In a few years from now, what will stand tall above all these so-called controversies is the work I'll have done and left behind me to make Indian industry great and big and competitive at home and in the world market. I'm not sure how many will really bother to remember the daily venomous outpourings of the *Indian Express*.

Q. *Have the controversies in any way*

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affected the performance of Reliance?

A. Yes, they have—in great measure. They have sent 51 lakh Indian investors rallying to Reliance's support. They have made my colleagues at our offices and at all our plants and in the market-place work with greater vigour, dedication and solidarity to yield the type of production and financial results which we have achieved in all our companies.

Q. Why raise money from the investors when the banking system is more than willing to help you?

A. What are you saying? If you say what you have said, you haven't understood me; you haven't understood Reliance's corporate philosophy. Even my worst enemies have not denied me credit for having pioneered a revolution in the Indian capital market, for bringing the equity culture to the money market, the middle class and farmers.

Q. The Reliance scrip is languishing in the Rs 105-110 range. Is this a sign that investors have lost confidence in Reliance?

A. Certainly not. The confidence and trust of Reliance investors in their company is unshakable. Do you think we would have received such huge over-subscriptions to our public issues had our investors' confidence in the company been shaken? As for the Reliance stock price, you must relate it to the vast changes which have come about in our capital market over the last few years. Investors are dispersing their investments more widely, in different companies, even within our own group. The stock prices of our different companies are seeking and attaining a new equilibrium.

Q. Would you attribute your presence in Larsen & Toubro (L&T) to the support of the financial institutions?

A. It was the L&T Chairman N.M. Desai and its board of directors which invited Reliance to join its board. Then, once we had mutually agreed to come together, L&T stock was acquired from the market at the market price. In fact, the shares were acquired in the face of tough competition. All that is a matter of record. The entire issue has been dealt with in the Bombay High Court, which has clearly and categorically vindicated and upheld the coming together of the two companies.

Q. *But that is not correct. BoB Fiscal and other financial institutions had already made up their mind to hand over the company to you through the backdoor. Please comment.*

A. This is again the creation of *Indian Express*' fertile mind. The stocks were available in the market. We bought them at the market price. Any one could have outbid us. Even today, enough L&T shares are available in the market.

Q. *Three years ago you had stated that the Reliance group was not interested in takeovers. What explains your acquisition of* L&T?

A. Synergy. You know Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) and L&T have had a long business association. We came together to take up the various Reliance Petrochemicals Ltd (RPL) projects. We both found that considering the volume of RIL/RPL orders on L&T, it would be in our interest to come together. This was really a marriage by mutual consent rather than a takeover.

Q. *Your connections in the bureaucracy are legendary. Is it true that important appointments are made at your behest? You are viewed as a 'king-maker' who can make or unmake leaders.*

A. I do not know whose perceptions you are referring to—the *Indian Express*'? Well, the *Indian Express* has tried to propagate, publicise and project a larger-than-life image of me, calling me the 'king-maker' and all that, all to distort my public image, my public profile. It is all a part of its prolonged psychological war against me, a part of its journalistic terrorism against our group.

Q. *But you have been able to prevent action against your company. Nothing has been heard of the famous case relating to backdating of the letter of credit for imports and alleged smuggling of plants without any valid documents.*

A. Do you mean to say that the Government should take cognizance of any fabricated material published on the basis of documents stolen from government offices? Let me tell you that even if the *Indian Express* publishes lies on all the 365 days of the year, it is not going to be accepted by the public. It is the truth which finally prevails. We have been completely exonerated by the adjudicating authorities.

Q. *Is it not because you keep the top civil servants and the bankers on your side by helping them set up business? You have done it for the Bank of Baroda chairman's son, and the* CBI *director's son is also a beneficiary of your munificence.*

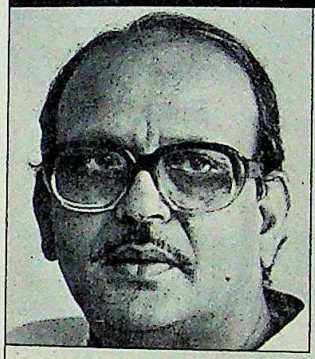
A. This is a lie. The allegations, both general and specific implied in the question, which itself is based on stories run by the *Indian Express*, are false. Is doing business with Reliance munificence? Is it a crime? If it is so, then what about people like Ramnath Goenka, Gurumurthy, and others who have all made money out of Reliance?

No businessman can keep investigating the antecedents of all his clients or business associates. If he keeps looking at the name tags of his clients, he is bound to fail.

Q. *Your clout with the Government is evident from the manner in which you have been getting all applications for licences approved so quickly.*

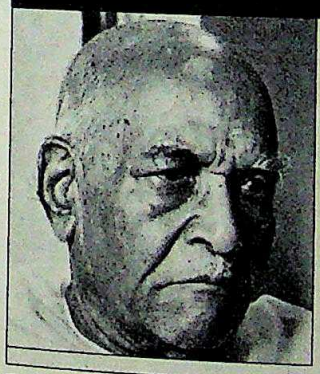
A. This is the trouble with you newspapermen, my friend. You allow your mind to be conditioned by the so-called pseudo-journalists masquerading as investigative journalists. Every licence that

ON JANATA DAL LEADER V.P. SINGH



Reliance always deals with the Government and not with any individual. It has always been my policy to abide by government policies and rules.

ON WHY GOENKA HAS BECOME HIS ENEMY



As for me, I would say Ramnathji is not my enemy.... The sole motivating factor behind his character assassination campaign is: envy.

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we get immediately becomes a page one story but no one ever bothers to find out how many rejections we have to face. Shall I name a few? Our applications for a six-million-tonne refinery was rejected as were the applications for the Gandhar gas field development and a 600 MW power plant in Gujarat.

Q. *You are believed to have stated that 'everyone has a price'. Was it this statement that turned Ramnath Goenka against you?*

A. You have known me all these years. This is not your first interview with me. Can you believe that I could have said that? I never uttered such a thing and I would not, because I am myself a living example of one who could not and cannot be bought.

Q. *Why has Ramnath Goenka become your enemy?*

A. Why don't you ask Ramnathji himself? Only he can reply to that. I would also want to know. As for me, I would say Ramnathji is not my enemy. My success is my worst enemy. Let us look at it this way. In conditions where too many try and too few succeed, the success of someone like me is bound to cause envy and the envy becomes ever more intense, the more its designs are frustrated. The sole motivating factor behind Ramnathji's campaign of character assassination is: envy.

Q. *What is so great about Reliance? Your detractors say that it is a sinking ship and that the bubble will burst.*

A. They have been saying it from the day we were seen to be a threat to our business rivals. The recent reconstruction of the Patalganga plant which was totally ruined by the floods is a classic example. By getting the plant back in production, our employees have proved that they are committed to a concept, not to individuals. Reliance has survived. Dhirubhai will go one day. But Reliance's employees and shareholders will keep it afloat. Reliance is now a concept in which the Ambanis have become irrelevant.

Q. *What is the status of the Reliance Petrochemicals project. You have set 1990 as the deadline and yet it seems that even the civil works have not commenced?*

A. I stand by my commitment to have RPL on stream by the first quarter of 1991. We shall go together next year and you will see this with your own eyes.

Q. *Money by any means seems to be your objective.*

A. Well, I don't believe that. You must realise that such money which you have in mind may enable a man to make a fast buck or become rich. But it cannot enable you to raise a Reliance from scratch. You can't build an industry by fraud as some of my adversaries want all of you to believe. A small-time operator can and may become a small-time businesssman but he can't become an industrialist.

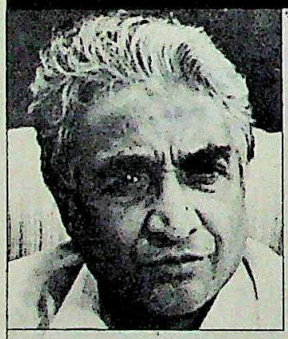
Q. *What is your own assessment of the Rajiv Government's liberalisation policies so far?*

A. I think the changes have done industry good. I welcome these changes. They are in the right direction. The growth of industry is proof of that. The pace of liberalisation needs to be hastened but I can appreciate the Government's concerns.

ON THE POLICIES OF RAJIV'S GOVERNMENT

I think the changes have done industry good. I welcome these changes. They are in the right direction. The growth of industry is proof of that.

ON THE CHARGE THAT HE HELPED KATRE'S SON



No businessman can keep investigating the antecedents of all his business associates. If he keeps looking at the name tags of his clients, he is bound to fail.

Q. *There are conflicting versions about your health. We would like to have your last word on the subject.*

A. Not the 'famous last word' I hope! (*laughs*). Why do you need my word for that? I'm here before you. How do you find my health? I feel fit. I'm here at the office as I always used to be, doing my hard day's labour. If this is not being in good health, what is?

Q. *It is widely believed that you have been able to hound out all those politicians and civil servants who have opposed you.*

A. I think it has become a fashion in the country to attack achievers. Pygmies always attack giants so that they can get attention. Who would have known of some so-called journalists had they not attacked me and Reliance? Moreover, over 25 cabinet reshuffles took place during the last five years. Over 200 civil servants were shifted from the departments we deal with. Do you want to give me credit for all these transfers and changes?

Q. *Were you not hostile to V.P.Singh and his officials because they refused to be bulldozed by you?*

A. Reliance always deals with the Government and not with any individual. It has always been my policy to abide by government policies and rules. But the so-called torch-bearers of truth have always been trying to poison the minds of politicians and civil servants on behalf of our business rivals.

Q. *Who are these rivals?*

A. You know them well. I feel the *Indian Express* has been put up front as our rival by others.

Q. *But you are believed to have forged letters and documents to get rid of the then finance minister V.P. Singh.*

A. Nonsense. This is nothing but a figment of the *Express*' imagination. I have no doubt that it was done on behalf of our only rival.

Q. *Are you really worried about the possibility of V.P. Singh being the next prime minister of India?*

A. I am not in the business of political speculation and astrology.

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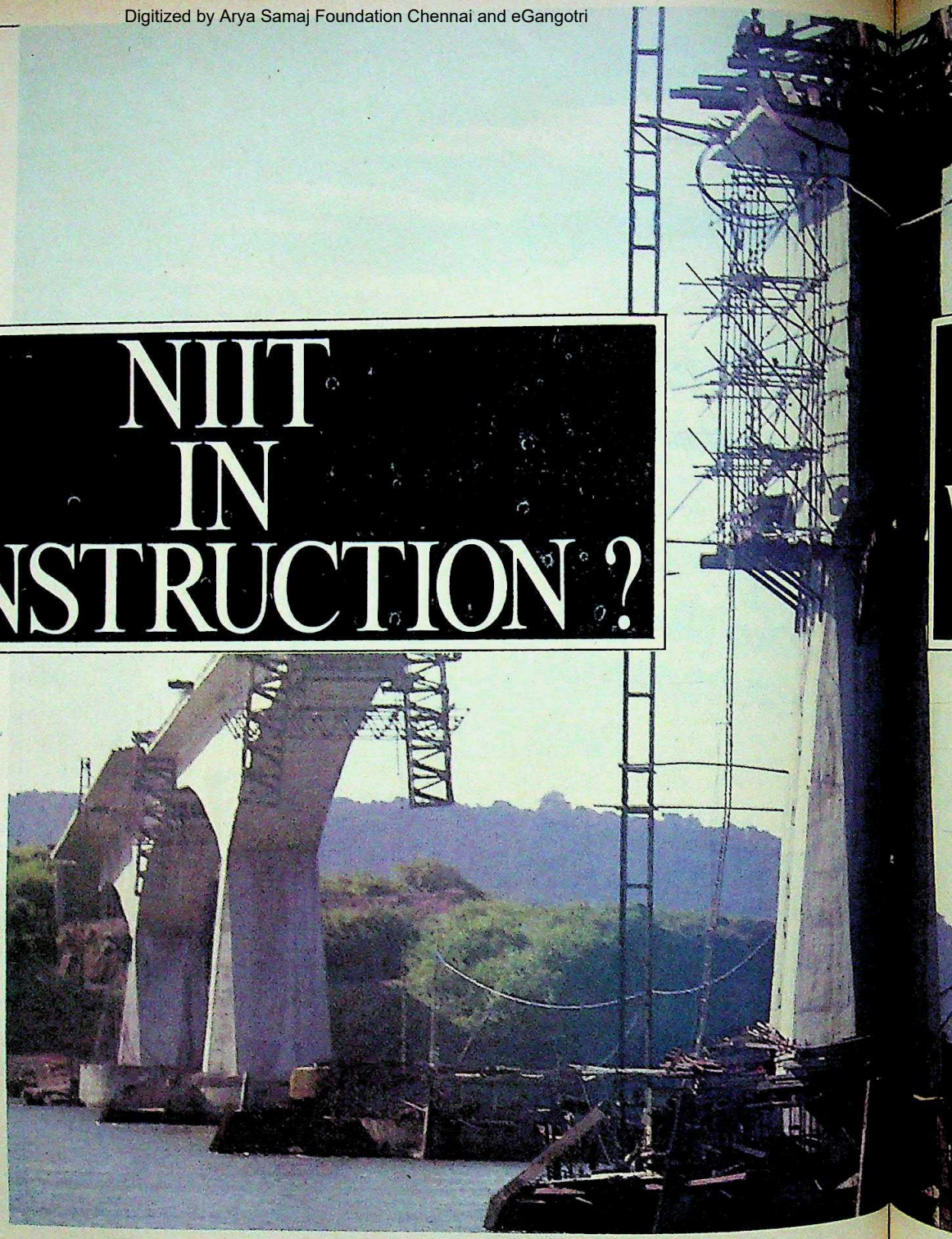

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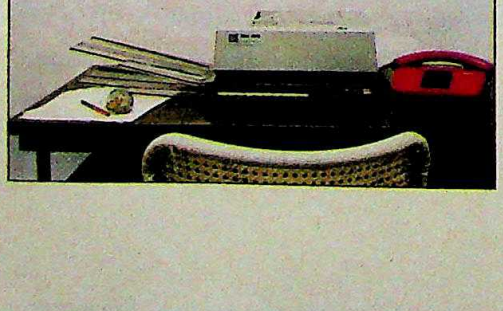

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RUSSI MODY

Golden Boy of Steel

Chairman completes 50 years in TISCO

THE twin-engined Beechcraft taxis to a halt. The man the crowd has been waiting for steps out of the aircraft last. The scene that unfolds would do a potentate proud.

The milling throng of company officials, town residents and tribals surge forward. Parked not far from the tarmac is a 1.7-tonne *laddu*, made in the company canteen—from 350 kg of gram flour, 43 tins of ghee, 3 kg of cardamom, and 1,200 kg of sugar—at a cost of Rs 60,000.

The focus of all this attention: Rustomji ("Russi") Hormusji Mody, the 72-year-old chairman and managing director of the Rs 1,862-crore Tata Iron & Steel Company (TISCO). The occasion: Mody's completion last fortnight of 50 years at TISCO—the longest stint ever by a senior executive. So what does it feel like? "It's the Old Man Upstairs who's responsible for my lasting," says Mody.

The hoopla at Jamshedpur in Bihar is part of a six-month-long bash. Few companies have made such a hullabaloo over their chief executives. Even in the Tata group, heavyweights like the late Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company (TELCO) head Sumant Moolgaokar and Tata Tea Chairman Darbari Seth have preferred to keep a low profile. Mody, however, is a cult figure in a company town, a corporate chieftain whose word is law.

Yet TISCO, the Tata group's flagship, has other reasons to celebrate. For the eighth year in succession, production, sales and profits are up. And after a Rs 35-crore tax dispute with the Government—which led to Tata Steel being placed on an official blacklist—was settled last year, the company is on an ambitious modernisation and expansion drive.

The Tatas are also jacking up their equity stake in Tata Steel from roughly 4 per cent to around 8 per cent—some 2 per cent more than the Birla stake of nearly 6 per cent. Tata companies have picked up nearly Rs 120 crore of the recent Rs 650-crore convertible debenture issue. "I don't think we visualise any takeover attempts," explains Aditya Kashyap, TISCO's executive director (corporate). "It's just that we have faith in our issue."

Amidst all these events,

Photographs by SAIBAL DAS

Mody with aircraft: high-flier

Mody occupied centre-stage last fortnight. A *bon vivant* with a keen interest in week-end cooking, bridge, and the piano, Mody took up skiing last year. And he still pilots the company plane. As head of Tata Steel and director of numerous Tata enterprises, he flits through cities like London, Paris, New York, New Delhi, Bombay and Bhubaneswar, spending on an average not more than three consecutive nights in each. "This is true only of the mad Tata executives," he chortles, adding simply: "I like to keep in touch."

He's been doing that since he joined TISCO 50 years ago as a trainee on a salary of Rs 100. Mody came to Tata group Chairman J.R.D. Tata's attention for his handling of labour, a skill that's not deserted him (the last big strike was in 1942). He was director of personnel in 1953, joint managing director in 1974, chairman and managing director in 1984.

Since then, he's helped pitchfork the steel conglomerate and its 16 associate companies and subsidiaries into the mega league, and turned its scrip into a blue chip. In terms of market capitalisation—the total value of the stock in the stock-market—Tata Steel shares are *numero uno*, now worth over Rs 20,000 crore (the Reliance share comes second). Indeed, Tata Steel has cobbled together an empire that rivals Dhirubhai Ambani's Rs 1,496-crore Reliance Industries. The Tata Steel group's sales run to about Rs 2,500 crore.

That's due to diversifications and take-overs, both ongoing affairs. As part of an ambitious export effort that will involve international trading in commodities, a foray into shrimp farming is planned. Tata Steel and the Hawaii-based Aquatic Farms are floating a new enterprise, Tata Aquatic Farms. On the anvil too are a 1.7 million-tonne cement plant, using a blast furnace by-product, a Rs 100-crore ferro-chrome project and a Rs 200-crore investment in power.

This is not all. Tata Steel is to buy British Steel's 39.5 per cent overseas stake in the Calcutta-based Stewart & Lloyd, to ensure that it remains in the steel company's fold (it already owns 10 per cent of the industrial pipes and construction company's equity). And about nine months ago, Tata Steel bought a 50 per cent controlling interest in MAN India, an existing engineering products unit, and will be renaming it Tata MAN.

The attempts at modernisation, aimed at improving productivity and cutting costs, have helped put the group on the fast track. Between 1980 and 1988, TISCO invested Rs 1,072 crore in updating manufacturing pro-

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

	SAIL	TISCO
Sales (Rs crore)	7,156.00	1,861.77
Pre-tax profits	358.40	180.34
Saleable steel production (million tonnes)	7.26	1.94
Capacity utilisation	81.4%	111%

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cesses. One outcome: steel production capacity has ballooned, from 1.74 million tonnes to 2.1 million tonnes, and will go up further to 2.7 million tonnes. "In the next seven years," says Mody, "roughly Rs 3,700 crore will be invested in modernisation, in the cement project and in capital expenditure." The cash is to come from internal resources (roughly Rs 200 crore a year), international financial agencies, and, the Government willing, debentures floated abroad.

FINALLY, the group seized the opportunities provided by the Government decontrolling the prices of special steels this decade. It's cut down the production of items whose prices are still controlled and is stepping up the output of decontrolled items. So revenue has shot up. Example: in the first five months of this year, Tata Steel realised Rs 6,996 per tonne of steel, versus Rs 6,200 in the same period last year.

For all the hype about Tata Steel's successes, it's had its embarrassments too. After claiming that it could revive Ipitata Sponge Iron, a joint venture with the Orissa Government, with in-house technology, Tata Steel had to call in Lurgi of West Germany. While Ipitata is now out of the woods, turnkey contractor Tata Davy is not. And even the steel conglomerate's most ardent fans admit to its bureaucratic functioning.

And Mody's critics accuse him of advancing the careers of favourites, of playing company officials against one another. Yet he arouses a fierce loyalty in his defenders. They insist that he delegates authority, that he picks people and drops them if he finds they're incompetent, that he's not overly authoritarian. "He does enjoy power, and I don't think it's good. But for the sort of power he enjoys, he's not half as autocratic as he could be," says an interested observer. As for Tata Steel's to-do about Mody's completing 50 years, he adds: "The eulogising has to be understood in its context. Jamshedpur is a company town. The ethos is such. J.J. Gandhi (a former resident director of the company at Jamshedpur) was a moghul and was eulogised."

The picture that emerges, then, is of a plain-talking corporate moghul who's frequently described as an outstanding manager of men, accessible to his subordinates, but nevertheless a man with warts.

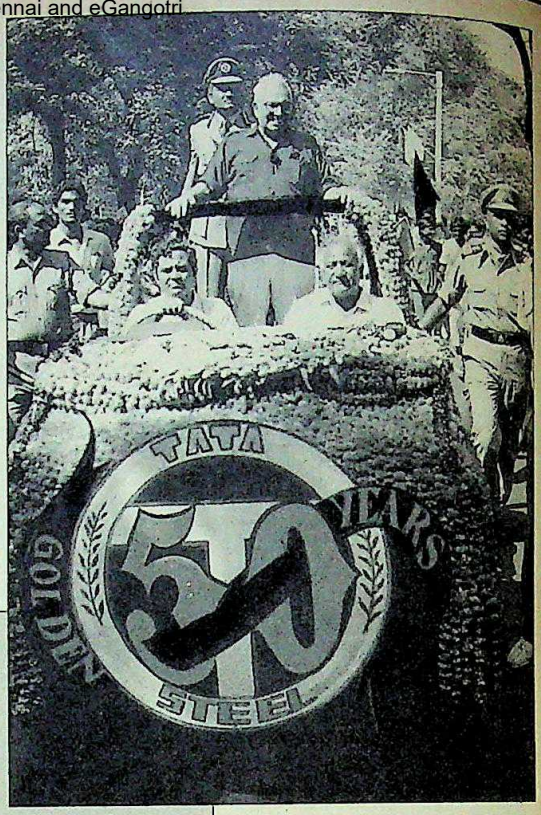
Mody too has had his share of embarrassments. Last year, a Calcutta newspaper suggested he was in the running for Moolgaokar's job at TELCO. Mody had apparently been tipped to take over the chairmanship of TELCO: the report cost him the job. Asked to comment, Mody says: "Who would want to appoint a 72-year-old man? JRD quite correctly nominated Ratan Tata."

Question marks also hang over the succession at Tata Steel. Joint Managing Director J.J. Irani is one possible contender for the top slot. But Mody thinks that the posts of chairman and managing director will be split, with TISCO Deputy Chairman Ratan Tata taking over as chairman. "The posts were always split. I'm the only one who's held both posts," says he.

If Mody is a cult figure in company circles, it's also because he enjoys playing up to audiences. At a so-called Junior Dialogue—a grievance ventilation forum for supervisors and officers—last fortnight, Mody was at his biting best. One complainant: "There are no lights in the *gulli* behind the garage in my house." Mody: "You don't have any back lights in your backside." Loud guffaws from the audience. Mody (turning to the official responsible for such matters): "In which fifth year plan are you going to provide those lights?" Company official: "In four months time." Mody (to the complainant): "If by year-end you don't have lights, come back to me."

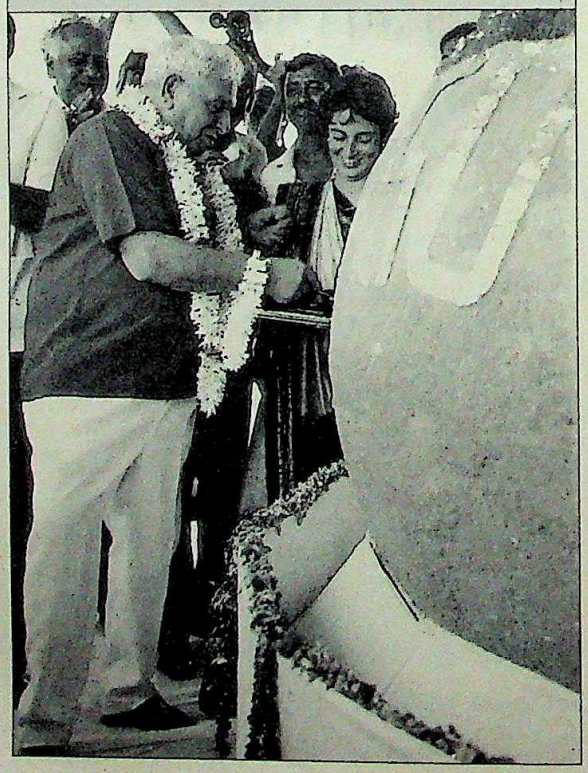
The audience loved it.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI
in Jamshedpur



Mody acknowledging greetings; and (below) with a 1.7-tonne *laddu*: cult figure

Russi Mody arrived from Bombay to a tumultuous reception in the company township of Jamshedpur, the start of a unique celebration that will continue for six months.



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U G. MATHAI
in Jamshedpur

What did the Copenhagen Mermaid say to the Skypak Man?

"I know, you keep racing against time. But must you always prefer the sky to the sea?"

We'll deliver. Wherever on earth. **SKYPAK** The worldwide couriers.

Skypak House, Off M. Vassanji Road, Marol, Andheri (E), Bombay 400 059.

Avenues:SC:490:89

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The day is drawing to a close in Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh. Sitting at one of his largest looms, Abdullah leans back to scrutinise his handiwork. On the semi-finished carpet, the pattern is coming alive; and in his eyes is the craftsman's gleam of pride. As he tucks one last loose thread into place, his thoughts go back to that day in 1977 when ITC's Triveni Handlooms came to his help...

Abdullah of Shahjahanpur. Even the skills inherited from his forefathers weren't getting him two square meals a day.

Until ITC established Triveni Handlooms to export his carpets and give his talent a new lease of life.

As an export agency, ITC matches requirements of foreign buyers.

ITC established Triveni Handlooms to inspire the revival of this traditional craft. Under Colonel Prem Sahgal (of INA fame), Triveni has helped over 2500 talented but poor weavers. Wages have increased from Rs 4 per sq. ft. in 1977 to over Rs 150 and the quality of product has improved impressively. With all their carpets being exported, Triveni earns close to Rs 1 crore in foreign exchange.

Apart from carpets, ITC's Exports Division markets a range of other products across the world. These include computer software, marine foods, garments and handicrafts. With fresh fruits, vegetables, spices and processed food being added to the portfolio, and with new markets showing significant potential, ITC is increasing its foreign exchange contribution to the country.

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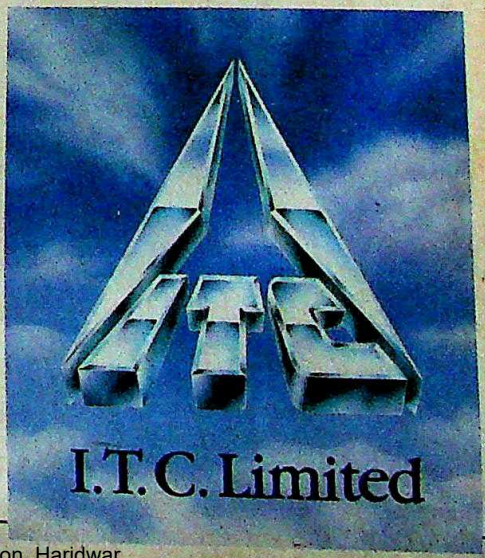
Where else is ITC working for India?

Agro-industry : ITC's technological expertise, gained from decades of R&D in seed development, is being transferred to produce high-yielding oilseeds. With the manufacture and marketing of edible and non-edible oils and their derivatives, ITC is helping reduce imports.

Family Health and Welfare : Through its far-flung marketing network, ITC distributes millions of Nirodh contraceptives and promotes the advantages of a small, well-spaced family: an effort acknowledged by the 1988 FICCI Award for Family Planning.

Paper and Board—in the core-sector : The ITC-promoted Bhadrachalam Paperboards is a leader in its field. It has set new standards by combining record productivity with exemplary concern for wood conservation, environment protection and tribal welfare.



New horizons, new hopes.

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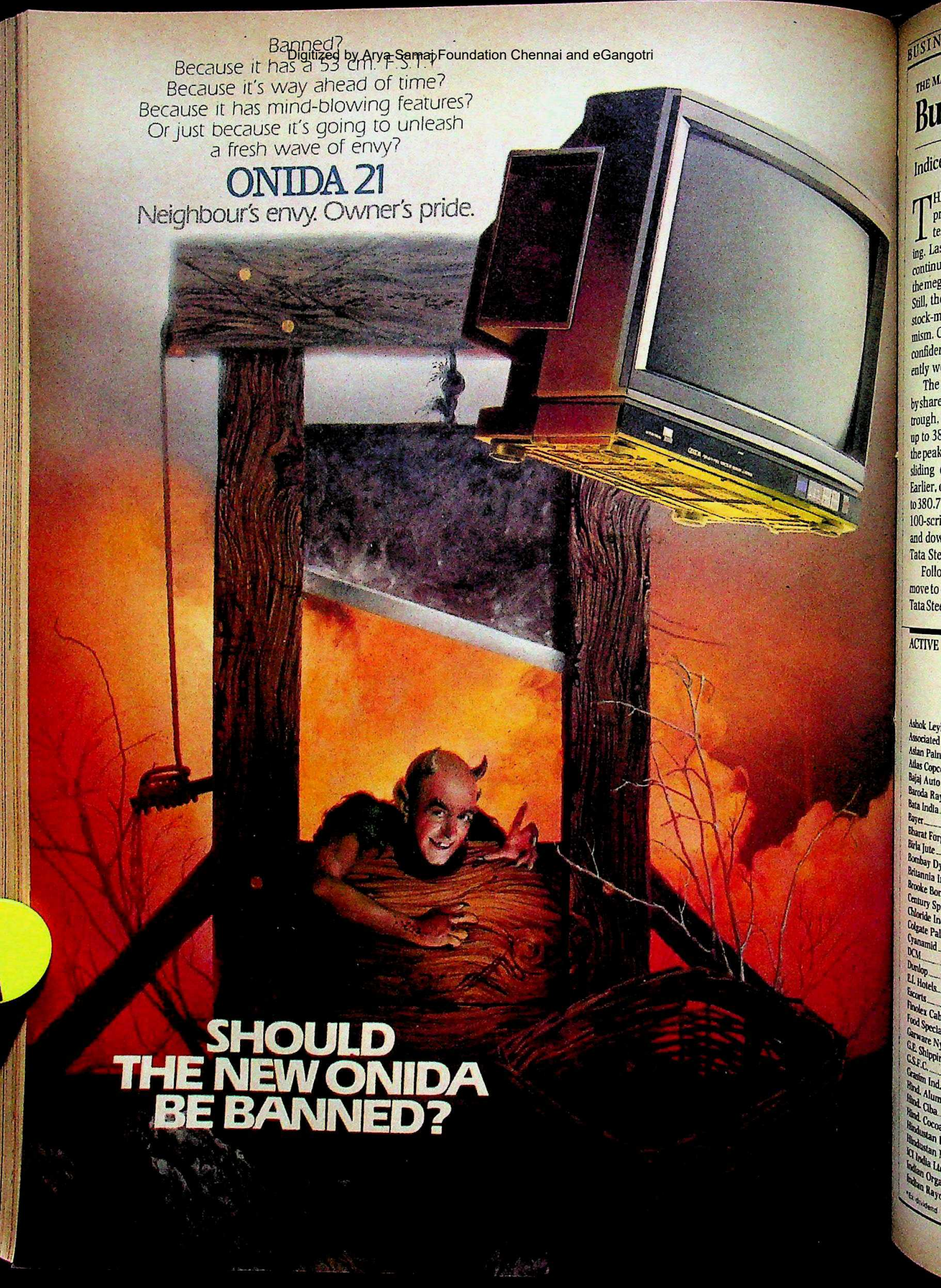

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THE MARKETS

Bumpy Ride

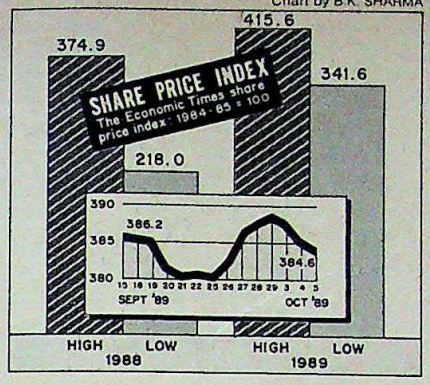
Indices continue to see-saw

THE sharp fluctuations in share prices which started in early September show no signs of stabilising. Last fortnight, share price indices continued to see-saw even as the first of the mega issues opened for subscription. Still, the overall mood in the country's stock-markets was one of cautious optimism. Corporate managements exuded confidence, though investors apparently were more cautious.

The market volatility was mirrored by share price indices. Recovering from a trough, *The Economic Times* index shot up to 389.1 by end-September, close to the peak of 389.2 on September 7, before sliding down to 384.6 on October 5. Earlier, on September 25, it had dropped to 380.7. The Bombay Stock Exchange's 100-scrip national index too went up and down as did a favoured blue chip, Tata Steel (Ordinary).

Following rumours about an official move to decontrol the steel industry, the Tata Steel scrip gained nearly 100 points

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



between September 22 and 29—going from Rs 1,191.50 to Rs 1,290. The share then settled at Rs 1,225 on October 4, presumably because it was realised that the Government would not initiate any drastic policy measures affecting the steel industry before the general elections. It is rumoured that the Bank of Baroda subsidiary, BoB Fiscal Services—which is embroiled in a controversy over the purchase of L&T shares—has picked up a hefty chunk of Tata Steel shares.

While investor sentiments were by and large lukewarm, the market for new issues was buoyant. The first mega issue, that of Larsen & Toubro, got off the ground after an acrimonious court battle which is yet to be fully resolved. Next come the public issues of Usha Rectifiers and Bindal Agro Chem.

The indirect consequence of the upbeat mood in the new issues market was that a couple of leading scrips perked up. Such shares, which had been somewhat subdued in the recent past, included Reliance, TELCO and Associated Cements. The sprightly mood was underlined by the ACC chairman when he projected a rosy future for the company which had suffered a net loss last year. Tata Tea's open offer to shareholders of Consolidated Coffee to buy their shares ushered in a welcome trend of openness in corporate take-overs which have hitherto been shrouded in secrecy.

For all the gloom caused by the fluctuations in share prices, there's no denying that share prices are ruling far higher than they were last year. In 1988, *The Economic Times* index touched a high of 374.9 and a low of 218. In contrast, the index hovered around 384 in early October—almost 10 points higher than last year's peak. So much for the Cassandras.

The big question however is: is the see-saw season over? At the moment, the chances seem even. But with the impending elections throwing their long shadow on the markets, it's difficult to arrive at any firm conclusions.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1989 HIGH	1989 LOW	CLOSE 5.10.89	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	84.00	61.00	76.00	2.00 +
Associated Cement	345.00	230.00	268.00	4.00 +
Asian Paints	226.25	165.00	205.00	5.00 +
Atlas Copco	53.00	32.00	41.00	2.50 +*
Bajaj Auto	450.00	290.00	302.50	3.75 –
Baroda Rayon	755.00	285.00	702.50	27.50 –
Bata India	89.00	60.00	66.00	0.50 –
Bayer	910.00	580.00	730.00	10.00 –
Bharat Forge	202.50	68.75	71.25	6.25 –
Birla Jute	73.75	41.50	51.50	1.00 +
Bombay Dyeing	162.00	104.00	127.00	1.00 +
Britannia Ind.	120.00	89.00	111.00	1.00 +
Brooke Bond	155.00	75.00	91.00	5.00 +
Century Spinning	2240.00	1230.00	2155.00	25.00 –
Chloride India	88.50	72.00	84.00	1.00 +
Colgate Palmolive	371.25	162.50	178.75	6.25 +
Cyanamid	92.00	55.00	82.50	4.50 +
DCM	85.00	31.00	58.00	3.00 +
Dunlop	95.50	70.00	73.00	2.00 –
E.I. Hotels	68.00	50.00	60.00	1.50 +
Escorts	84.00	58.00	80.00	1.50 –
Finolex Cables	430.00	290.00	310.00	10.00 +
Food Specialities	224.00	154.00	161.00	1.00 +
Garware Nylon	55.50	36.00	49.50	nil
G.E. Shipping	46.50	33.75	40.50	0.50 +
G.S.F.C.	177.50	123.75	162.50	2.50 –*
Grasim Ind.	137.00	75.00	101.00	4.00 –**
Hind. Aluminium	327.50	155.00	240.00	15.00 –
Hind. Ciba	1090.00	600.00	970.00	110.00 +
Hind. Cocoa	141.25	98.75	130.00	5.00 –*
Hindustan Lever	102.00	69.50	101.00	1.50 +
Hindustan Motors	52.50	26.75	28.30	3.20 –
ICI India Ltd.	68.00	39.00	52.00	1.00 –
Indian Organic	54.00	23.00	51.00	5.00 +
Indian Rayon	106.00	76.75	83.75	0.25 +
Indrol	335.00	218.75	248.75	6.25 +
Ingersoll-Rand	423.75	267.50	402.50	5.00 –
ITC	129.00	46.25	66.00	3.00 –
J.K. Synthetics	92.00	66.00	73.00	3.00 –*
Kinetic Engineering	395.00	130.00	137.50	12.50 –*
Kirloskar Cummins	88.75	54.50	67.50	0.50 –
KSB Pumps	445.00	187.50	192.50	2.50 –
Larsen & Toubro	128.00	81.50	100.00	1.50 –**
Lipton	88.75	65.00	87.50	10.00 +
LML Ltd.	28.00	12.50	17.00	1.00 –
Madura Coats	104.00	92.25	100.00	nil
Mahindra & Mahindra	113.50	76.50	94.00	1.00 +
Milk Food	300.00	180.00	220.00	2.50 –
Motor Industries	695.00	560.00	660.00	40.00 +
Mukand Ltd.	140.50	75.00	134.00	3.50 +
National Organic	1180.00	710.00	1065.00	15.00 +
Nirlon	17.00	8.00	14.00	2.75 +
Orkay Silk Mills	29.00	13.50	17.50	2.00 +
Peico Electronics	30.50	16.50	24.25	0.25 +
Pfizer	80.00	58.00	74.00	9.00 +
Ponds	212.50	151.25	173.75	7.75 +
Premier Auto	68.00	40.00	58.50	0.50 –
Raymond	85.00	65.50	73.50	2.75 –**
Reliance Industries	158.00	99.50	101.50	0.50 –
Siemens India	95.00	65.00	76.00	1.00 –
Shaw Wallace	103.25	62.00	91.00	3.50 –
Shriram Fibres	94.00	55.00	60.00	2.00 +
SKF Bearings	3020.00	1140.00	1260.00	30.00 +
SPIC	67.00	39.00	49.00	1.25 +
Tata Steel	1580.00	1062.50	1195.00	18.75 –
Telco	1075.00	657.50	1011.25	12.50 +
Vam Organic	178.00	136.00	160.00	5.00 –
Videocon Int.	172.50	55.00	165.00	12.50 +
Voltas	1000.00	470.00	920.00	30.00 –
Wimco	32.00	15.00	17.75	1.50 +

*Ex dividend

**Spot delivery

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	13.1066	12.9631
Austria	Schilling	100	1.2845	1.2706
Bahrain	Dinar	1	44.4568	44.3829
Bangladesh	Taka	100	52.9628	52.8312
Canada	Dollar	1	14.3858	14.2354
Denmark	Kroner	1	2.3109	2.2869
Egypt	Pound	1	6.2000	6.0900
France	Franc	1	2.6954	2.2724
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.1646	2.1426
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.0950	0.9000
Iran	Rial	100	23.2600	23.1628
Italy	Lira	100	1.2302	1.2170
Japan	Yen	100	12.1655	11.8624
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7528	0.7000
Kuwait	Dinar	1	54.2696	54.1600
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.2783	6.2130
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.0520	1.0000
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6000	0.5829
Netherlands	Guilder	1	7.9659	7.8823
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7526	0.7000
Singapore	Dollar	1	8.6020	8.5114
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1410	0.1309
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4190	0.4000
Sweden	Kroner	1	2.6282	2.6010
Switzerland	Franc	1	10.4142	10.3033
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.1160	0.1000
Thailand	Baht	100	62.1282	62.0800
UK	Pound	1	27.1706	26.9107
USA	Dollar	1	16.8919	16.7224
UAE	Dirham	1	4.55	4.50
USSR	Rouble	1	25.7228	25.5686
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	9.1491	8.9206

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 5.10.89.

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Playing the Global Market

WE live in a global village where nations play a game in which some win and others lose. The game is called international trade. When scores are tallied at the end of the game, the winners are nations that sell more and buy less.

It is a deadly serious game because on its outcome depends the wealth of nations, the prosperity of their peoples and their political and military standing. Today, India is a loser in this game.

Why? What should India do to improve its performance? We must first understand that although nations may win and lose, the players in the game are corporations. The instrument for gaining market share is business, not government. The governments of the successful nations have consistently nourished and supported their corporations. The Indian Government, in contrast, has tightly controlled and hindered the growth of private business.

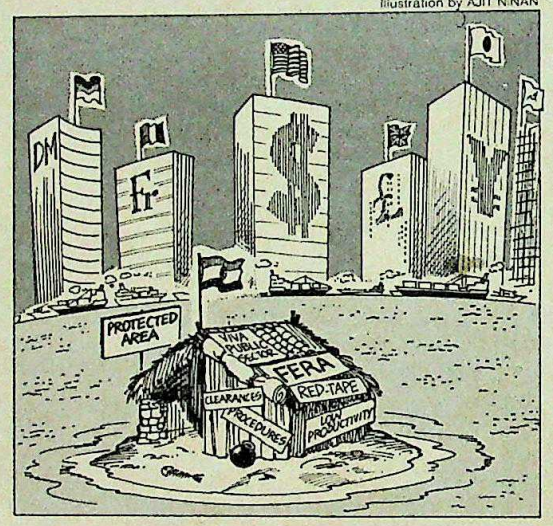
If we want to be a successful player we should begin by seeking our comparative advantage. An obvious one is our cheap labour. But our organised labour is not productive, and so not competitive. Both the unions and inflexible labour laws discourage productivity.

It is unorganised labour that we must thank for our modest export performance. We account for less than 1 per cent of world exports; the city of Hong Kong does better. Our major exports originate in labour-intensive small-scale factories cutting gems, making readymade garments and leather goods. Almost all these exporters are non-unionised.

To succeed in the world market, we need to sell superior products. But superior products need technology. India does not have technology for three reasons. One, our domestic market has been so protected from competition that companies have not been forced to upgrade their products. Two, our institutes of science and technology are isolated from companies and oblivious of the needs of our people. Technology flourishes in the pell-mell of the competitive marketplace. Three, technology infusion is a continuous process, not a one-shot deal. Neither business nor government recognises this or is willing to pay for it.

Superior products don't guarantee success in the world market. We need to seek out and maintain customers. This requires marketing. Because of our closed market and our "licence-permit raj" we have seen little competition. Market share in effect was won in a bureaucrat's office when a licence was awarded. Marketing skills are sharpened only in the battle for market share.

Illustration by AJIT NINAN



If we want a share of world economic growth, we have to nurture our corporations instead of putting them down.

Another ingredient of success is plenty of capital. Unfortunately, too much of our scarce capital is locked up in an inefficient public sector. Global competition requires low costs, very fast responses and flexibility of action, none of which the public sector possesses. So to succeed we will need to shift our capital to the private sector.

Size is also important. Successful companies in the world market are giants; they have the advantage of production economies, distribution clout and massive marketing budgets. Our small sector stands little chance here. Unfortunately our Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act is a great obstacle to becoming big.

In our global village there are massive flows of capital from one country to another. But compared with China, which has been receiving $2,000 million (Rs 3,300 crore) a year in foreign direct investment, India receives a meagre $100 million (Rs 1,650 crore). A significant lesson of the past 25 years is that countries which have encouraged foreign investment have consistently outperformed those which have not. There is also no evidence that they have compromised their independence.

A very real hope for enhancing our exports is through the integrative power of global companies because they represent the world economy. India can also become a supply base for MNCs, as Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan have. To do so, we must unconditionally offer them our domestic market. They are not interested in India otherwise. Once they start making world quality products in the domestic markets they will automatically use India as a global supply source if our costs are right.

So if we want a share of world economic growth we have to go much further to liberalise our economy, make our markets genuinely competitive by scrapping licensing, reservations for the small sector and by overhauling MRTP. We have to divert capital from the public to the private sector by dismantling large chunks of the public sector; we have to improve labour productivity by amending labour laws; we have to nurture our corporations instead of "controlling" or putting them down.

Why must we compete in the world market? Why can't we manage within our own borders? We tried to do this with the principles of self-sufficiency and import substitution. They have led us to a dead end. The countries which participated in the world market got jobs, technology, living standards, and respect. Global market share is not merely a crass commercial goal. It is the basis for improving the condition of our people—all, not merely a few.

Gurcharan Das is the managing director of a Bombay-based enterprise.

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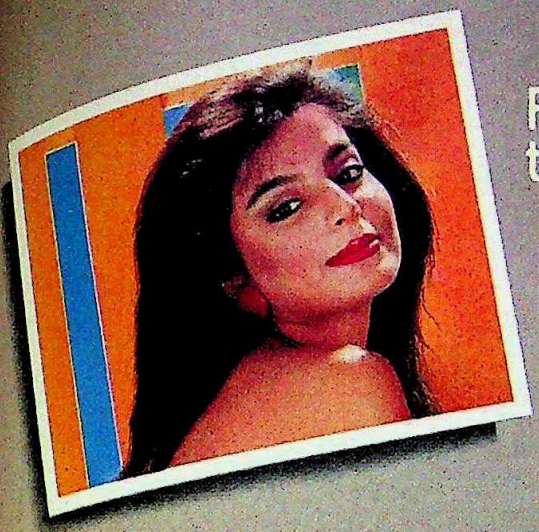

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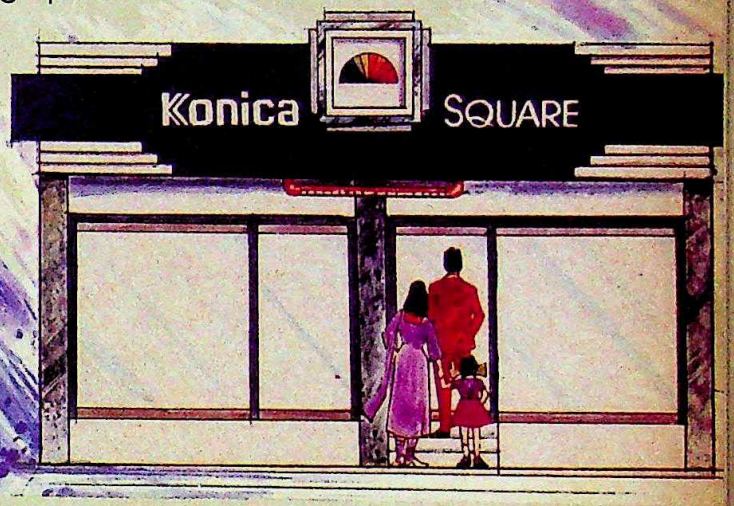

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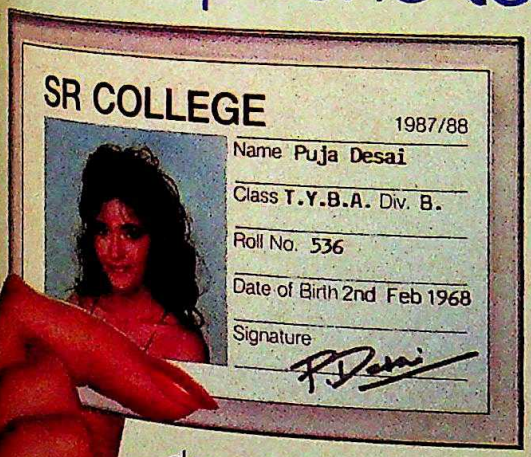

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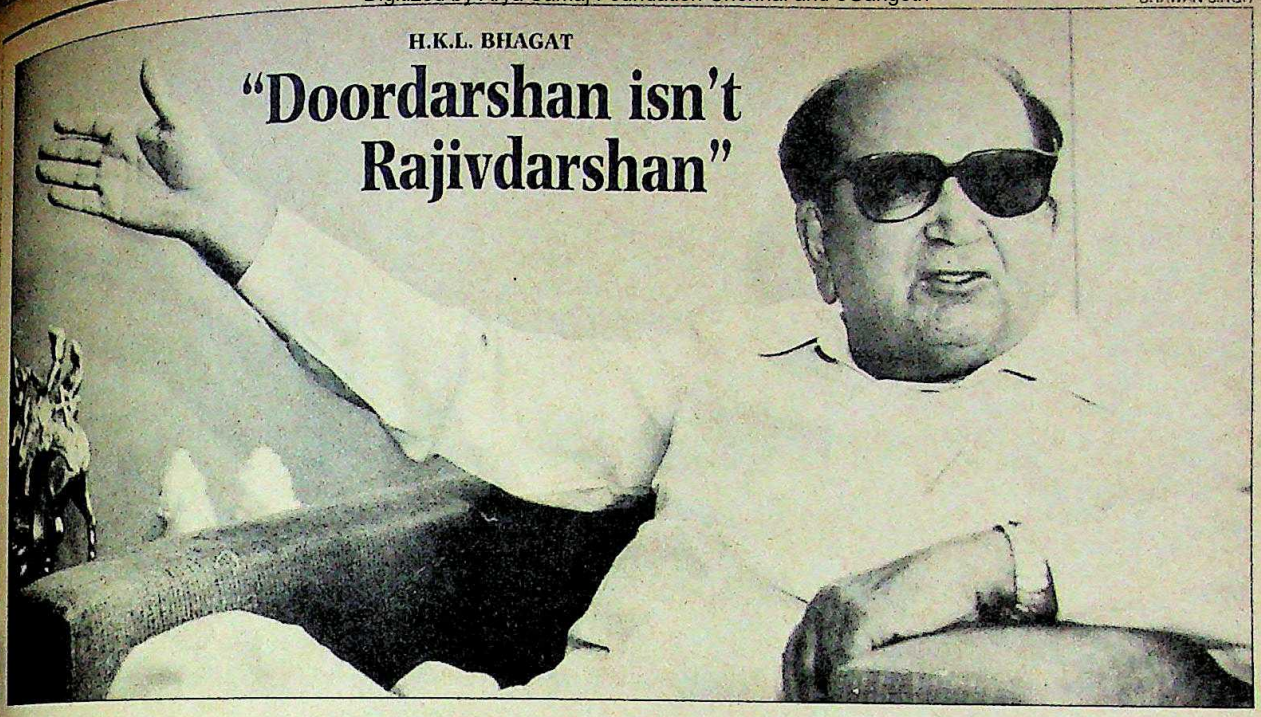
BHAWAN SINGH

H.K.L. BHAGAT

"Doordarshan isn't Rajivdarshan"



DESCRIBED as the numero uno of Delhi politics, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister H.K.L. Bhagat has been in the eye of many a political controversy. Now, on election-eve, he faces an unenviable task—to defend the role of the official media against charges of misuse, possibly a major plank of the opposition campaign. But the deceptively mild-mannered politician exuded confidence as he spoke to Senior Editor PRABHU CHAWLA *in his living room adorned with photographs of the Gandhi family. Excerpts:*

Q. *Do you agree that Doordarshan has been turned into Rajivdarshan?*

A. Doordarshan is not Rajivdarshan, it is Bharatdarshan, Vishwadarshan. He is not only the president of the ruling party, but the prime minister of the largest democracy in the world. Whatever he says is news not only for India, but also for the rest of the world. Can we ignore his statements and the functions attended by him? Does the western media ignore Maggie Thatcher, George Bush or any head of state?

Q. *Isn't it blatant misuse of the official media?*

A. Why are we talking about the official media? Even the print media, which is not controlled by the Government, gives more space to the prime minister than any other leader in the country. There is not a single publication in the country that has not sought an interview with him.

Q. *Don't you feel that in a democracy, opposition leaders should not be blacked out from TV and AIR?*

A. Doordarshan does not ignore the Opposition. Opposition chief ministers get more exposure as compared to Congress(I) chief ministers. It goes strictly by the importance of the news and the personalities involved.

Q. *There is more negative coverage.*

A. That may be due to their squabbles which is also news. The opposition leaders get away with more time, because there are so many of them. If you ignore them, you are accused of a bias. As against one prime minister and one Congress Party, one has to choose from so many prime ministerial candidates and alternatives to the ruling party.

Q. *But the opposition leaders' attack on the prime minister is ignored.*

A. We go by the statements' newsworthiness. We can't carry a statement only because someone has criticised the prime minister. There must be some substance in it.

Q. *The image of the party and the prime minister have suffered.*

A. Not at all. Despite the full blast attack on him by the Opposition, he remains the most popular leader in the country. No amount of character assassination, cycle pedalling and rallies will reduce his importance in the country. Rajiv Gandhi means stability, progress and democracy. Without him there will be total anarchy. It is his modern outlook that is keeping the country together.

Q. *Are you concerned about the credibility of Doordarshan and* AIR?

A. If our credibility is low, why are they bothered about it? They should be happy we are doing something foolish. We will suffer. They know both AIR and Doordarshan are the most trustworthy sources of information. They want to destroy them by raising false alarms.

Q. *You ignore the charge that they have become the party's mouthpiece.*

A. The charge is politically motivated. In fact, the credibility of the official media suffered during the Janata regime when L.K. Advani was information and broadcasting minister. Mrs Gandhi was persecuted by Doordarshan and false affidavits by politicians opposed to us were given prominence. It is really amusing to receive sermons from Advani on the official media's freedom.

Q. *Is the official media being given more financial support to counter the attack on the prime minister?*

A. There is more money allocation to the electronic media because the entire country wants its expansion. People of this country want to enjoy the progress achieved during the last 40 years. There is not a single opposition leader who has not demanded a TV tower in his area.

Q. *Does it mean the Government should impose a financial burden on the print media so that it doesn't expand?*

A. This is not correct. Newspapers haven't suffered because of the expansion of the electronic media. Both can coexist. The print media may be facing financial pressure due to the difficult foreign exchange situation. There has been cost escalation in the inputs that go into the newsprint. Ultimately, the burden of the higher newsprint cost has been passed over to the consumer. It doesn't pinch the press at all.

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CRICKET

Back to the Crease

After the politicking, the Indian team gears up for a hectic season

AND finally, back to the game. The month-long cliff-hanger of a dispute between the players and the BCCI is over, so are quibbles over selections, payments, logos, column-writing, contracts, controversies, uncertainties. It's time again to talk of runs, wickets, catches, victories and defeats, all on the playing field. Leaving behind the ghost of politicking—at least for the moment—Indian cricket is gearing up for what may indeed turn out to be its busiest season ever.

And the busiest season is also a bonanza for the cricket enthusiast. What else can a cricket crazy nation ask for than a season that begins with 24 one-day internationals in a space of just 21 roller-coaster days. The first six, the season's looseners in a manner of speaking, will be at Sharjah as traditional rivals India and Pakistan try to deny victory to the West Indies in a triangular contest. Then the battle will be rejoined in India, in the fortnight-long MRF-Nehru Cup World Series as all the top international teams, except New Zealand play out the extravaganza, being already billed as the other World Cup. "It is one of our busiest seasons. And our most challenging for a long time," said national selector Raj Singh Dungarpur.

Sure enough, the way the gladiators of Indian cricket face up to the challenge could indeed have a bearing on the very future of the game in India. The defeats by West Indies and Pakistan—particularly in the one-dayers—have left Indian cricket smarting. "This is our opportunity to rebuild the team and rediscover faith in ourselves," says new captain Krishnamachari Srikkanth *(see box)*.

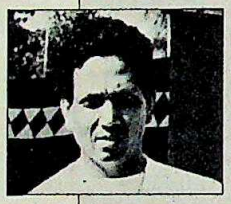
Some of that resolve showed quite visibly as the team went through its paces at the five-day conditioning camp at the Railways' Karnail Singh Stadium in New Delhi. The players who had for too long been seen in the incongruous yuppie attires, addressing press conferences or going through inquisitions at the board meetings were back in jogsuits, shorts and flannels.

Mohinder Amarnath, at 39, the grandad of the team, looks fit enough despite the grey late-morning stubble on his face testifying to his experience and numerous Mohammed Ali-like comebacks. Says he: "I have lost count of my come-backs. Anyway it is great to be back." Kapil Dev is bowling with a new enthusiasm to try and rediscover that elusive outswinger and sounds confident enough. "Make no mistake. We are a formidable team," he warns. Navjot Singh Sidhu, Mohammed Azharuddin, Ravi Shastri and Srikkanth are obviously concentrating on fitness and getting their eye in for a gruelling season—the one-dayers are followed by a four-Test series in Pakistan. And Kiran More, as ebullient as ever, is raring to resume his running battle with his cricketing *bete noire*, Vivian Richards. "It is good to see the boys in action. They are in good shape," said former star all-rounder Chandu Borde, now manager of the team.

But fitness is the least of his and skipper Srikkanth's problems. The senior members of the team are already veteran professionals and understand the need to reach peak fitness as the season begins. The younger lot have to fight for their places and that itself provides extra motivation. Besides whatever doubts remained on the fitness on the stars who have defaulted in the past: Mohinder Amarnath and Azharuddin, were removed by their sparkling knocks in last fortnight's Deodhar Trophy matches. The real problem was devising a game-plan.

SIX TOP STARS

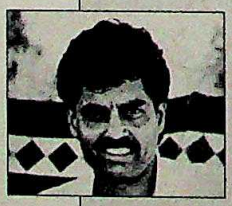
■ **Kapil Dev:** His bowling may lack the penetration of the past but he is a shrewder bowler now and India's only world class medium pacer. One-day average 27.26, one century in 137 matches, 160 wickets at 26.85 runs apiece.



■ **Amarnath:** Seems to be in good batting nick but this may be his swan-song season. One-day average 29.86, two centuries in 69 matches and 40 wickets at 42 runs apiece. His defiance of pace bowling will come in handy.

■ **Krishnamachari Srikkanth:** A match-winner of his day and dreaded by many bowlers. But rather inconsistent. One-day average 29.17, four centuries in 110 matches, 24 wickets at 16.20 runs apiece.

■ **Ravi Shastri:** The vice-captain. Still searching for a niche in the batting order. One-day average 24.03, two centuries in 109 matches, 103 wickets at 34.97 runs apiece.



■ **Vengsarkar:** The subcontinent's most under-rated batsman (average 36.52, one century in 114 one-dayers). Will be expected to prop up the middle order. Can take apart any bowling.

■ **Navjot Singh Sidhu:** If he and Srikkanth get going together it will be half the job done (average 43.10 runs in 22 one-dayers). But has to show more consistency to establish himself as an opener.

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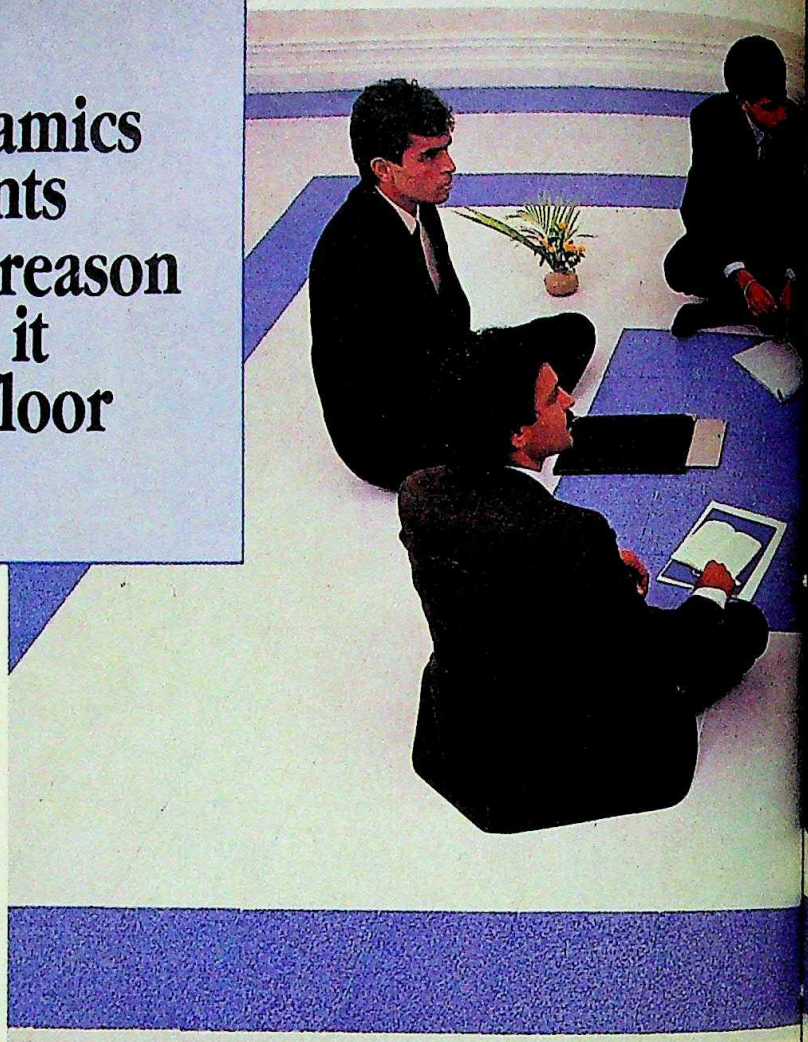

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"The team has a very, very strong batting line-up and that should make up for whatever lacks may remain in fielding and bowling," said Dungarpur. That is why the team brains-trust is working on a batting-oriented game-plan for the two competitions. "One-day game is a batsman-oriented game. The bowlers basically keep a straight line and wait for the batsman to make mistakes," says Srikkanth. Accordingly, his basic plan would be to bat first on winning the toss.

Unlike most other teams in the world the Indian batting line-up is peculiar in the sense that it has dashers in front and classicists in the middle-order. This can work to the team's detriment or advantage depending on the way it is exploited. Often enough in the past the stolid, conventional middle-order has taken too long settling down, wasting precious overs and neutralising good starts by the top order. That is an area of concern and

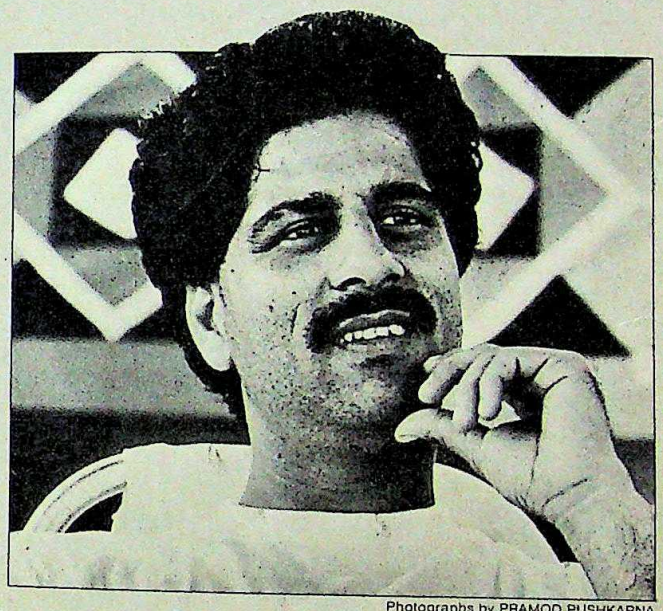
SRIKKANTH

"My batting reflects my attitude to life"

K. Srikkanth, 28, believes in destiny. As he offered a silver thali at the Guruvayoor temple for his appointment as the Indian captain, he may as well have thanked God for the quirky manner in which the cricketing drama unfolded. He was a contender almost by default. An Ian Bishop delivery fractured his forearm and he was sent back home. Otherwise, he too may have gone to the US and Canada from West Indies and got dragged into the controversy.

What worked to his advantage was his that he was a "good guy" who obeyed the contract and was aided by vigorous lobbying by the Madras press and south zone officials.

Srikkanth always believed in taking the battle to the enemy's camp by hook or by pull, by cut or by slash. He also believed that he was destined to captain the country. And now that the moment has arrived, he has a point to prove. Relaxed and confident during an hour-long interview with Features Editor SHEKHAR GUPTA, *he talked about his dashing style, the game, its controversies and personal relationships in the team. Excerpts:*



Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Q. *What are your views on finally getting the mantle of captaincy?*

A. After so many years of service for the team your natural feeling is you should captain it. But I never hankered for it. I take everything as it comes. In fact my batting best reflects my attitude towards life.

Q. *Many feel captaincy will affect your batting, making you defensive.*

A. Not at all. When I go to bat I don't think of captaincy. I've been captaining South Zone for four to five years. People are mistaken if they think of me merely as an attacking batsman. When faced with a good attack you have to be technically as great as Gavaskar to stay on for hours, grind the opposition. I don't have that ability, so I use the limited time I have at the crease most productively. When a fast bowler bowls with three slips, a gully and short legs you can afford to hit out. Chances are you'd clear the field. Or even if you slash, the pace of the ball will take it over the slips. I never loft an inswinger, only outswingers. Similarly when a spinner comes on with an attacking field why not go down the wicket and whack him. If I'm lucky I'll clear mid-on and get runs. My hitting is scientific.

Q. *And pleasurable.*

A. What is most pleasurable? When a fast bowler throws a super-fast bouncer at you and you hook it royally. It hits the middle of the bat. *Tapaak.* That is pleasure.

Q. *Don't you think you were lucky to have missed much of the West Indies tour ?*

A. On the contrary the injury deprived me of the one ambition I have always had, of going to the West Indies and scoring a lot of runs. However, the defeat in the West Indies is reason for us to do some rethinking on our cricket.

Q. *Such as what? Do you have a game-plan to beat the West Indies?*

A. Primarily, when it comes to the West Indies or Pakistan we have to be mentally tougher so that even when they momentarily seem to be on top, we should continue fighting. As for the West Indies, you should ideally bat first, get a good score, and put them under pressure. You have to attack them aggressively.

Q. *Despite the bouncers? What are your views on intimidatory bowling?*

A. I don't believe in this business of limited number of bouncers. It is the way pacemen bowl. It is ridiculous, as bad as demanding that a spinner will not turn the ball more than two inches, or will not flight or dip it too much. Do you expect the fast bowlers to go on giving you half-volleys to hit? They bounce, you cut or hook. Or you can't play the West Indies.

Q. *Will your batting influence your captaincy?*

A. I have a certain approach to the game which is basically aggressive. Let's face it, one-day cricket is much more of a team effort. If batsmen bat well, bowlers bowl well, fielders field well, how much does the captain have to do except count overs?

Q. *Won't captaining a side that includes three captains you have played under add to the pressure?*

A. No. We've played together for so long. We understand each other well. As for pressure, don't they say: when the going gets tough, the tough get going?

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the team brains-trust is working on that.

Senior members of the team explain that, as a matter of fact, this is one thing that should give the Indian batting line-up a tremendous advantage. Under one-day cricket rules in the early overs the fielders have to be drawn in, a condition hitters like Srikkanth, Sidhu, Raman Lamba and to an extent even Azharuddin can exploit by taking a few chances. "Our basic plan should be that the top order should attack. If they fail, Amarnath, Vengsarkar and Shastri should stem the rot and play themselves in, creating a situation where the late-order, led by Kapil can launch an onslaught, hoping that More and Arshad Ayub will continue to be productive with the bat," said a star.

But problems on that still remain. Srikkanth and Vengsarkar are both yet to display form. Azharuddin, despite his slaughter of Maninder Singh in the Deodhar Trophy will find the going entirely different once he is face-to-face with his West Indies tormentors and Imran Khan. And vice-captain Shastri is still searching for a firm place in the batting order.

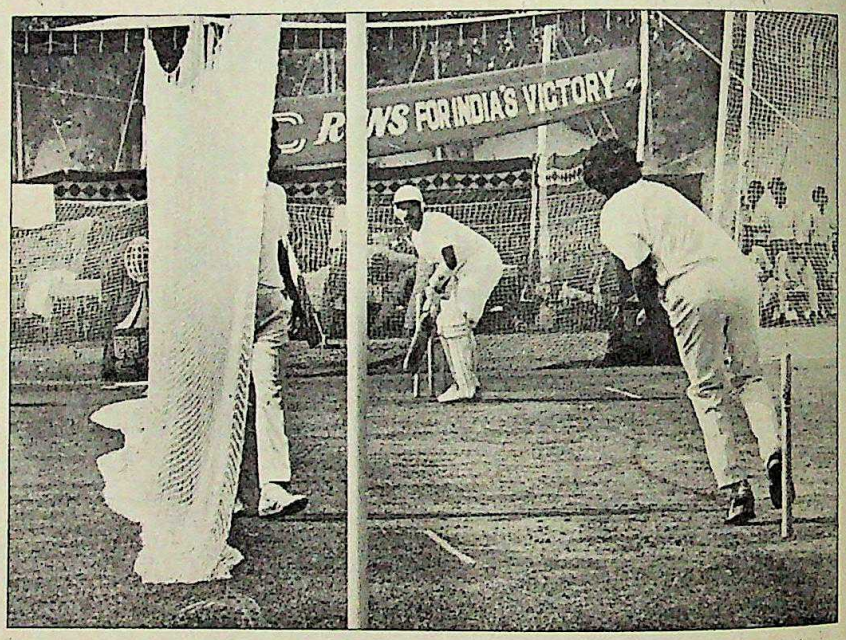
More than anything else it is the Indian team's greatest strength, batting, which has been a continuing enigma, failing to deliver at crucial moments and often unable to rise to its full potential. "Come to think of it, how many times has this great batting line-up ever crossed the 300-run mark?" asks a senior batsman, pointing out that too often in the past an excellent start from the openers has been squandered away by India's failure to cash in on the slog overs. It is significant that Srikkanth lists as his biggest disappointment the match against Pakistan at Calcutta where such a late collapse left the issue open for Pakistan which clinched it with the help of an incredible knock from Salim Malik. "We could have done better, shown greater mental toughness," says Srikkanth.

For the past few years the problem with India has been its virtually anaemic bowling resources, a weakness exposed most painfully on hard and true Indian pitches and in games played in dry domestic atmosphere. The same medium-pacers that look menacing in damp English conditions become inconsequential in the subcontinent and that is one of the main reasons behind India's relatively dismal one-day record at home. For the moment the team has to live with that problem. Kapil, whose lethality has been an enigma for three years now, still remains the spearhead-cum-stock bowler, but he too has no more than 10 overs in a one-day game.

IN Sharjah's sea breeze Delhi's Manoj Prabhakar may make the new ball wobble a bit, but between Kapil, Chetan Sharma and Manoj Prabhakar Indian bowling will be reduced to up-and-down stuff, particularly on true wickets. Add to that this Indian team's uncharacteristically weak fielding and the combined pressure on batting could be overwhelming.

Equally uncharacteristically this time, India does not even have an attacking spin bowler as leg-spinner Narendra Hirwani is still nursing an injury and Delhi's left-arm spinner Maninder Singh yet again failed to find favour with the selectors. "Unfortunately he is not bowling as well as he was earlier on," says Dungarpur. But his measured bowling, electrifying fielding and combative spirit could have come handy in the one-day games. That leaves spin department in the hands of Arshad Ayub and Ravi Shastri both of them steady performers but more in the mould of stock-bowlers rather than spearheads.

Maninder's exclusion is by far the most intriguing aspect of the selections but was perhaps unavoidable as the team was to be confined to 14. The only other surprise was the choice of Srikkanth as skipper. But as he himself says, he was considered the best compromise candidate. Vengsarkar had led India to defeat in the West Indies. Coupled with his own poor form and scraps with the BCCI that made his removal rather easy. Vengsarkar, obviously has not taken it philosophically and makes no effort to hide his disappointment. "Of course I am disappointed. I led India in 10 Tests, seven of them against the West Indies. I wasn't able to perform a miracle. I hope Srikkanth pulls that off now," he said, expressing the resolve to "pick up the thread" from the days of his peak form, "go out and get some runs". He also knows that many in the board would be waiting for a few failures from him so the process of settling scores could begin.



The team at nets: formidable task

If Vengsarkar was easy to jettison, Kapil Dev, a board official revealed, was too dangerous after his natural leadership during the recent crisis. Shastri had shown "too much arrogance" in the past when temporarily given the mantle of captaincy. Mohinder Amarnath was stepping into his 40s. The basic point also was that the cricket administrators were disinclined to hand over the captaincy to any of the stars embroiled in the recent controversies with them. As one of the stars said wryly: "That we, including Jimmy (Amarnath) have had to be included is humiliating enough for the board." But many in the board are smarting under that humiliation and make no secret of what they will do to the stars if they fail. For much of Srikkanth's team thus the threat from within will be as strong as the challenge from the West Indies and Imran Khan.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

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HAR GUPTA

Remember how we felt when the thunder of molten steel first resounded in an Indian steel plant...

When Satyajit Ray won the award at Cannes...

When our first oil well was spudded at Bombay High...

When India won the World Cup...

Now once again, its the same kind of feeling...

मारुति
MARUTI

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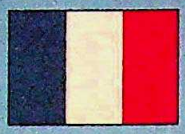
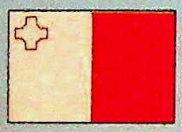
For India it is a dream realised. Exporting cars to France, one of the



world's most competitive car markets. Part of

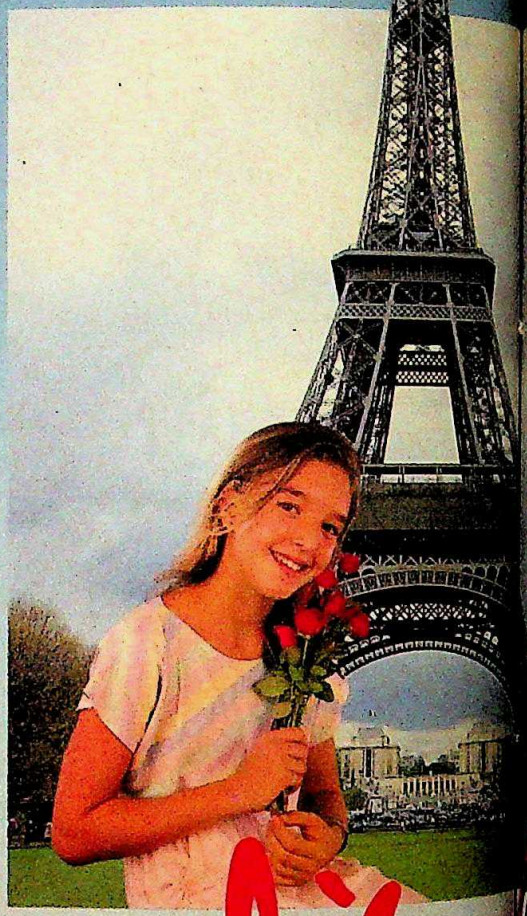
the EEC. With uncompromising standards for

performance, safety, emission control, driving



comfort and overall quality. To qualify, the Maruti

underwent the tough EEC crash test and



Voila

tests for braking force, emission, peak performance and reliability on every critical compo

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d passed them with flying colours. In record time! Yes, the 'Maruti From India' is truly

international. On the roads of Hungary, Tanzania, Malta, Cyprus, Papua New

Guinea, Mauritius, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh,

Maruti!

Nepal...and now France.

It's a moment that fills our hearts with pride..

On being Indian.

मारुति
MARUTI

S T E A S O N F O R S U C C E S S

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Buy two get one FREE

For you, from Hawkins.

Buy two Hawkins pressure cookers, 5 litre or bigger. Post your claim form as required. Get one 3 litre Hawkins delivered to your home absolutely free.

Offer limited to one free cooker per family. Ask for detailed terms and conditions. Available only from participating dealers and all CSD canteens. Only till November 10. Hurry.

Why more cookers?

The right size Hawkins pressure cooker for each of your cooking needs will help you save even more time and money. A medium size cooker is best for your day-to-day cooking. A larger size cooker is very convenient for festivals and parties. A small cooker is most economical when you are cooking for just one or two persons.

Also, a Hawkins makes a very appreciated gift.

The safest, fastest way to tasty food.

Superb Hawkins design and quality. Hawkins cookbook with 98 recipes. Choice of East, South, West or North Indian cooking and 13 languages. 311 prompt, courteous, efficient, authorised centres at your service.

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Over 1 crore pressure cookers sold

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Hawkins Scheme Dealers

DELHI

❑ **DELHI: Bhopal**, Jain Bartan Bhandar, 33, Saman Bazar • **Chandani Chowk**, Babu 1900, Opp. Bank of India • Bakshi Ware House, Shop No 1651 • Bhagwan Dass Jagannath, 633, Opposite Kucha Natwen • Budh Singh & Sons, 1834 • I.K. Sales, 4780, Ballimaran • Light Home, 1609 • **Dharampal Place**, Janki Dass & Co., 23-F • Sohan Lal Yash Pal, Mohan Singh Plaza • Super Bazar, Main Branch • **Fatehpuri**, Amar Singh & Sons, Shop No. 204 • Ladli Parshad Bansi Dhar, 256, Outside Kucha Kashi Ram • 4/3, Bonds, Shop No. 6504 • Raghubar Dayal & Sons, Shop No. 6504 • Ram Kishore Electricals, Shop No. 234 • **Gandhi Nagar**, Bhupinder Singh & Sons, 1/1, Old Post Office Building, Main Bazar • Des Raj Ram Prakash, 513/26, Main Bazar • Jhandamal Krishan Lal, 413/1, Main Bazar • **Greater Kailash**, Mehrotra Dept. Store, M-46 A • **Hauz Khas**, Jain Brothers, E/36/2, Jain Bartan Centre Wala • LNJA, Super Bazar, Main Market • **Kalkaji**, Das Electrical, H-11, Main Road • Kalka Steel Centre, M-64, Main Road • **Karol Bagh**, Gift Centre, 5/38, Karol Nagar, Crockery Emporium, 11-F • Sardar Bartan Store, 2567, Ajmal Khan Road • Vishal Ajmal Khan Road • Sangodha Bartan Store, 2567, Ajmal Khan Road • **Kotla Mubarakpur**, Bhagwan Bartan Bhandar, 2568, Ajmal Khan Road • Rajasthan Hardware Store, H-482, Ajmal Agarwal, 4523, Subhash Market • **Krishna Nagar**, Shri Krishna Bartan Store, D4/1, Lal Kothari Market • Bedi Bartan Bhandar, 30, Central Market • Dawar Bhandar • **Lajpat Nagar**, Bedi Bartan Bhandar, 34, Central Market • Jain Bartan Bhandar, 32, Central Market • National Bartan Bhandar, 34, Central Market • Bartan Bhandar, 32, Central Market • **Moti Nagar**, Bhutani Bartan Store, Main Market • **Munirka**, Lovely Kitchen Centre ,BA/10, DDA Market, Near Sabar Bazar • **Paharganj**, Fancy Bartan Bhandar, Shop No. 4553, Main Bazar • **Patel Nagar**, Super Bazar, Main Market • **Rajouri Garden**, New Variety Stores, J-83, Main Bazar • **Rohtash Nagar Shahdara**, Aggarwal Bartan Stores, 1-6966, Babarpur Road • **Sadar Bazar**, Amolak Chand Arhant Kumar Jain, 4217, Pahari Dhiraj • Bharat Crockery House, 6117, Main Market • Bir Kishore & Sons, 4522, Pahari Dhiraj • Delhi Cycle Co., 6119, Main Market • Grover Sons, 310, Niranjan Estate, Partap Market • Hira Lal & Sons, 6120, Main Bazar • Malik Light House, 9, Crockery Market • Nitin Store, 104/53, Deputy Ganj • Punjab Crockery House, 2744, Outab Road • Ram Rakha Mal Shanti Prasad Jain, 604, Main Bazar • Vishal Vastu Bhandar, 89 Crockery Market • **Sarojini Nagar**, Ahuja Bartan Store, 65, Main Market • Punjab Bartan Store, 64, Babu Market • Vandana, 93, Sarojini Nagar • **Subzi Mandi**, Crockery & Allied Stores, 1535, Chandrawal Road • Sarojini Nagar, Jain Electronics, 1532, Tota Ram Bazar • **Vasant Vihar**, Osaba Emporium, 56, Basant Lok • **Yusuf Sarai**, Jain Utensils, Mandir Wali Gali • Jain Household Emporium, 74/2 • Muni Lal Bishan Swarup, 72/6 • Ram Kishan & Sons, 72/7 • M/s. Shri Vardhman Traders, 6/2.

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

❑ **PORT BLAIR: RGT Road**, Dayal Co.

ANDHRA PRADESH

❑ **HYDERABAD: Kampally Station Road**, Anjali Electronics • Lakshmi Home Appliances, Opp. Board of Revenue • **Sultan Bazar**, Baliram Emporium ❑ **SECUNDERABAD: Rastrapathi Road**, Deccan Iron Works, Opposite Bata ❑ **KAKINADA: Suryarao Pet**, Gupta Emporium, Main Road.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

❑ **PASIGHAT: Pasighat Bazar**, Pasighat L/S. M/P Co-op Society Ltd.

ASSAM

❑ **BARPATA ROAD: Main Road**, New Variety Stores ❑ **BISWANATH CHARIALI: Pabhai Road**, Uday Sankar Stores ❑ **BONGAIGAON, Main Road**, Ravi Prakash Anand & Co ❑ **DERGAON: H.C.G. Road**, Bijoy Store ❑ **DHUBRI: D.D. Road**, G.C. Roy & Sons ❑ **DIBRUGARH: H.S. Road**, New Crockery Store • **New Market**, S. Dutta & Co., ❑ **GOLAGHAT: Main Road**, Kusona Enterprise ❑ **GUWAHATI: Chandmari**, Vedio View • **Dispur**, Kachuni Glass House • **Fancy Bazar**, S.R.C.B. Road, Sanganeria Agencies • Lakhotia, C.M. Store • **Maligaon**, National Variety Stores, P.N.G.B. Path • S.B. Road, City Centre ❑ **HALFLONG: Main Road**, Halflong Wholesale Cons. Co-op. Society Limited • Hojai & Sons ❑ **JORHAT: A.T. Road**, Durgapral Shankarlall • **Chowk Bazar**, Rakesh Chandra Das • **Gar-Ali**, Nemal Store • Roy & Co. • Saha Trading Agency, ❑ **KARIMGANJ: Station Road**, Stationery Stores ❑ **NAGAON: Dacca Patty**, New Chatanya Stores ❑ **NORTH LAKHIMPUR: N.T. Road**, Dutta Brothers ❑ **SIBSAGAR: Temple Road**, Murgilal Banwarilal ❑ **SILCHAR: Janiganj**, Maitry Enterprise ❑ **TINSUKIA: Daily Bazar**, Nazir Ahmed & Sons • **Thana Road**, N.N. Corporation

BHUTAN

❑ **PHUNT SHOLING:** Dolma Enterprises • Tashi Commercial Corp.

BIHAR

❑ **BEGUSARAI: Main Road**, Deo Bros • **IOC Township**, Barauni Refinery Co. Ltd. ❑ **BHAGALPUR: D.N. Singh Road**, Dokania & Sons • Glass Colony • Light Centre • Mela Stores • Rama Steel House ❑ **BOKARO STEEL CITY**, City Centre, Amrapali, Sector-4 • Bombay Variety Stores, E-13, Sector-4 ❑ **DALTONGANJ: Sadar Bazar**, K.C. Kaul & Bros ❑ **CHAS: Bye Pass Road**, Kanhaiya, • **Main Road**, Shital Stores ❑ **DALSINSARAI:** Lakshmi Narain Lal Jai Durgkar Prasad ❑ **DARBHANGA: Lalbagh**, Lovely Corner • **North Bihar**, Kalloo Subhash Chowk ❑ **DEHRIONSONE: Cinema Road**, Glassina • **DHANBAD: Bank More**, Shyamganj Road, Baidyanath Electric Stores ❑ **DHANBAD: Bank More**, Shyamganj Road, Shyam Bengal Ceramic ❑ **GAYA: Gol Patthar**, Pappu Trading Co • **GIRIDIH: Chowk Bazar**, Shankar Traders ❑ **GUMLA: Main Road**, Shyam Sundar Glass Stores ❑ **JAMSHEDPUR: Jugsalai**, Ramniklal Devchand, Near Railway Phatak, Main Road • **Main Road, Bistupur**, Coolon, Hindustan Building • **Sakchi Bazar**, Cocker House, 25, Old Alu Line • Lalit Kumar • Neel Metal Steel Centre, 24, Old Alu Line • Steel Sales Corporation, 161 ❑ **JHARIA: Dhanbad Road**, Ashirbad Trading Co • **Main Road**, Steel Corner • Kathuria, Sah Kataria, Roop Rang ❑ **KISHANGANJ: Hospital Road**, Prakash Stores ❑ **MUNGER: Town Hall Road**, Jalan Traders ❑ **MUZAFFARPUR: Moti Jhil, Dada Steel & Crockery**, Moti Jhil House • New Business Emporium • **Sariyaganj**, Bharat Glass Co. ❑ **PATNA: Boring Road**, Jain Emporiles, Hepatit Kotha • **Kadamkuan**, Patna Steel Corner • **Kankar Bagh Road**, Steel House • **Muradpur**, Steel Corner, Opp. Bankipur Post Office • New Market, Crockerico • Sawhney Electricals ❑ **RANCHI: Church Road**, Shree Metal Store • **Main Road**, Kailash Crockery House • Prabhat Shree Emporium Cycle Stores • The Ranchi Motor & Cycle Co., Beside Big Bata Shop • Upper Bazar, Ashok Enterprises • Stainless Steel Sales ❑ **SAHARSA: Dahlan Chowk**, Dahlan Glass House • **D.B. Road**, Apollo Electric House ❑ **SAMASTIPUR: Magardahi Road**, Raja Steel ❑ **SASARAM: Chowkhandi Road**, New Janta Glass Stores ❑ **SINDRI: Saharpura**, Uppal General Store, 15, Tinshed ❑ **SIWAN: Durbar Cinema Compound**, Saran Electric Works ❑ **LAHERIASARAI: Bakarganj**, Dayal Crockery House • **Commercial Chowk**, Steel House.

CHANDIGARH

❑ **CHANDIGARH: Sector 15-D**, Indian Crockery House, Shop No 45, • **Sector 17-E**, Jagat Singh & Sons, SCF-32 • **Sector 18-C**, Dharam Chand Aggarwal, SFC-17 • **Sector 19-C**, Gupta Crockery House, SCF 31 • Jain Glass House, SCF 14 • **Sector 26**, Aggarwal Distributors, Show Room No-30 • **Sector 35-C**, New Indian Crockery House, S.C.O. 89.

GOA

❑ **MAPUSA: Municipal Market**, Ismail Jusab Virani, Shop No. 19 • **Near Canara Bank**, Laxmikant & Co. Khalap Building • **17, Ramchandra Building**, Mayur Agencies ❑ **MARGAON: New Market**, Dinanath D Sadekar & Sons, 10, P.O. Box No. 331 • **Opp. Cine Lata**, The Bombay Metal Mart • **Station Road**, T.A. Hazare & Sons, New Market ❑ **PANJIM: Azad Maidan**, S.T. Pokle & Co., Opp. Azad Maidan • **Dr. Pissurlekar Road**, M.S.B. Caculo, P.O. Box 63 ❑ **PONDA: Belgaum Road**, Shanta Electric Stores, Gaonekar Building.

GUJARAT

❑ **AHMEDABAD: Meghaninagar**, M/s. Ajanta Steel Centre, Meena Bazar • **Three Gates**, M/s. Akbarally Kadabhai, Abdul Kadar Mohammed Hussain, 1812 • M/s. Akbarally & Sons, 1822/1 • M/s. Bombay Novelty Stores, 1839/1 ❑ **RAJKOT: Lakhaji Raj Road**, M/s. Apsara Agencies, Sanganwa Chowk ❑ **VADODARA: Jubilee Baug**, Happy Home, Shalimar Chambers, Opp. Sardar Bhavan.

HARYANA

❑ **AMBALA CITY: Jain Bazar**, Janata Crockery & General Store • **Qotwali Bazar**, Fancy Bartan Store ❑ **BAHADURGARH: Railway Road**, Suresh Chand Sanjay Kumar ❑ **FARIDABAD: Market No. 1**, Krishan Lal Sanjeev Kumar, Shop No. 116 ❑ **GURGAON: Sadar Bazar**, Classic Kitchenware ❑ **JAGADHARI, Chowk Bazar**, Suruchi Sales • **Railway Road**, O.P. Metal Industries ❑ **KALKA: Gandhi Chowk**, Beni Parshad Parduman Kumar ❑ **KARNAL: G.T. Road**, Dewan Chand Karambir ❑ **PANIPAT: Halwai Hatta Bazar**, Jia Lal Jain Dass • **Main Bazar**, Mohar Singh Dhari Mal ❑ **REWARI: Moti Chowk**, Harsahaimal Sukhdev Sahaii ❑ **SIRSA: Rori Bazar**, Aggarwal Bartan Bhandar • Gaba Bartan Bhandar ❑ **THANESHAR: Krishana Gate**, Kumar Bartan Store.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

❑ **KANGRA: Main Bazar**, Gupta Sewing Machine ❑ **KULLU: Akhara Bazar**, Vigson Gen Store ❑ **MANALI: Main Bazar**, Thomas Stores ❑ **RAMPUR BUSHAHAR: Main Bazar**, Mehar Chand Mool Raj ❑ **SHIMLA: Lower Bazar**, Sant Lal Inder Sain Aggarwal, 31 • **The Mall**, Central Traders, 2.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

❑ **ANANTNAG: Lal Chowk**, Abdul Rashid Kochak & Co. • **New Market**, Kashmir Bartan Store • **Super Bazar**, Islamabad District Consumer Co-op. Store ❑ **JAMMU: Kanak Mandi**, Tara Chand Kapur Chand Jain • **New Market**, Ladhu Mal Des Raj Jain, Raghunath Bazar • **Raghunath Bazar**, Princeways ❑ **SOPORE: Near D.P. Dhar Memorial Hospital**, Malik House ❑ **SRINAGAR: Hari Singh High Street**, Kasturi Lal Jain & Sons • Piaralal Kulbhushan Lal Jain • **Lala Rukh Hotel Building**, Apna Bazar (J.K. Confed), Lal Chowk • **Maisuma Bazar**, Miraj & Co. • **Pilladium Street**, Cosmos House, Lal Chowk • **Tankipura Road**, Ahuja Agencies, Opp. D.C. Office.

KARNATAKA

❑ **BANGALORE: Avenue Road**, Bagrecha & Bros., 314, Bagrecha Building • Cheap Hall, No.195 • **Brigade Road**, Pots and Pans, 11, Curzon Complex • **Chickpet**, Raja Trading Co., Near Balepet Square • **Richards Square**, Adams & Company, 19 • **Sampige Road**, Anand Departments, 532 • **Sudhamanagar**, Master Marketing Agency, 13, Annipuram Main Road ❑ **BIJAPUR: Azad Road**, Sha Fulchand Kesarimal, Opp. Canara Bank ❑ **CHIKMANGALUR: Vijayapura Extension**, Multi Agencies, Ratnagiri Road ❑ **HUBLI: Broadway**, Patra Bhandar, 53 ❑ **KARKALA: Main Road**, Sovereign Enterprise ❑ **MANGALORE: Balmatta**, Souza Electronics, Kumudavathi Building • **K.S. Rao Road**, Super Suplies, Gokul Market • **Market Road**, Bharath Steel & Gift Centre ❑ **SHIMOGA: Nehru Road**, Sadhana Trading Co.

KERALA

❑ **ALWAYE: Catholic Centre**, Wireless Metro ❑ **CALICUT: Muthalakulam**, Bright Metals ❑ **CHALAKUDY: Main Road**, Sini Vessels, Pellissery Building ❑ **ERNAKULAM: Broadway**, Anthony Francis & Son • Life Styles, K.T.D.C. Shopping Complex • Mahmood Crockeries, Wakf Board Building • **M.G. Road**, Electrical Sales Corporation, Opp. College Ground ❑ **MAHE: Parakkal**, Karma Enterprises, Main Road ❑ **PALGHAT: G.B. Road**, Steel Palace ❑ **PERUMBAVOOR: P.P. Road**, Mookada Agencies, Near New Private Bus Stand ❑ **TELLICHERRY: Logan's Road**, Sreenivas Electronic Company ❑ **TRICHUR: P.O. Road**, Steelalayan • **Round South**, Kerala Leather Co.

MADHYA PRADESH

❑ **AMBIKAPUR: Deviganj Road**, Fairdeal ❑ **BALAGHAT: Main Road**, Metal House ❑ **BETUL: Ganj**, Bal Mukund Gupta • **Kothi Bazar**, Ahuja Traders ❑ **BHILAI: Camp. 2, Circular Market**, Gargi General Stores, Shop No. B14,15,16 • **Civic Centre**, Suresh Brothers, 21, Indira Place • Surana Sales, 186A, A Market, Sector 6 ❑ **BHIND: Sadar Bazar**, M/s. Shah Mewaram Narendra Kumar ❑ **BHOPAL: T.T. Nagar**, Animesh Traders, 19, New Market • **Roshan Pura Naka**, Darwesh Bartan Bhandar ❑ **BILASPUR: Sadar Bazar**, Akash Stores, Near Corona Shoe Stores • Vijay Stores ❑ **CHHATARPUR: Chowk Bazar**, Hazarilal Narayandas • **Hatwara**, M/s. Amit Electronics • **Kotwali Road**, M/s. Choice Centre • **Agrasen Emporium**, Mahal Road ❑ **CHHINDWARA: Budhwari Bazar**, Grih Shobha Steel Emporium • **Station Road**, Mayur, Char Phatak ❑ **DABRA, Kamla Market**, Adhunik Kitchenware ❑ **DAMOH: Cinema Road**, Ajanta Traders ❑ **DHAR: 93, Jawahar Marg**, M/s. Goyal Traders ❑ **GADARWARA: Jhanda Chowk**, Mangal Kalash ❑ **GWALIOR: Daulat Ganj**, M/s. Raju Crockery House, Daud Market • **Sarafa Bazar**, Dhomraj Hazarilal • Goyal Steel Emporium • M/s. Narsingdas Renwal • **Topi Bazar**, Ashok Crockery House • Pahuram Peshuram Lokwani ❑ **INDORE: Jawahar Marg**, Cooker House, Shop No.370 • **Ram Laxman Bazar**, N. R. Electronics, Shop No. 23 ❑ **JABALPUR: Ashirwad Market**, Ashirwad Steel Emporium, Shop No. 18 • Steel Emporium, Shop No. 36 • **Civic Centre**, Electricals & Electronicals, Shop No. 7A • **Jawaharganj**, National Stores, Bhargava Chauraha • **Karamchand Chowk**, Steel Palace • **Naya Bazar**, Peekay Traders, Shop No. 30 • ❑ **JAGDALPUR: Gandhi Chowk**, Woonwala ❑ **KATNI: Raghunathganj**, Shyamlelal Mohanlal • **Shalimar Market**, M/s. Bharat Steels ❑ **KHANDWA: Bombay Bazar**, Khandwa Plastic Centre, Shop No. 262 ❑ **KHARGONE: Hospital Road**, Kailash Printing Press, Shop No. 10 ❑ **KORBA, Main Road**, Agarwal Traders • Ganesh Steel Emporium • Ramgopal Radheshyam Agrawal ❑ **MANDSAUR: Kalidas Marg**, Janta Radios ❑ **MANENDRAGARH: Old Sabji Mandi**, Supreme Electricals, Nagar Palika Bldg. ❑ **MORENA: Sadar Bazar**, Durga Book Stores ❑ **NAGDA: M.G. Road**, Ramchand Premkumar Kasera, Shop No. 99 ❑ **NARSINGHPUR: Kandeli**, Jyoti Bartan Bhandar, Main Road ❑ **NEEMUCH: Tagore Marg**, Agarwal Stores • Ratandeep Agencies ❑ **RAIPUR: Malviya Road**, Surana Sales • **Sadar Bazar**, Khemraj Jusraj & Bros. • M.S. Traders • **Shri Patra Bhandar**, Opp. Hotel Madhuban • Steel Emporium ❑ **RAJNANDGAON: Azad Chowk**, Shree Bartanwala • **Juniihatri**, Chhote Sound Systems ❑ **RATLAM: Dafu Modi Bazar**, Agarwal Electricals, Shop No. 24 • **Do Batti**, Roopayan Stores • **Manak Chowk**, Jain Sons ❑ **REWA: Kala Mandir Road**, Gupta Sales Corporation • **Prakash Chowk**, Prakash Agencies ❑ **SAGAR: Katra Bazar**, M/s. Jaina Steels • National Stores ❑ **SATNA: Opposite Ashok Talkies**, Keshari Steel Centre • **Pannilal Chowk**, Gifto Steel Centre ❑ **SEONI: Budhwari Bazar**, Sunil Metal Stores • Vishal Steel Centre ❑ **SHAJAPUR: New Road**, A.G. Takhatwala ❑ **UJJAIN: Freeganj**, 23/4, Bhoj Marg, Laxmi Steel Center • **Jawahar Marg**, Manoj Patra Bhandar • **Patni Bazar**, Maha Laxmi Patra Bhandar, Shop No. 125.

MAHARASHTRA

❑ **AHMEDNAGAR: Shahaji Road**, Ambhore &Co. • K.T. Rasane, M.G. Road • Surekh Sangam, Department Stores ❑ **AKOLA: M.G. Road**, Anupam Variety House ❑ **AMRAVATI: Jawahar Road**, Israni Steel & Gift Centre • **Inside Jawahar Gate**, Nankani & Co. ❑ **AURANGABAD: Supari Hanuman Road**, Krishna Corporation ❑ **BOMBAY: Andheri (West)**, Apna Bazaar, J.P. Road, Azad Nagar • Hemco Steel Centre, 212-S.V. Road • Meghraj Umedmal & Co., Opp. Municipal Market • Shree Muthulaxmi Steel Palace, B-106 Laram Centre ❑ **Bandra (West)**, Anupam Emporium, Opposite Pali Market • Shazaan, 34-Hill Road ❑ **Borivli (West)**, Oswal Steel Centre, 18-Goyal Shopping Arcade • Pramanic Centre, Opp. Rly. Station ❑ **Chembur**, Akbarallys, Sion-Trombay Road • Milan Emporium, 5-Laxmi Market • Natraj Emporium, 4, Natraj Cinema Building • Silver Centre, 3 Laxmi Market • Vijay Steel Centre, Station Road ❑ **Dadar**, C.M. Mehta & Co., M.C. Jawle Marg, Dadar (West) • Dhiraj Sales Corpofation, 33, Padhyewadi, B.S. Road, Dadar (West) • Kamal Stores, Opp. Kabutarkhana ❑ **Fort**, Apna Bazaar, Noble Chambers, Ghoga Street • ❑ **Fountain**, Akbarallys, Veer Nariman Road ❑ **Grant Road**, Variety General Stores, 297, Lamington Road ❑ **Jacob Circle**, Ramanlal Jayantilal & Co., Opp. Church, Sane Guruji Road ❑ **Kansara Chawl**, Ratilal Mohanlal, 46, Kalbadevi Road ❑ **Khar (West)**, D.N. Jain & Co., Station Road ❑ **Lohar Chawl**, Asiatic Electric Trading Co., 46-48, Jay Mahal Bldg. • Sanghvis International, 62 ❑ **Mahim (West)**, Arunodaya Stores, Opp. City Light Cinema • Bhairav Bhandi Bhandar, Near Shobha Refreshments ❑ **Malad (West)**, Mahavir Steel Centre, Natraj Market • Sirish Traders, Station Road ❑ **Mulund (West)**, Apna Bazaar, Jawaharlal Nehru Road ❑ **Nalgaum**, Apna Bazaar, Govindji Keni Road ❑ **Panjrapole**, Sonia Enterprises, 179/A, Kandori Bldg., Opp. Sarvodaya Nagar ❑ **Santacruz (West)**, Akbarallys, S.V. Road • Mahavir Stores, Station Road ❑ **Sion (East)**, Kani Evershining Emporium, Opp. Sion Hospital •Shri Murugan Steel House, Near Sion Circle ❑ **Thakurdwar**, Amar Enterprises, Shop No 4, 238-A, Dr B.J. Marg ❑ **Vile Parle (East)**, Mansukh Metal Mart, Agrawal Market • Murugan Appliances, 36, Agarwal Market • Pankaj Steel Centre, 38, Agarwal Market • Parle Novelties, Opp. Rly Station ❑ **Vikhroli (West)**, Mukesh Sales Agency, Station Road ❑ **CHIPLUN: Chiplun Dist. Ratnagiri**, M/s. Rajan Steel Bhandar, Main Road ❑ **DHULE: Opp. Shriram Mandir**, Silver Shop, 1442, Agra Road ❑ **DOMBIVILI: Patkar Building**, Pankaj Steel & Novelty • Parag Steel & Novelty, Near Canara Bank ❑ **GONDIA: Main Road**, Anjali Steel Centre ❑ **ICHALKARANJI: Near Vyankatrao High School**, Heramb Trade Group, 10/152❑ **JALGAON: Phule Market**, Varieties ❑ **KALYAN: Bazaar Peth**, Prabhat Bhandi Bhandar, Opp. Vishnu Mandir, ❑ **KARAD: Near Mandai**, Rajlaxmi Enterprises, 386, Raviwar Peth ❑ **KOLHAPUR: Shivaji Road**, G.R. Shah ❑ **MALEGAON: Camp Road**, N. Joshi Pvt. Ltd., Opp. LIC Building ❑ **NAGPUR: Gokulpeth**, Sathe Agency, West of High Court Road, • **Jagganath Budhwari**, Geetanjali Steel Centre, Lanjiwar Galli, • **Sitabuldi**, M.s. Pande & Sons, Near Variety Chowk, ❑ **NASHIK CITY:848-Bartan Bazar**, Prakash Ramdas Kale • **Shalimar Bldg.**, Vijay Trading Co., Shivaji Road ❑ **NASHIK ROAD: Opp. Muktidham**, Mohan Metal Mart, Chaya Niwas, M.G. Road, ❑ **NEW BOMBAY: Vashi**, Apna Bazar, Sector-17 ❑ **OSMANABAD: Marawadi Galli**, Bedmutha Sons, B. Mahavir Path ❑ **PANDHARPUR: Taluka Place**, Ganjewar Traders, 2894 'Pushpanjali' Paschimdwar ❑ **PIMPRI, Station Road**, Rajkumar Enterprises, Near Arya Samaj ❑ **PUNE: Karve Road**, Jain Metals, 39/248,Karve Road, Opp. Bank of Maharashtra • **Narayan Peth**, Neelam, 689, Narayan Peth, Opp. Lokhande Talim • **Rameshwar Chowk**, B.C. Mehta & Co., Mandai • **Raviwar Peth**, Rajendra & Co., 894, Daroowala Bridge • Jain Metal Corporation, 635/Bohri Masjid Building • **Shashtri Chowk**, Nitin Metal Works, 1626, New Shukrawar Peth • **Tulsi Baug**, Tulsi, 1183, Budhwar Peth • N.H. Pandya & Sons, 1473/Shukrawar Peth, Near Jilbya Maruti • **Opp. Tulsi Baug**, Mehta Brothers, C/o. Mamta Steel, 1471, Shukrawar Peth ❑ **SANGLI: Herbhat Road**, Bhagate Steel Centre, Near Arwade High School • **Main Road**, Shree Ameya Steel Centre, Karmarkar Building • **Maruti Road**, Mangle & Sons • Miraj Taluka Paschimbhag Sahakar Graha Vaibhav Bhandar • **Saraf Bazar**, P.M. Shinde, Saraf Corner • **Station Chowk**, Deokar Steel Centre, Station Road ❑ **SATARA: Moti Chowk**, Graharaj Stainless Steel Centre, Opp. Sangli Bank • **Sadashiv Peth**, Lanjekar Wadake & Co., Near Bhaji Mandai ❑ **SOLAPUR: Bhandi Galli**, M/s. Shashikant Jaykumar Mohire, 193, Shukrawar Peth • **Navi Peth**, Golden Electronics, Shastri Shopping Centre • Katte Brothers Steel House, Janata Shopping Centre • Laxmi Stainless Steel Centre, 42-43/Janata Shopping Centre • Solapur Stainless Steel House, 4, Paras Estate • Steel Centre, 8/Janata Shopping Centre ❑ **RAHURI: Main Road**, Rasane Brothers ❑ **RATNAGIRI: M.G. Road**, Prakash Vastu Bhandar, Near Vitthal Mandir ❑ **THANA: Naupada**, Kitchen Shine, Dr. Ambedkar Chowk • Mahavir.

continued overleaf.....

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Hawkins Scheme Dealers
.....continued from previous page

MANIPUR

❑ **IMPHAL: M.G. Avenue**, Manipur Builder Store • **Poana Bazar**, Pasa Enterprise • **Thangal Bazar**, Roopak Agency.

MEGHALAYA

❑ **SHILLONG: Dhankheti**, V.K. Ghai & Co., Bawri Mansion.

MIZORAM

❑ **AIZWAL: Bara Bazar**, B.C. Dey & Sons • Eastern Trading Agency • Lal Huluni & Sons, Zion Street • National Business Enterprise • Mizoled
❑ **LUNGLEI: Chandmari**, J.B. Press & Stores.

ORISSA

❑ **ANGUL: Medical Road**, Agarwalla Enterprisers, Sanjibani Market • Sunil Electric Supply ❑ **ASKA: Bus Stand**, Asoka Enterprises ❑ **BALASORE: Cinema Bazar**, Fairdeal Corporation ❑ **BARBIL: Main Road**, Bhabani Varieties ❑ **BARGARH: Main Road**, Roop Sringar Agencies ❑ **BARIPADA: Lal Bazar**, New Electrical Agency • **Sebasanga Hall**, Aero Voice ❑ **BERHAMPUR: Bhapur Bazar**, Silla Gopaiam & Sons • **13, Giri Market**, Allied Stores • **One Way Traffic Road**, J.K. Enterprises • Madhu Enterprises • **Sano Bazar**, Raghevendra & Co. ❑ **BHAWANI PATNA: Gandhi Chowk**, Amit Fancy Emporium, Bhawani Patur • Maheswari General Store ❑ **BHUBANESWAR: Ashok Nagar**, T. Krishna Patra • **Eastern Market Building**, Banjya Bikash • Lalchand & Sons • **Rajmahal Chhak**, Reeta • **Sahid Nagar**, Suruchi ❑ **BOLANGIR: Bus Stand**, Narayan Das Adumal • Steel Home • **Cinema Hall Road**, Samjuka Steel Centre • **Surya Hotel Complex**, Bombay Steel Emporium ❑ **BURLA: Main Road**, Burla Electricals • Punjab General Stores ❑ **CHANDPUR: Main Road**, Gourjema Electricals ❑ **CHATRAPUR:** Durga Electricals ❑ **CUTTACK: Bajra Kabati Road**, Konark Light House • **Choudhury Bazar**, Janata General Store • **Badambadi**, Gayatri Stainless Steel • **College Square**, Laxmi Prakash Agency • **Mahatab Road**, Indian Industries • **Raja Bagicha**, D. Patra • **Tinkonia Bagicha**, Gupta Sales Corporation • Shankar General Store • Sunita • Utkal Sales Corporation ❑ **DHENKANAL: Kanchan Bazar**, Beauty House ❑ **HIRAKUD: New Market**, Pradhan General Stores ❑ **JASHIPUR: Main Road**, Janata Agencies ❑ **JATNI: Railway Market**, Popular Stores ❑ **JEYPORE: Main Road**, Shantee Stores • **M.G. Road**, Viswanath Steel Centre ❑ **JHARSUGUDA: Main Road**, Jharsuguda Metal Stores ❑ **KARANJIA: Main Road**, Shankar Stores ❑ **KEONJHAR: New Market**, Asha Ladies Corner • **New Market**, Bhabani Stores • Priya Stores • Sri Durga Agencies ❑ **KORAPUT: Near Bus Stand**, Bikram Radio & Electricals ❑ **NALCO NAGAR: Nalco Township**, Nalco Employees, Multi Purpose Consumer Co-Operative Stores Ltd. ❑ **PADAMPUR: Raj Bora Sambar**, Rahas Behari Stores, Main Road ❑ **PURI: Grand Road**, T. Krishna Patra ❑ **RAIRANGPUR: Main Road**, Friends Corner ❑ **RAJGANGPUR:** Main Road • Modern Variety Centre • Pradeep Stores ❑ **ROURKELA: Fertiliser Township**, Sri Baldevji Enterprise • **Main Road**, Ghanashyam Das & Sons, Opp. Mangal Bhawan • Glamour • Pawan Stores • **Sec-5, Market Complex**, Prestige ❑ **SALIPUR: Main Road**, Electrical Sales & Supply ❑ **SAMBALPUR: Gole Bazar**, Bharat Steel Centre • **Usha Kunj**, Poddar Machinery House, Marwaripara ❑ **SIMILIGUDA: Main Road**, Chandra General Store ❑ **SUNDERGARH: Main Road**, Jafar Ali Rahimtullah.

PUNJAB

❑ **AMRITSAR: Hall Bazar**, M/s. Harbans Crockery Store • Raghbir Singh Katana & Sons • **Katra Baggian**, Mangal Singh & Sons • **Katra Jaimal Singh**, Popular Trading Co. • **Partap Bazar**, M/s. Puri Battery Store ❑ **BATALA: G.T. Road**, Abrol Enterprises, Near Punjab National Bank ❑ **BHATINDA: Dhobi Bazar**, Bombay Steel & Crockery House • **Gandhi Market**, Kanchan Crockery House • Subhash & Co. ❑ **GURDASPUR: Hanuman Chowk**, Kedar Nath & Sons ❑ **HOSHIARPUR: Jalandhar Road**, Bansal Crockery House, Near Clock Tower • **Kashmiri Bazar**, Vaishno Dass & Sons ❑ **JAGRAON: Main Bazar**, Kailash Chand & Sons ❑ **JALANDHAR: Balmiki Gate**, Bharat Light House, Near Seema Palace • **Bazar Sheikhan**, Kharbanda Shopping Centre • Romesh Chander Mittar Pall • **Chowk Rainak Bazar**, Gift Centre • **G.T. Road**, Opp. Civil Hospital, J. Om Parkash & Sons • **Naya Bazar**, Bombay Stainless Steel (Regd.), Near Luv Kush Chowk • **Rainak Bazar**, Behal Sons ❑ **KOTKAPURA: Railway Road**, Ahuja Gift House ❑ **LUDHIANA: Chaura Bazar**, Jainsons • Kapoor Crockeries • Opera Crockery House • **Saban Bazar**, Gupta Gift House • Jain Crockery House ❑ **MOGA: Bagh Gali**, Crockery Palace • **Main Bazar**, Nand Kishore Aggarwal & Sons ❑ **NASRALA: Jalandhar Road**, Kailash Ceramic ❑ **NAWANSHAHAR, Railway Road**, Hara Singh Jaswant Singh Anand ❑ **PATIALA: Chowk Arya Samaj**, Malhotra Stores ❑ **PHAGWARA: Loha Mandi Road**, A.K. Traders, C/o. Tilak Raj Darshan Kumar Mata • **Loha Mandi**, Chada Metal Store ❑ **ROPAD: Main Bazar**, Basti Ram Narinder Kumar Dhawan • **Subhash Road**, Gupta Sales Corporation, Chowk Farid Jullundur

RAJASTHAN

❑ **AJMER: Kesar Ganj**, Goyal Brothers, Station Road • **Naya Bazar**, Jain Sujan Mal Shiker Chand ❑ **ALWAR: Hope Circus**, Janta Bartan Bhandar, Shop No. 39 ❑ **BANSWARA: Azad Chowk**, Kansara Shambhu Lal Maniklalji • **New Cloth Market**, Rajasthan Furniture, Shop No.4 ❑ **BHARATPUR: Neem Gate**, Kishori Shyam Brijesh Kumar ❑ **BIJAINAGAR: Sadar Bazar**, Ganesh Crockery Store ❑ **CHITTORGARH: Rana Sangha Market**, Steel Emporium, Shop No.49 ❑ **JAIPUR: Katla Purohit Ji**, Karamchand Premchand Jain • **Nehru Bazar**, Ashoka (Dept. Store), Near Mayur Cinema • **Raja Park**, Long Life Deptt. Store, 372, Gali No.1 • **Tripolia Bazar**, Mahavir General Store, Shop No. 215 • Rajdhani Bartan Bhandar, Shop No. 186 ❑ **JODHPUR: Sojati Gate**, Arora Stores • **Station Road**, Saluja Agencies ❑ **KHETRI NAGAR: Subhash Market**, Amar Jyoti Fancy Store, Shop No. 38 ❑ **SHEOGANJ: Gandhi Chowk**, Vishnu Crockery & Gen. Store ❑ **SRIGANGANAGAR: Public Park**, Lyallpur Bartan Bhandar, Shop No. 46-47 A ❑ **UDAIPUR: Bapu Bazar**, Shah Laxmilal Parkashchander Jain, Shop No. 108 • **Chokhla Bazar**, Rajesh Traders, Near Chittora Mandir • **Inside Suraj Pole**, Lucky Stores.

TAMIL NADU

❑ **CHIDAMBARAM: 25, South Car Street**, Sri Vinayaga Pathirakkadai. ❑ **COIMBATORE: Gandhi Puram**, Ms. Covai Steels, No. 48, Shree Laxmi Complex, Cross Cut Road • **R.S. Puram**, M/s. Ideal Gift House, 8, Bashyakaralu Road ❑ **DINDIGUL:** S.M.B. Manickam Nadar, 163, 164, Big Bazaar Street ❑ **MADRAS: Park Town**, M.A. Ethirajulu Naidu, 18, Evening Bazar • **Park Town**, 15-C, Evening Bazaar, P.L.D. Rajendran Bror. • S. Santhosanadar Son, 88, Nyniadda Naicken Street • **T. Nagar**, Rathna Stores, (Siva Complex) 47, Pondy Bazar • Rathna Stores, 15, Renganathan Street • **Washerman Pet**, S. Selladurai Nadar Corpn., 360, T.H. Road ❑ **MADURAI: Ammansannathi**, S.S. Kandasamy Pandiyan, 3, Amman Sannathi Street • **Bullion Bazar**, Ananda Stores, 42, South Avani Moola Street • **Kamarajan Street**, S. Chelliah Nadar, 267, Kamarajar Street • **Netaji Road**, Muthuselvi Corpn., 109 ❑ **PATTUKKOTTAI: 19, Thalayari Street**, Sri Raamu Furniture ❑ **SALEM: Bazar Street**, Ms. Chandra Sekaran & Sons, No. 357 • Ms. National Agencies, No. 348 • Ms. V.C.R. Metal & Co., 87 ❑ **SIVAKASI: South Car Street**, M/s. M.V.K.D. Thangavel Nadar, 8 ❑ **TIRUPUR: Pookadal Corner**, Ms. Kavitha Agencies, No. 45, Eswaran Koil St. ❑ **TRICHY: N.S.B. Road**, Mangal Metal Mart, 24/2 ❑ **VELLORE: Opp. C.M.C. Hospital**, Seenu Agencies, 80/A-Arcot Road • **Main Bazaar**, Anand Agencies, 478.

TRIPURA

❑ **UDAIPUR: Central Road**, Electric House.

UTTAR PRADESH

❑ **AGRA: Johri Bazar**, Dada Glass & Crockeries • **Kaserat Bazar**, Agra Bartan Bhandar Pvt. Ltd., Shop No. 1/78 • **Subhash Bazar**, Gupta Glass Store ❑ **ALIGARH: Mahaveerganj**, Leela Dhar Babu Lal Kasera • **Railway Road**, Gulati Store, New Market • Jai Bharat Crockery House ❑ **ALLAHABAD: Chowk**, Gur Prasad Hira Lal, Jain Bhawan • **Civil Lines**, Alka Enterprises, 30, M.G. Marg • **Kamla Nehru Marg**, Novelty House, Near Power House • Priya Stores, Near Power House • The Sair Co., Near Power House • **Katra Crossing**, Jain Trading Co., Shop No. 11/48 • **V.N. Marg**, Diamond Tea Sales, Opp. Chameli Dharshala ❑ **ANAPARA BAZAR:** Moti Radio Centre ❑ **AZAMGARH: Chowk**, Jalan Electricals, Ahmed Market ❑ **BAHRAICH: Chowk**, Shyam Lal & Sons, Near Bata Shop ❑ **BALLIA: Chowk-Station Road**, Maheshwari Crockery Store • **Station Malgodam Road**, Vijay Gun House ❑ **BAREILLY: Chowk Bazar**, Swadeshi Jar House ❑ **BIJNOR: Sadar Bazar**, Rahmani & Sons, Opp. Ghanta Ghar ❑ **BULANDSHAHR: Ansari Road**, Kansal Crockery Store ❑ **DEHRADUN: Pipal Mandi**, Cee Vee Brass & Hardware, Shop No.3 • **Paltan Bazar**, Sushil & Co., Shop No. 95 ❑ **DEORIA: Ansari Road**, Mirzapur Metal Stores • **Moti Lal road**, Om Stores ❑ **FAIZABAD: Chowk**, Karim Khan ❑ **GHAZIABAD: Sihani Gate**, Goel Electric Stores, Shop No. 186 ❑ **GHAZIPUR: Gandhi Road**, Adarsh Bartan Bhandar ❑ **GONDA: Utraula Road**, Paras Steel Emporium, Raja Raghuran Market ❑ **GORAKHPUR: Cinema Road**, Ganeshi Lal & Sons • **Golghar**, Fine Crockery House, 16, Water Works Building • Ganeshi Lal Ram Niwas Agency, Station Road • **Gorakhnath Road**, Moti Steel House, Shop No.11, Sunder Katra • **Maya Bazar**, Amar Crockery Centre, Kotwali Road • **Town Hall**, Kitchen Museum, 11, Health Officers Building • Shree Bartan Stores, Opp. Petrol Pump • Steel Corner, Shop No. 14 • Vijay Agencies, Shop No. 16-17 ❑ **HALDWANI: Bareilly Road**, Sardar Crockery House • **Bartan Bazar**, Prem Singh Bartan Wale, Shop No. 73-74 ❑ **JAUNPUR: Court Road**, M/s. Anand Stores, Jogiapur • **Harlalka Road**, Glass Stores, Near Bata Shop ❑ **JHANSI: Jawahar Chowk**, Saran Brothers ❑ **KANPUR: Bhoosa Toli**, Kanpur Metal Co., Shop No. 66/317 • **Birhana Road**, Supreme Radio & Electric Corporation, Shop No. 26/49 • **Govindnagar**, India Crockery, Shop No. 124A/116, Near Bata Chowk • S.K. Sales Corporation, 2/7, Vidyarthi Market • Universal Sales Corporation, 41, Arya Kanya Market • **Gumti No.5**, Ish Electricals, Opp. Jaihind Cinema • **Harsh Nagar**, M.K. Agencies, Shop No. 111/2, Opp. Bank of India • **Meston Road**, Asia Light House • **Navin Market**, Kumar Fancy Stores • **Sisamau Bazar**, Adarsh Steel House, Shop No. 108/140 • Laxmi Bartan Bhandar, Shop No. 108/130 • Shanker Bartan Bhandar, Shop No. 108/146 ❑ **KHURJA: Bartan Bazar**, Bhola Nath Harchand Rai ❑ **LAKHIMPUR KHERI: Main Road**, Alok Agencies, Champa Bhawan • Mehrotra Agencies ❑ **LUCKNOW: Aminabad**, Inder Chand Jain • Ram Saran & Co., C/o. Bankey Lal Ram Saran • Susheel Bartan Bhandar • **Aminabad Road**, Tara Chand Kishan Gopal Jain, 18, Awadh Market • Tara Distributors, Awadh Market ❑ **Hazratganj**, Jain Sons, 11, Church Building • **Nazirabad**, Kanhaiya Lal Prag Das • **Yahiya Ganj**, Kanhaiya Lal Prag Das, Pili Kothi ❑ **MATHURA: Chatta Bazar**, D.C. Prakash Chand Anand Punjabi • Shree General Store ❑ **MEERUT: Begum Bridge**, Shakun Bartan Bhandar, Jagdish Sharan Inter College Bldg. • **Khair Nagar Bazar**, Modern Light House, Shop No.222, Opp. Pan Dariba ❑ **MIRZAPUR: Sardar Bhagat Singh Marg**, Mohan Brothers, Kotwali Road • **Wellesly Ganj**, Akashwani & Co., Swami Dayanand Marg • Krishna Electricals Agency, Sardar Bhagat Singh Marg ❑ **MORADABAD: Bazar Ganj**, Jain Crockeries • Pradeep Crockeries • **Opp. Kotwali**, Crockery Emporium ❑ **MUGHALSARAI: G.T. Road**, Krishna Bandhu ❑ **OBRA, Kharatia Bazar**, Mai Ram Jai Bhagwan ❑ **RENUKOOT**, Super Bazar-Hindalco ❑ **RUDRAPUR: Bhagat Singh Chowk**, India Industries ❑ **RUPAIDIHA:** Ramdoot Stores, Beside Ramdoot Cloth Store ❑ **SAHARANPUR: Nehru Market**, Nihal Chand Harbans Lal, Shop No.14 ❑ **SHAKTINAGAR: Vidyut Vihar**, Aggarwal Fancy Stores, Shop No. 32, Shopping Centre ❑ **SHAMLI: Bara Bazar**, Sugan Chand Sohan Lal ❑ **SHAKTINAGAR: Vidyut Vihar**, Jyoti Store, Shop No 6, Shopping Centre ❑ **SHAMLI: Bara Bazar**, Sugan Chand Sohan Lal ❑ **SITAPUR: Greek Ganj**, Sehra Brothers ❑ **SULTANPUR: Majorganj**, Narayan Stainless Steel Retail Stop • **Shahganj**, Anupam Electricals, Shiv Bhawan • S.R. Steel Emporium, Lala Suraj Lal Market ❑ **UNNAO: Sadar Bazar**, New Harish Chandra Gupta & Sons, 72-73, Shahganj ❑ **VARANASI: Bansphatak**, Girdhar Das & Sons • Stainless Steel Centre • **Dalmandi**, Glass & Plywood Centre • Ideal Glass House • **Govindpura Khurd**, Ramji Sao Satyanarayan Prasad, Near Raja Darwaja • **Kashipura**, Mahadeo Prasad Hari Ram, Shop No. C.K. 62/30 • **Lahurabir**, Asia Electronics, Opp. Thana Chetganj • U.P. Glass Stores, Opp. State Bank of India • **Shiwala**, S.P. Engineering, B10/45, Kirim Kund • **Vishwanath Lane**, Mohan Lal Kishan Chand, Shop No. D10/45.

WEST BENGAL

❑ **ANDAL: G.T. Road**, National Variety Stores ❑ **ASANSOL: Bastin Bazar**, Saha Steel House, 19, Leighton Street • **G.T. Road**, Eagle Glass House, 102, Ghanty Furniture House, 361 • Probhat Radio & Electricals • **Hutten Road**, A. Mitra & Co., 1 ❑ **ASHOKNAGAR: Golbazar (Maingate)**, Renuka Stores ❑ **AURANGABAD: Netaji More**, Saladal Basanalaya, C/o. Mulin Kr. Sinha ❑ **BALURGHAT: Chowranghee**, Hemanta Stores • **Lenin Sarani**, Sri Krishna Stores ❑ **BANKURA: Lalbazar More**, Radio Centre, 306, Lalbazar Crossing, **Subhas Road**, Goenka Stores. ❑ **BARASAT: Capital Market**, New Sarkar ❑ **BASIRHAT: Nutan Bazar**, Suralipi • **Puratan Bazar**, Modern Electric ❑ **BATANAGAR:** Batanagar Employees Co-operative Society ❑ **BELDANGA: Beldanga Bazar**, Radio Ghar ❑ **BERHAMPORE: Aajkal**, 53, B.B. Sen Road • **Near Kalpana Cinema**, Basak Enterprise, B.B. Sen Road • **Khagra**, Ghosal & Co., 226, Manindra Road • Roy Brothers, 202, Manindra Road ❑ **BOLEPUR: Sreeniketan Road**, Ananda Stores. ❑ **BURDWAN: Dholdighi**, Hindustan Aluminium, G.T. Road • **Tentultala**, West Bengal Stores, B.B. Ghosh Road ❑ **CALCUTTA: Bagree Market**, Sham Bros. C-23, • United Stationery, C-21 • **Baguiati (Durga Bari)**, Manimala, AA/12, Baguiati Road, Deshbandhu Nagar • **Baranagar**, Kashinath & Co., 1/1/A/4, Narasingha Prasad Dutta Rd. • **Baranagar Bazar**, Manoranjan, 16, Cossipore Road • **Beadon Street** (Hedua), Avantika, 173/3, Bidhan Sarani • **Behala Bazar**, Behala Steel House, 400-1, D.H. Road • Narayanee, 13, Brahma Samaj Road • **Bhawanipur**, Amita Stores, 144/A, A.T. Mukherjee Road, (Near Purna Cinema) •Porcelain Stores, 28, B.T. Mukherjee Road, (Near Purna Cinema) • **Bidhansarani Town School**, Modern Museum, 137/1A, Bidhan Sarani • **Canning Street**, Lamp House Pvt. Ltd., 21 • **Chandni Chowk**, Crockery Centre, 41B, Chandni Chowk Street • Nag & Sons, Chandni Chowk Street • **College Street**, Dutta Bros, B41/42, College Street Market • **Cotton St., (Satyanarayan Park)**, Mohanlal Madhawjee, 59, Cotton Street • **Deshapriya Park**, Nepal Sankar & Co., 85, Rash Behari Avenue • **Dunlop Vikram Super Market**, Sanjay Sales, 140, B.T. Road, Block-D, Room 14 • **Haltu**, H.B.P. Finance & Trading Centre Ltd., 4, Kayastapara Main Road • **Hare Street**, Calcutta Telephone, Dist. Con. Co-op., 8 • **Hati Bagan**, Ashraf Trading Corpn., 82/2E, Bidhan Sarani • **Hazra**, Shyam Traders, 62/A, Hazra Road, (Near-New Allenbury) • **India Exchange Place**, Ramdeo Enterprises, 36 • **Jadubabur Bazar**, Dasakarma Bhander, (C/o. R. Saha), 31, A.T. Mukherjee Road • **Kasba**, Proyojani, 22, B.B. Chaterjee Road, (Opposite Purbasha Cinema) • **Khangra Patty**, B. Dayal & Sons, 109A, Pandit Purushotyam Roy Steeet • **Lake Market**, Sree Durga Stores, Shop No. D-5, 104, R.B. Avenue • **Lenin Sarani**, Navee Electronics & Electricals, C/o. Wadhwa Mollah & Sons, Pvt. Ltd., 8 ✓ **Lindsay Street**, Samavayika, 13 • **New Market**, Ghosh & Ghosh, B-65 • **Old China Bazar**, Amamath Kundu & Bros., 14/3, Old China Bazar St. • Obhay Charun Coondoo, 207, Old China Bazar St. • R. Shantilal Flash Light & Co., 53/A, Old China Bazar St. • Satcowrie Dass & Co., 196, Old China Bazar St. • S. L. Coondoo & Co., 206, Old China Bazar St. • **Padmashree Cinema**, United Sales Emporium, P-45, Raja S.C. Mullick Road • **Posta (Central Bank)**, Nandy Stores, 50, Kalikrishna Tagore Street • Sealdah, Laxminarayan Basanalaya, 133/H, A.J.C. Bose Road, (Ground Floor of Astoria Hotel) • Ruby Cycle Stores, 11, M.G. Road • **Shambazar**, Sangeeta Enterprises, 123, Bidhan Sarani ❑ **CHAKDAH: Opp. Post Office**, Steel Varieties, N.S. Road ❑ **CONTAI: Main Road**, Sabitri Bhandar ❑ **COOCH BEHAR: B.S. Road**, Das Brothers • **Nripendra Narayan Road**, Tolaram Dalimchand ❑ **DARJEELING: Chowk Bazar**, Keramat Ali & Sons ❑ **DIAMOND HARBOUR: Near UCO Bank**, Botokrishna Pal & Sons ❑ **DURGACHAWK: Colony Market**, Pratik ❑ **DURGAPUR: Benachity**, Jyoti • New Digty, Nachur Road • **Chandi Das Market**, Prince • **Mamra Bazar**, Sansar, Chatterjee Market • **Station Bazar**, Ruj Bros., Hattala Road ❑ **FARAKKA: Chittaranjan Market**, Modern Trading Agency, Shop No. G-19 ❑ **HABRA: Jessore Road**, Mahali Bhandar • The Hindusthan Belar • **Jirat Road**, Habra Sewing Concern, Uday Shop ❑ **HOWRAH: Shibpur Bazar**, Sree Guru Basanalaya, 34-2, Shibpur Road ❑ **JANGIPARA: Jangipara Bazar**, China Stores ❑ **JIAGANJ: Churiapatty**, Jogmaya Stores ❑ **JIRAT: Jirat Station Road**, Poddar Steel Variety, Hooghly ❑ **KALNA: Bhadurl Para**, Shaw Sarker & Co., Old Bus Stand ❑ **KANCHRAPARA: Workshor Road**, Bangalaxmi Basanalaya ❑ **KANDI: Kalabagan**, Nivanani Electric, (Near Police Station) ❑ **KHARAGPUR: Gole Bazar**, Arvind Stores, 87, Railway Market • Ganga Jamuna, TE-2, Railway Market • Hindustan Stores, 123A, Railway Market ❑ **KRISHNANAGAR: Gole Sona Patty**, Sailen Kumar Dutta & Bros., B.K. Chatterjee Lane (Near Mini Market) • **High Street**, Ram Krishna Stores, R.N. Tagore Road • **Near Debnath High School**, Nadia Basanalaya, Biswambhar Roy Road ❑ **LAL BAG: Lal Bag Court**, Dey Brothers ❑ **MALDA: Binoy Sarkar Road**, Malda Electric House (Chhata Bhandar), 11/4, Binoy Sarkar Road • **D.C.R. Market**, Malda Variety Stores, 3/49, D.C.R. Market • **Netaji Subhas Road**, Radio Sign, 27 ❑ **MIDNAPUR: Bibiganj**, Chabri Enterprise ❑ **MURAROI: Station Road**, Gouranga Dutta ❑ **NABADWIP: Basan Patty**, Balai Chandra Das, Bazar Road ❑ **PURULIA: Chowk Bazar**, Dutta Bros. ❑ **RAGHUNATHGANJ: Darbeshpur**, Provat Stores, (Dulu's Dokan) • **Sadar Ghat**, Sukanta, Municipal Super Market ❑ **RAMPURHAT: Dak Banglow Para**, Radio Stores, Netaji Subhas Road • **Near U.B.I.**, Dutta Stainless Steel House, Desbandhu Road ❑ **RANAGHAT: Bhangrapara**, Chakraborty Distributors, Kalimoy Ghatak Lane ❑ **RANIGANJ: Burro Bazar**, Seth Bros, 25, M.G. Road ❑ **SAINTHIA: Nandy Keshan Talkies**, Shankar Variety Stores, Old Kandi Road ❑ **SANTIPUR: Public Library**, Sen Electric, 33/A, Netaji Subas Road ❑ **SERAMPUR: Near Manasi Cinema**, Eastern End Traders, 39, N.S. Avenue ❑ **SILIGURI, Alupatty**, Neelam, Metal Market • Hill Cart Road • **Bidhan Market**, Nadia Stores, B3(R), Bidhan Market • Stainless House, A93(R) Bidhan Market • **Bidhan Road**, North Bengal Stores ❑ **SIMURALI: Simurali Bagar**, Uphar ❑ **SONAMUKHI: Rathitala**, Paul's Furniture ❑ **TAMLUK: Panskura Bus Stand**, Tamralipta Aluminium Stores, Padambasam ❑ **TARAKESWAR: BPR Gate**, Supersonic Radio, Chaudhuri Road ❑ **UTTARPARA: Uttarpara Bazar**, Tapasi, 219, G.T. Road.

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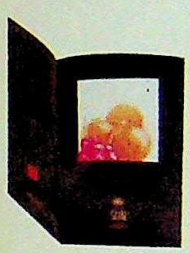
AIR-INDIA

Flying Colours

New livery and image for the airline

A glittering golden sun with 24 spokes emblazoned on the tail against a deep red sash. The glitzy new symbol, Air-India hopes, will inspire it to fly to the heady reaches of prosperity, wing-to-wing with the other major world airlines. So after half a century, the national carrier is shedding its faded skin to emerge in a gleaming new corporate avatar.



(From top) the new logo; the redone executive class; and (left) the menu card: suave look

The Boeing 747 Emperor Rajendra Chola, the first of the refurbished planes has a markedly different interior. The upholstery is new, so is the livery, the cutlery and the decor. The seats are remodelled with custom-made fabrics from Lagenthal of Switzerland. The economy class seats are new: the Sicma model of Paris with its contoured back. The chairs offer greater leg-room. Overhead luggage bins are expanded. And the overly ethnic side panels have been redone in a simple white tone and diffused lighting. Explains buoyant Managing Director Rajan Jetley: "It is a public statement of change and a product modernisation exercise in the classic marketing sense."

The changes took a long time coming. A board subcommittee comprising Jetley, chairman Ratan Tata and Vivek Bharat Ram closely monitored every change. The attention to detail is evident everywhere: the bone china is Royal Doulton. Porcelain and imported glassware adorn the Sun Executive Class. Table-linen is white damask and the liquor, a connoisseur's delight. For those who prefer white wines, 1985 Schloss Vollards Rheingau Riesling and 1986 Chablis A.C. Joseph Drouhin. Red wines: 1985 Chateau Negrit St Emilion A.C. and 1986 Bourgogne Pinot Noir Joseph Drouhin. Rose wine: 1986 Chateau de Beaulieu Coteaux D'aix en Provence A.C. And Henriot Brut champagne. The first-class now serves Blue Label, not Black Label. It also offers bounties like XO Courvoisier cognac and Moet Chandon. The cuisine has gone upmarket with food festivals and menus prepared under the recommendation of Steigenbergers.

Air-India's audio range too has been brushed by the fairy wand. It has been expanded from the earlier eight channels to include a selection of ghazals presented by Kaifi Azmi, western classical music presented by David Hudson, jazz from Don Hurst, a children's hour, and Japanese music on the eastern sector. And instead of reruns of the '50s films which had become Air-India's staple inflight entertainment, the latest hits from Hollywood and Bollywood are being screened. Non-stop entertainment includes programmes on sports, health, tourism, music and wildlife. This month, for instance, there is a tourism feature on India focusing on heli-skiing.

Inflight shopping has also been upgraded with a much wider range of items. There are duty free wines, liquors, aperitifs, lighters (Ronson and VC-200), and Swatches and Casio calculators will soon be introduced. Says Jetley: "It is meant to satiate the demand of the Indian clientele for cheap bargains." Incidentally, the cabin crew has been advised to shed those extra pounds and look trimmer and sexier.

The face-lift comes expensive: a cool $ 35 million (Rs 58.9 crore). Air-India has acquired a new advertising agency—the San Francisco-based Landor Associates, which had earlier refurbished British Airways, Thai, Singapore Airlines and US Air. Its tab: $ 1 million (Rs 1.7 crore). Jetley, however, is quick to explain that the cost of the entire refurbishing is to be spread over the next three years in a phased manner. And after the first two aircraft are redone in Hong Kong, the next 19 will be refitted in India itself.

There has been a shift in marketing strategy too. The airline has begun focusing on the smaller number of lucrative full-fare paying business travellers rather than the discount-seeking economy class passengers, at the cost of forgoing higher passenger load factors. Today, except for New York and Tokyo, practically every major international centre is serviced by non-stop Air-India flights, often lasting 14 hours. Besides meeting the needs of business travellers who form the cream of an airline's clientele, Air-India has rescheduled its timetables with night-time departures and sunrise arrivals, introducing Snoozer and Whizzer flights. Recently it linked travel agents with its online reservation system.

Air-India expects that the target profit for this year—Rs 23 crore—may be exceeded, and some even hope it will touch a Rs 100-crore profitability by the turn of the century. But there is a long way to fly. As an aviation expert cautions: "Changing colours and cushions is fine, but what will really matter finally is improvement in operational efficiency and strict punctuality. Unless that happens, these cosmetic changes will be meaningless." But the mood in Air-India's boardroom is upbeat and the management hopes that armed with its catchy new slogan 'the pace of the West and the grace of the East', it can recapture its past glory as one of the leading airlines in the world.

—SALIL TRIPATHI

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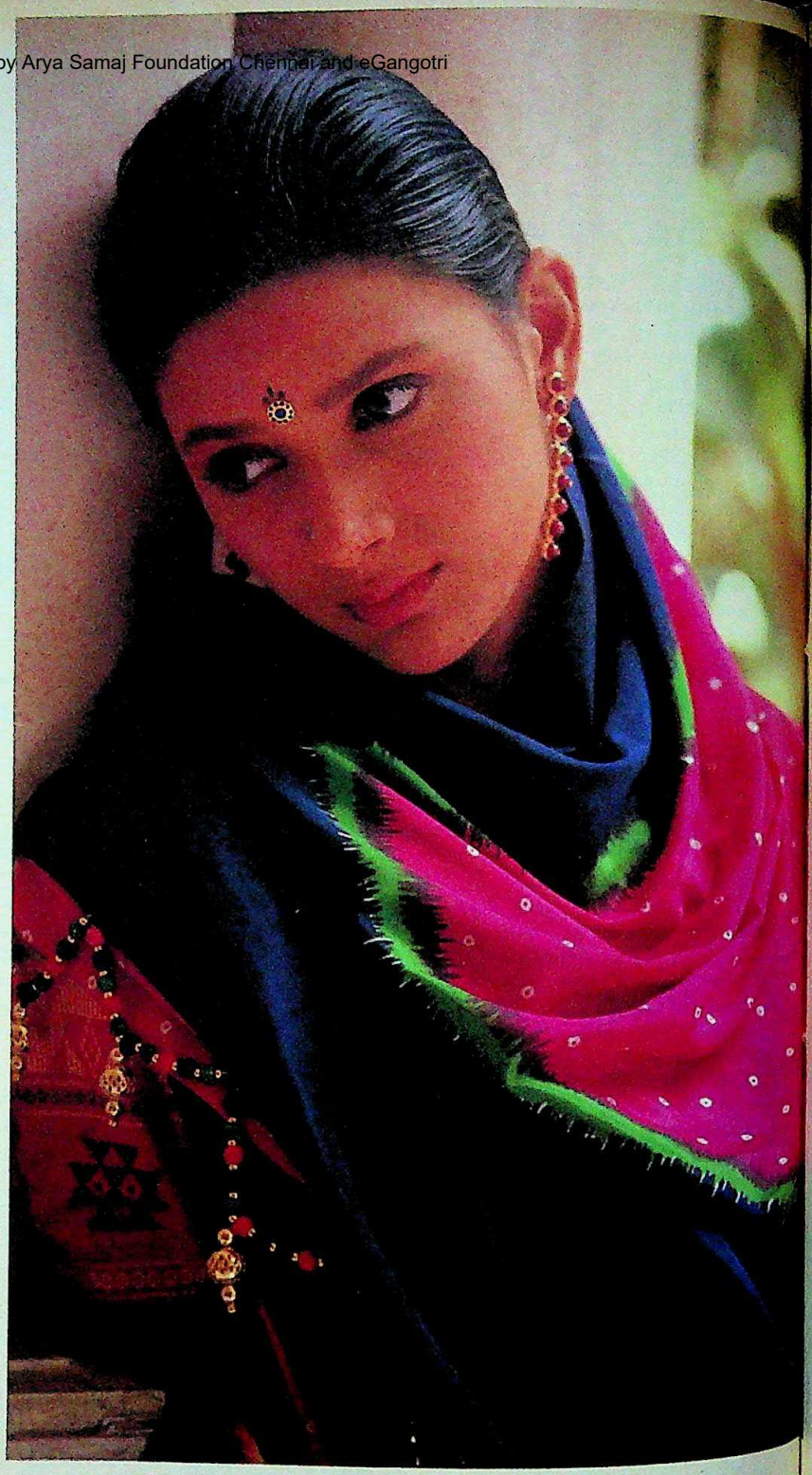
VIMAL



A woman expresses herself in many languages. Vimal is one of the

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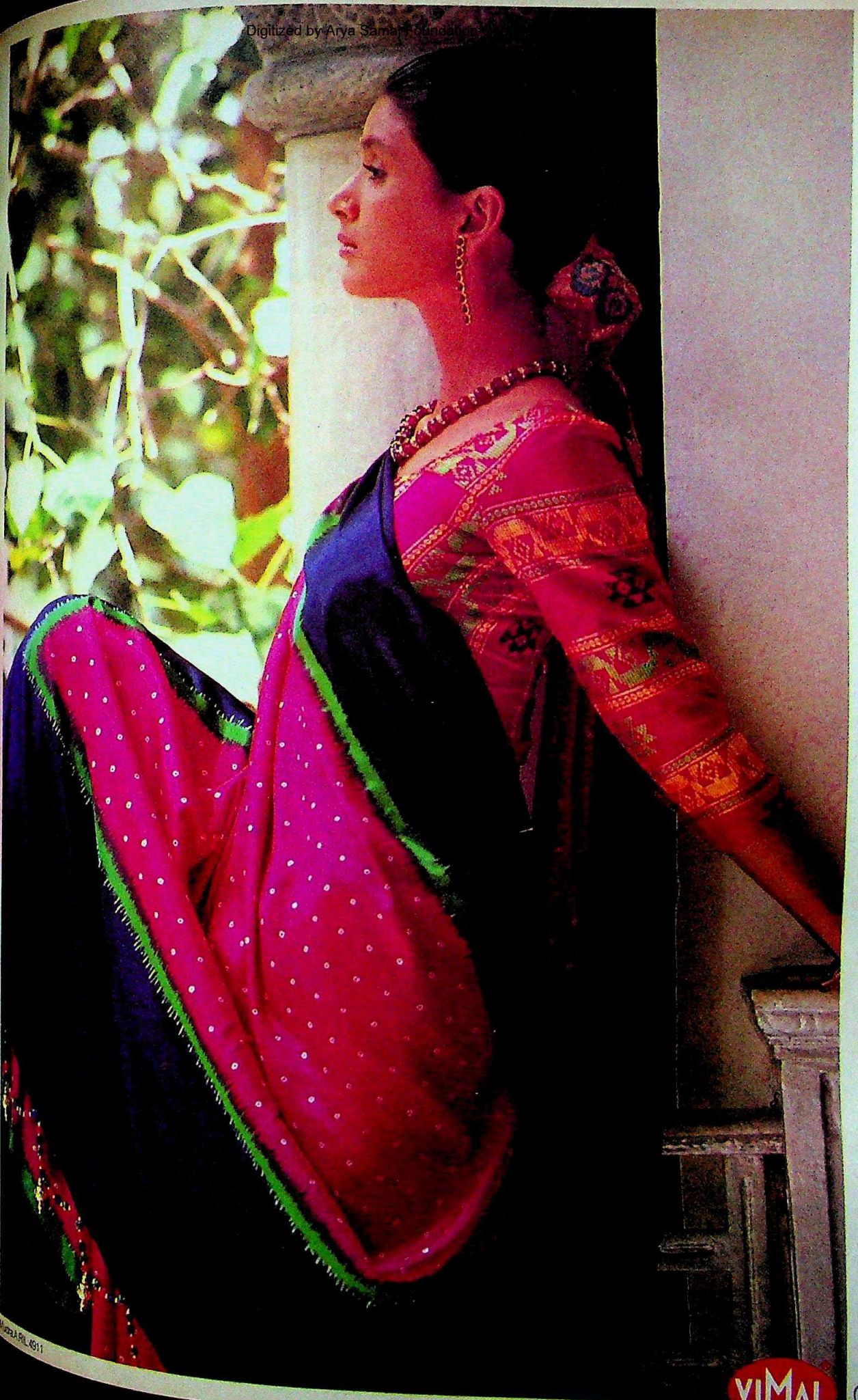

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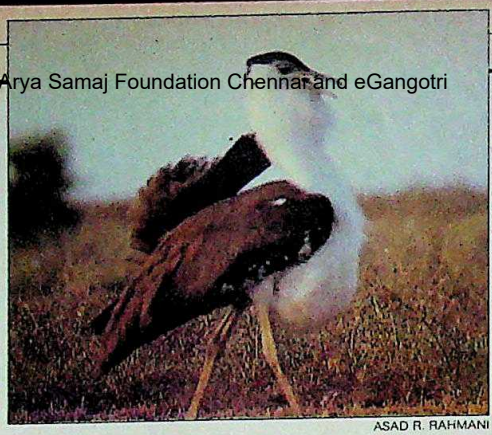
Tenuous Return

WHEN a great Indian bustard courts, it does so with flamboyant style. A cock bustard trots up to an elevated spot, then tail raised above his back, he puffs out his special neck pouch and gives out a deep-throated "boom". The sound carries across the scrubby plains he inhabits. Interested hens then move closer and peck around nonchalantly.

Once endemic to the continent, the bustard is, however, among the most endangered birds in the country. But thanks to a determined conservation programme launched in the '80s in five states across the country, the majestic bird is making a slow come-back. In Rajasthan, which today supports the largest number of bustards, the population has increased from 200 in the '70s to around 500 now. In Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, the population averages about 50 each.



ASAD R. RAHMANI

Courting bustard: growing numbers

Yet the recovery is tenuous. Although eight sanctuaries have been established for the bustard, many of these are already under pressure. In western Rajasthan, the construction of the Indira Gandhi Canal is fragmenting the bustard's habitat. Elsewhere, overgrazing by cattle has seen the sparse grasslands that it thrives on, disappear. As Dr Asad Rahmani of the Bombay Natural History Society says: "The bustard's future is still not very bright."

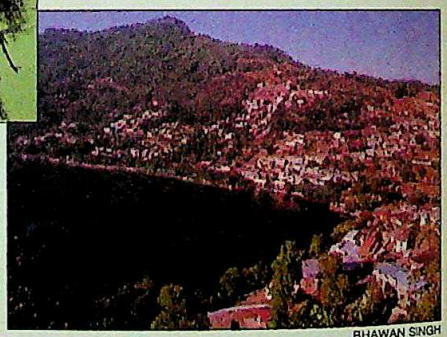
Menacing Parasite

A highly polluted lake and unchecked deforestation are not the only reasons for Nainital's decline as a hill station. The magnificent oak trees that drape its rugged mountain slopes now face a different kind of threat.

It comes in the form of a pernicious parasitic plant called Loranthceae that latches onto the trunks of the giant oaks and sucks their vitality. Locally called *bana*, the plant last year took a toll of 400 oak trees. This year too it is maintaining its deadly progress. Says environmental activist Anup Sah: "*Bana* infection has now reached epidemic proportions and threatens the entire oak forests of Nainital district."

There is, however, no consensus on how best to tackle the menace. Earlier the local municipality used to carry out a *bana* uprooting programme every year.

ANUP SAH



BHAWAN SINGH

Oak tree infected by *bana*; and (right) Nainital: vanishing trees

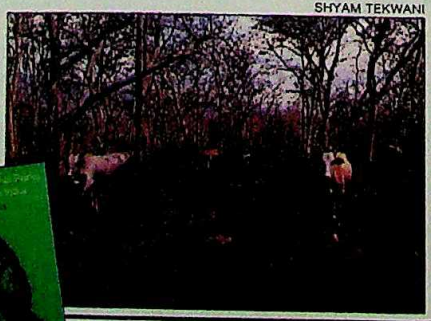
But forest officials argued that the oak tree can support the parasitic plant without too much harm to itself. That put an end to the programme and saw a resurgence of the problem. It was exacerbated by people cutting oak branches as firewood. The cut branches, with their exposed saps, became ideal sprouting grounds for the sticky *bana* seeds dispersed by birds.

So widespread is the Loranthceae menace that it has even found its way into local idiom. Hill folk now say: "*Bana lag gaya*" (*bana* has afflicted it) to describe anything on the decline. Sah fears that unless remedial action is taken, the oak forests of Nainital may soon disappear.

Wildlife Blues

THE '80s have produced a wealth of documents recording the country's ecological devastation. The best example is the series on the *State of India's Environment*. Last month saw a valuable addition: a critical appraisal of the management of the country's 400-odd national parks and sanctuaries.

Despite being funded by the Environment Ministry, the report, produced by the Indian Institute of Public Administration, doesn't gloss over reality. Among the disturbing facts it exposes is the extent to which these wildlife preserves have been invaded by humans. Half the parks and two-thirds of the sanctuaries surveyed had large populations of people living inside them. And in 10 sanctuaries, the density of the human population per acre was higher than the national average!



SHYAM TEKWANI

Cattle in reserved forest: encroaching

As bad was the threat from domestic animals. A majority of the parks reported widespread grazing by cattle and goats. And even in the Keibul Lamjao Park, the last home of the seriously endangered brow-antlered deer, more cattle were reported per hectare than the wild beast itself. There were other nuggets too: barely a fifth of these reserves have corridors linking it with another park, and there is the rising threat of pollution of water sources inside these sanctuaries from industrial effluents.

If the Environment Ministry could fund such a study, there is no reason why it cannot get down to correcting the mess.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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DEV ANAND

The Ageless Wonder

Four decades of a celluloid career, and the star continues to captivate

DEV Anand is a busy man. The phone keeps ringing. Dev, true to habit, answers each personally. There are producers waiting to cast him in new films, script-writers who want to sell him their dream projects, and mothers and agents of teenage sensations who hope Dev will do for them what he has for so many others—transform caterpillars into butterflies.

Last fortnight trade papers continued to report that Dev's *Lashkar* was outperforming Bachchan block-busters like *Toofaan* and *Jadugar*; audio cassettes of his latest film, *Awwal Number*, were selling briskly; and he had already announced a new film, *Sau Crore*, with a new pair: Raman and Fatima. "She looks great in shorts," says the Grand Young Man of Indian cinema, as he pores over her transparencies, surrounded by posters of New York and London, of topless dreamy-eyed beauties and David Hamilton's soft-focus nudes.

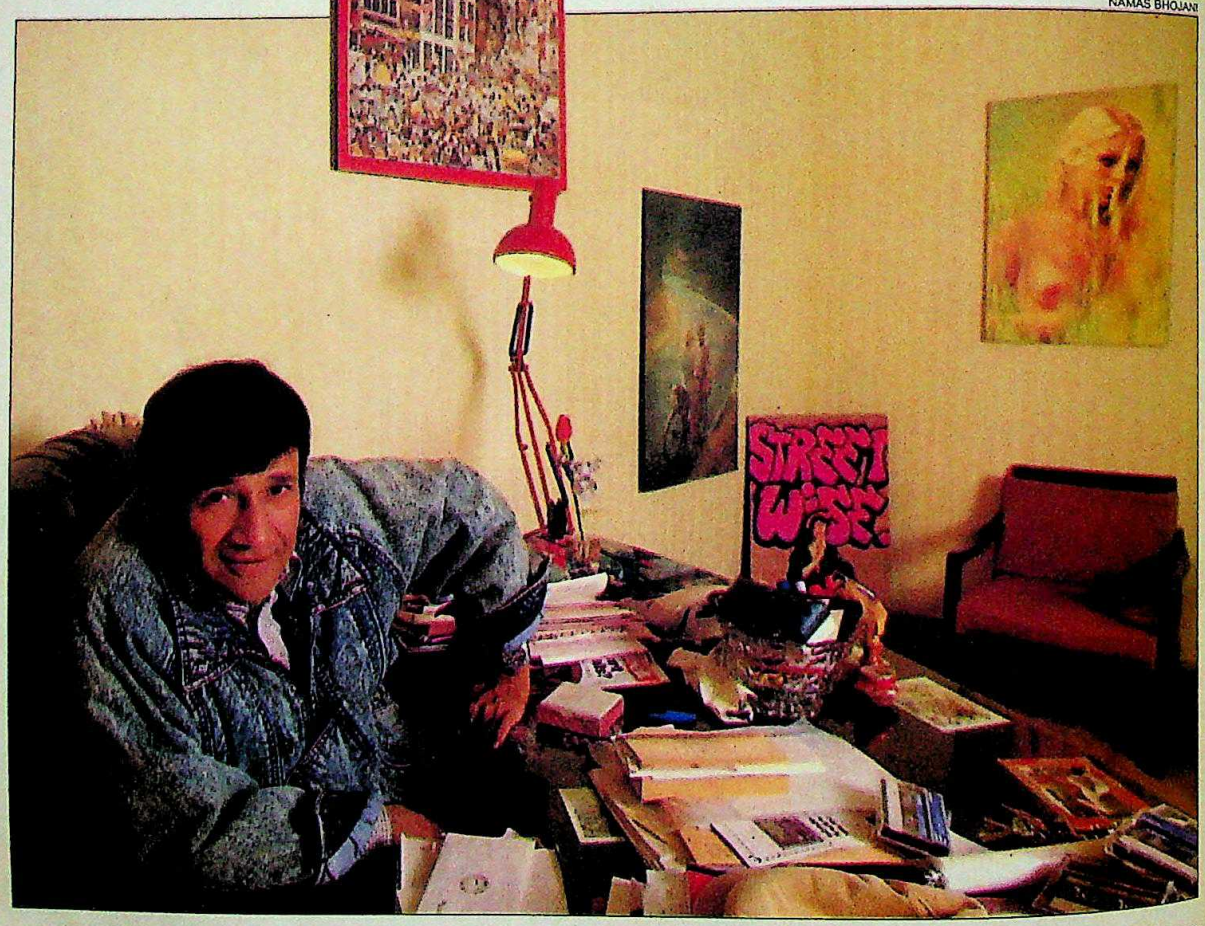
At 66, Dev Anand is an ageless wonder. At an age when others retire into genteel tranquillity, Dev's mind is bursting with ideas. Even while Navketan, the film company he started with his brothers Chetan and Vijay Anand, celebrates 40 years this fortnight, Dev is completely immersed in *Sau Crore*—a political thriller about an Indian Wimbledon star. He was at Wimbledon to shoot the crowd scenes and hopes to be there next year as well. Besides Raman and Fatima, the film features Naseeruddin Shah and Anupam Kher. And Dev Anand.

Says Zeenat Aman: "He is a man with a tremendous, fatal charm." That charm has worked for 44 years. Generations of heroines—Suraiya, Nutan, Waheeda Rehman, Hema Malini, Mumtaz, Zeenat Aman, Tina Munim, Ektaa—have succumbed to his dashing looks.

He is still clad in his trademark jeans and full-sleeved shirts with a denim jacket flung carelessly across his shoulders: you half-expect him to step out onto the streets looking for some real action. If you remind him that he is now a grandfather—he has a son, Suneil and daughter, Devina—he'll take you to his bedroom in his penthouse showing a hologram of a disrobing woman. He has that elan, that ersatz appeal which simply refuses to pale into grey eminence.

Remaining young has its price: a bit of bending and stretching in the morning; a strict diet; the ability to hold only one drink in a sozzled screen party; and a great love for the outdoors. Says he: "I have to get out—vast expanses fill

NAMAS BHOJANI



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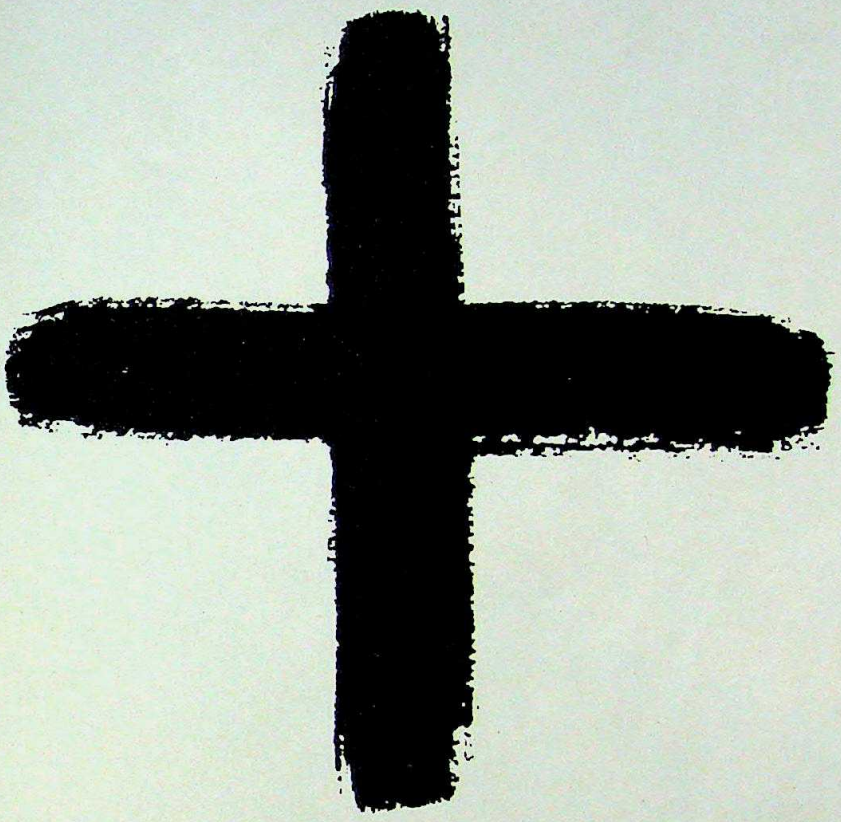

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a new life in me."

Seven years ago, he was shooting *Swami Dada* at a studio and on an adjacent set, the late Raj Kapoor was acting in *Chor Mandli* (a film that never got released). On spotting Dev, Raj walked up to him and said: "Dev, weren't those good old days wonderful when we were young, when everyone was punctual and there was so much respect all around?" Dev grew mildly agitated, kept shuffling his feet and told Raj: "I don't know what you're talking about. Your time may have changed. Mine hasn't." Script-writer Suraj Sanim, who wrote many of Dev's hits including *Chhupa Rustom, Heera Panna, Des Pardes* and will be working in *Sau Crore*, succinctly observes: "For Dev Anand there is no past. He lives now and for tomorrow. He purposely forgets yesterday."

His enthusiasm is infectious. Says Zeenat: "For him, each film is an adventure and he shares his enthusiasm with every worker on the sets." She should know. When she blew cigarette smoke rings at a party over a decade ago in the hope of catching Dev's roving eye, she could scarcely believe that with just one film and a song—*dam maro dam* in *Hare Rama, Hare Krishna*—he'd change the concept of Indian heroines.

In a film world that reinforces the ethos that *poorab* is all pure and divine and *paschim* the vulgar and decadent, Dev has managed to hold his own without compromising his westernised appeal. You can't imagine Dev in a *sherwani* spouting Urdu poetry like a Dilip Kumar, nor clad in a dhoti and resembling a village simpleton singing folksy songs like a Raj Kapoor.

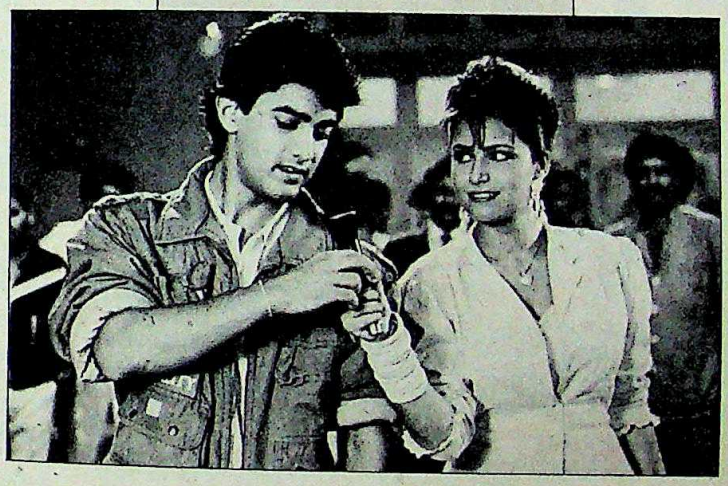
As critic Iqbal Masud points out: "He is the least Indian of the three (the other two being Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor). And his obsession with youth has prevented him from playing a wider range of roles. You have to graduate from college and enter the wide world at some point in your life."

Yet, the masses have loved him and, of late, tolerated him. Says Amit Khanna, who has been associated with Navketan since 1970: "He will be adored as a star but not as an actor."

Fatima, Dev, Raman in *Sau Crore*

A refreshingly non-conformist Dev has managed to hold his own without compromising his westernised appeal.

Aamir, Ektaa in *Awwal Number*



DEV is proud of that past but uncomfortable when reminded of it. He has introduced many to the industry, but is unwilling to wallow in past glory. Perhaps he does not wish to be reminded of his age, or he doesn't want to be termed a "thespian". But his contribution to the industry is munificent. It was he who discovered Zeenat, Tina, and gave Shabana her first commercial break. It required guts.

He's been gutsy in his themes as well: he has played villains and anti-heroes without worrying about his image (*Jewel Thief, Baazi, Swami Dada, Gambler* and *Guide*). And he has even avoided falling in love with his heroine, as in *Des Pardes*—though commercially that would have been more exciting—because the situation did not demand it. Asks Dev: "Can anyone else take such a gamble?"

It was not just his heroines that he ran around with. He flirted with politics too for a brief while. He attacked the Emergency in an interview to the BBC and later launched the National Party, which disappeared like a fleeting frame. His idealism has much to do with the poor. He philosophises: "The man sleeping on the street isn't asking for much. He doesn't want to be disturbed; he is not revolting. Our politicians have failed even him."

But Dev hasn't: for over 40 years he has unfailingly entertained him. He has very high hopes for *Awwal Number*, a film about a terrorist threat to a cricket match with Aamir Khan, Aditya Pancholi and Ektaa. "He is great—he makes you feel really good, like a star, even though it was my first film," says Ektaa. Whether he is at his Pali Hill penthouse, Juhu beach-house or Santa Cruz office, Dev is constantly on the move: looking for faces that spark stories, young girls that become the mascots to launch new movies. Says he: "I look for cinema everywhere."

It has never bothered him when he is ridiculed for running around trees with girls young enough to be his granddaughters. Questions are invariably asked about whether he's had a facelift (he hasn't). Or the reason why he continues to wear full-sleeved shirts (friends say he is conscious of his arms). Or if he has any elixir of youth (he hasn't).

For Dev the only elixir is work. His day starts with meeting hopefuls or script-writers. Then dubbing, mixing or editing, often skipping lunch. All this while conjuring up visions of scenes that will entrall generations. "I can't believe 40 years have passed. I can't recline on a chair and grow old with grace among books. I have to be on the move." Nothing, not even the tick-tock of time can restrain him.

—SALIL TRIPATHI

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Statement of the Chairman, Mr. N. A. Palkhivala

(53rd Annual General Meeting at the Birla Matushri Sabhagar, 19, Sir Vithaldas Thackersey Marg, Bombay-400 020, on Thursday, September 28, 1989)

"After four decades of strangulating controls, total decontrol has been the most propitious development this year but .... unless cement selling is delicensed, penetration into the rural markets is bound to remain dishearteningly difficult."

I have to begin on a sad note. Sumant Moolgaokar is no more. He was one of the main builders of your Company, and served the cement industry with rare distinction for 58 years. The fall-out from his dedicated labours was "innovative quantum jumps in India's technological progression", as one of your Directors put it.

As an architect of a new undertaking, Sumant was in the world class of the most dynamic entrepreneurs. He combined a creative mind with a high-octane passion for perfection. To him perfection was a goal, never quite reached but always sought after. **He had an eye for the scarcest resource of all – talent; and he could bring out the best in his team. No one worked *under* him: every one worked *with* him. Emperors rule, but leaders motivate. He could motivate the workforce to the pitch where they became emotionally involved in the company they served.**

Integrity and self-effacement came as naturally to him as deviousness and ostentation come to some others. *Business ethics* was not to him an oxymoron – like a hot ice-cube or a tiny giant.

Sumant Moolgaokar loved nature – "the silence that is in the starry sky, the sleep that is among the lonely hills." He loved birds and trees and the wind upon the heath, and "saw the brightness of the skirts of God". He felt a mystic kinship with the animate and the inanimate world – in that sense he was in tune with the infinite. Ecology and environment were to him paramount considerations which were non-negotiable. His was, par excellence, a life with a theme, a life dedicated to the great thinker's ideal –

"To see as far as one may;
To feel the great forces that lie behind every detail;
To hammer out as solid and compact a piece of work as one can;
And to leave it unadvertised."

We shall endeavour to ensure that your Company will always maintain the high standards that Sumant established. To impove upon them is beyond hope.

Depression in cement industry

After four decades of strangulating controls, total decontrol has been the most propitious development this year for the cement industry. I heartily welcome the long-delayed decision on decontrol for this vital industry which can now organize itself to achieve higher standards in the free market.

However, the year under review has been a year of depression for cement. For the second time in its 53-year history, your Company will not be paying any dividend. A recent study, undertaken by the Cement Manufacturers' Association (CMA), of 42 companies - accounting for 80 per cent of the total capacity – revealed that the post-tax return on net worth fell sharply from 36 per cent in 1983 to zero in 1987. In 1988 it was a *negative* 12 per cent! The Reserve Bank of India Bulletin of April 1989 gives some startling figures for 1987-88. While the ratio of after-tax profits to net worth was 5.6 per cent for the total industry of India, it was a negative figure for the cement industry. Likewise, the return of post-tax earnings (less preference dividends) on ordinary share capital was 21.2 per cent for the total industry, but was a negative figure for the cement industry.

The reasons for the bad times the industry is going through at present, are not far to seek.

As much as 75 per cent of the input costs of the cement industry is governed by administered prices totally beyond the control of the manufacturers. Decontrol has unfortunately coincided with steep increases in coal prices, electricity charges, and railway freight. With the industry's output estimated at 49 million tonnes during 1989-90, all the plants taken together will incur an additional expenditure, according to a CMA study, of Rs. 52 crore by way of increase in excise duty, and Rs. 290 crore on account of the hike in freight.

The increase in administered prices and costs has not been compensated by any increase in the retail price of cement. On the contrary, the retail price has fallen over 50 per cent in real terms since the introduction of partial decontrol seven years ago.

The cost increases have come at a time when the industry faces a situation of excess production and cut-throat competition. On a rough reckoning, the supply of cement outstrips demand by four million tonnes.

Widespread industrial sickness is a danger to be guarded against, though the shutting down of some old and unviable units would contribute to a healthy adjustment.

Remedial measures

If we have "an intelligent heart and a kind brain" – the Russian poet's birthday wish to a little girl – we would have no difficulty in adopting remedial measures which are so obvious that they almost cry aloud for adoption:

***First*, the imperative for the cement industry is to scout for new markets in semi-urban and rural areas where the demand for cement has remained largely untapped.** Cement should be placed outside the purview of the Essential Commodities Act which makes it obligatory for dealers to go through the arduous process of obtaining licences at considerable cost in time and money. Unless cement selling is delicensed, penetration into the rural markets is bound to remain dishearteningly difficult.

Secondly, active measures need to be taken to promote the use of cement for housing. It is a sad commentary on our plans and public policies that, on the one hand, we have a glut of cement and consequent sickness in the industry, while on the other hand we view with equanimity the homelessness of tens of millions of our people as a regular feature of the bleak national landscape. **Recently, the Chairman of the National Housing Bank put the existing housing shortage at 29 million units, and estimated that an additional 36 million housing units will be required to be constructed by the year 2000. In other words, 65 million housing units will have to be constructed over the next twelve years if the shortage is to be met in full.**

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Thirdly, the Central and State Governments should implement a priority programme of constructing concrete roads and using cement for the lining of canals for irrigation purposes. International financial agencies have shown an active interest in plans for concretizing our roads. **While the initial cost of concrete roads may be a little higher, (a) the savings in maintenance costs and the longer life of the roads, and (b) the savings in operation costs of plying the ever-increasing number of vehicles, would far outweigh the extra initial outlay. While we mentally accept that roads are the road to national growth, we are content to have the most woefully inadequate system of roads of any comparable country in the world. Only about 1.3 per cent of our surfaced road length is laid out in cement concrete, while – as the Planning Commission's Report recently pointed out – almost one-third of the length of our national highways has only a single-lane road pavement.**

I have no doubt that the depression in the cement industry will not last long. "Even this shall pass away." The governments will be obliged by compelling circumstances to adopt the three remedial measures. The foresight of those who, like your Company, are expanding their capacity, will be fully justified by events.

Exports

While cement was a deficit commodity earlier, it has now the potential to become an earner of precious foreign exchange. The market in our neighbouring countries – Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangla Desh and Nepal – is large; and Indian cement, which is of world quality, is readily acceptable in those countries.

But our cost of production is so high that it is impossible for Indian cement to face international competition. Since 75 per cent of the input costs is governed by administered prices as stated above, there is not much room for reducing the cost of production. The gap between the price of Indian cement and that in the world market is such that Indian producers, to compete successfully, would have to suffer a significant loss of Rs. 400 per tonne. This is hardly the time when the cement industry can bear such a loss. The reliefs offered by the Government on the export front – duty drawback, import replenishment, and ten per cent cash compensation support – are wholly insufficient to neutralize the price differential.

A few of our cement units are strategically located for exports and your Company's reputation attracts numerous international inquiries. But the extent of the loss involved in exports at international prices is a powerful commercial deterrent. Nevertheless, your Company has already ventured into the export market in a modest way.

Modernization and expansion

As I said five years ago, modernization is one of those words which have a resonance wider than their original meaning. To your Company modernization does not mean merely replacement of equipment; it covers upgradation of product and process technologies in their manifold varieties, as also energy conservation.

The completion of the modernization of the plant at Madukkarai, and the optimization schemes at Jamul, Chanda, and Gagal – dealt with in the Directors' Report – augur well for the unfolding future of your Company.

The Government has just cleared our project to increase the present installed capacity of 5.6 lakh tonnes of the plant at Gagal in Himachal Pradesh, by an additional one million tonnes per annum. The project, estimated to cost Rs. 130 crore, will meet the growing demand for cement in the Northern region, specially for the large hydel projects in Himachal Pradesh and in Jammu & Kashmir.

Leader in the field

In the competitive situation today, we are fully geared to stay ahead of the others. In production, our accent is on quality; in distribution, on availability of the product at a fair price.

We strive to live up to the motto – "It is good to be big; it is better to be good; it is best to be both". We shall maintain our premier position in the field; and the good quality of our product is witnessed by the better price it commands in the free market.

Your Company is fortunate in having – under the outstanding leadership of Dr. Subrata Ganguly – a dedicated and loyal family of employees at the works, the offices, and other establishments, who have carried out their tasks devotedly through the difficult times. I should like to express, on your behalf and on behalf of the management, our sense of appreciation and gratitude for their performance in a trying year.

THE ASSOCIATED CEMENT COMPANIES LIMITED

Bombay, September 21, 1989

ROGER ACC 163/89 A

ACC

times change, our values don't

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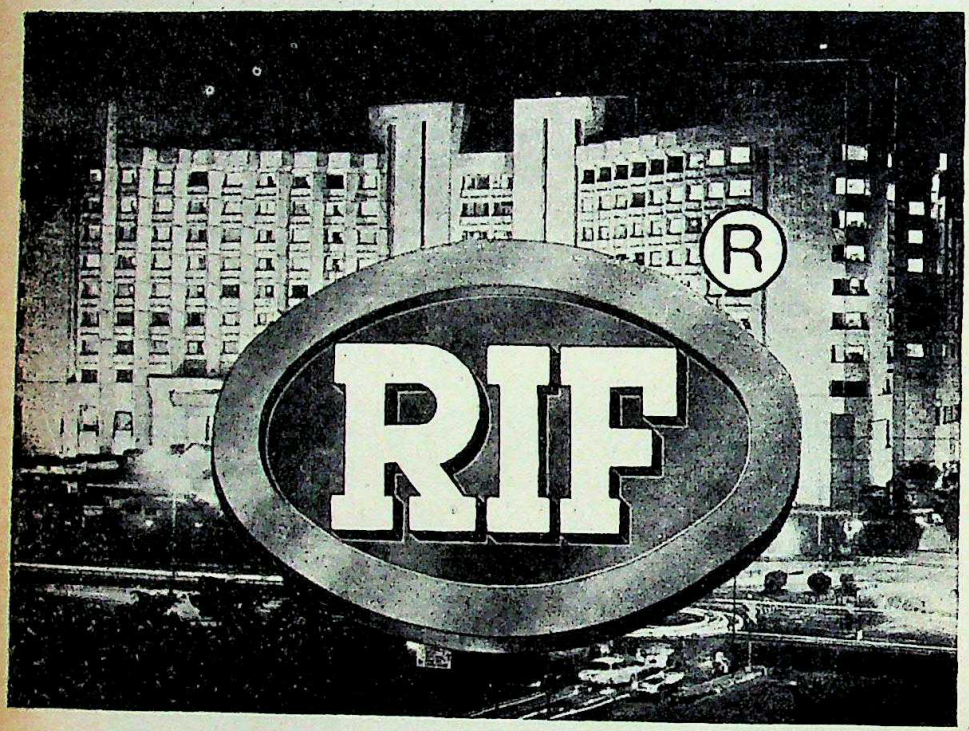

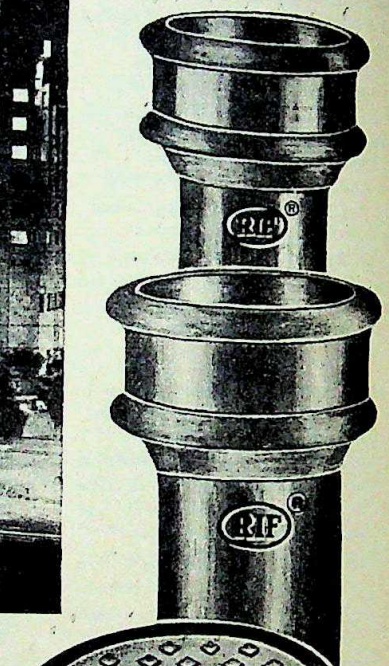

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MEDICAL CONFERENCES

Tough Stance

Government policy draws flak

IS India using discrimination to fight discrimination? That's the question being asked after the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) imposed severe and, according to one organiser, "humiliating" conditions on delegates from Israel, Taiwan and South Africa expected in New Delhi for three international medical conferences this month. Besides the Ninth International Congress of Neurological Surgery which concluded on October 13, Delhi is expecting hundreds of world renowned medical specialists for the 18th International Epilepsy Congress (October 17 to 22) and the 14th World Congress of Neurology (October 22 to 27). But if MEA persists in its policy of singling out delegates from some countries for discriminatory treatment, the prospects of India hosting other such conferences look pretty bleak.

When the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare recently sought MEA clearance for the three congresses, MEA said yes to delegates from all countries except Israel, Taiwan and South Africa. From that moment on, the organisers of the three events have found it difficult to convince MEA that restrictions on delegates from some countries would not be consistent with the open-door commitment they made to the world federations of neurology and neurological surgery.

A few months ago, Dr A.K. Banerjee, organising secretary of the Congress of Neurological Surgery was informed that the participation of delegates from Israel and Taiwan would be subject to certain conditions. Dr M.C. Maheshwari, organising secretary of the Epilepsy Congress, too received similar intimation. The conditions set by MEA were:

- Israeli and Taiwanese specialists will participate in their individual capacity and not as representatives of their countries.
- Israeli and Taiwanese flags, nameplates and emblems would not be displayed nor would their national anthems be played.
- The names of Israeli and Taiwanese delegates would be listed in their individual capacities in alphabetical order.
- The invitation to Israeli and Taiwanese participants would be issued by a non-government organising committee.
- There should be no office-bearers representing these governments.

The organisers were also categorically told that no political figure would associate himself with the congress, even for the inauguration, if Israeli participants were present. Moreover, the organisers were asked in writing whether publicity about Israel's participation could be avoided, whether India would be debarred from participating in similar conferences if the Israelis were kept out, whether any other countries would object to an Israeli exclusion and how India could expect to benefit from Israeli participation.

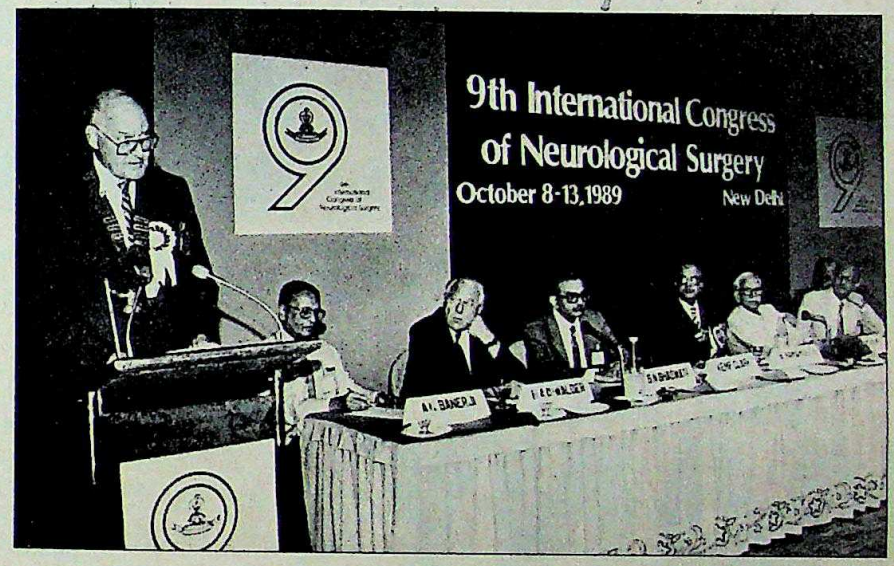
In the case of South Africa, MEA adopted an even harder line. P.L. Santoshi, joint secretary in MEA, wrote to Dr J.S. Chopra, secretary-general of the World Congress of Neurology, that MEA would allow only those delegates from South Africa who could supply "proof of being anti-apartheid activists". MEA said that while South Africans of Asian origin would be allowed to attend, others would have to get their anti-apartheid testimonial counter-signed by the African National Congress. The Neurological Association of South Africa was also asked to supply lists of their members prepared on racial lines.

MEA's stand drew instant condemnation from world medical associations and embarrassed the Indian organisers. Professor Richard Masland, president of the World Federation of Neurology, accused the Indian organisers of reneging on their commitment of an "open-door policy with respect to persons attending the Congress". Dr Kevin D. Rosman, chairman of the Neurological Association of South Africa, was more scathing. "We are a multi-racial organisation and see our role in the furtherance of medical care and not politics," he said. On India's request for lists of members divided in racial groups, he stated: "We would consider any attempt to do so as being racist."

An MEA spokesman said the Israelis and Taiwanese could attend as long as their presence did not imply Indian recognition of their countries. But the MEA stand drew flak from doctors at home. A senior professor in the All India Institute of Medical Sciences said that "India's policy of discrimination at the scientific level is unfortunate". It could lead to similar discrimination against Indian doctors attending international conferences abroad, he added. Leading doctors from France, Switzerland and Yugoslavia were also denied visas because of MEA's delay in advising its missions in these countries to issue visas for the conference delegates. "This is atrocious," fumed one of the organisers, but the damage has already been done.

—KANWAR SANDHU

Dr Clark addressing the conference



Restrictions on delegates from Israel, Taiwan and South Africa for three medical conferences in Delhi could lead to similar discrimination against India in the future.

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GEARING UP FOR THE FUTURE

V.K. MODI

Ladies & Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and on my own behalf, I extend to you all a very warm and cordial welcome to this 18th Annual General Meeting of your Company. The Directors' Report and audited Accounts for the period ending March 31, 1989, have been with you for some time now and may I, therefore, with your permission take them as read.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

At the outset, I would like you to join me in complimenting our dynamic Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi and his Government for valiantly grappling with various challenges faced by our country and at the same time making a bold bid to harness our cyclically volatile economy. I am sure, you also share my feeling that aided by timely monsoons, the nightmare of drought, staring us in the face during 1987-88 is already a thing of the past. A record breaking growth of 23% in agricultural produce, about 9% in industrial sector and 29% in exports, alongwith major leaps in technology speak volumes for the sagacity and drive of our Government and commitment of our people. The timely and wide dispersal of rainfall, during the current monsoon spell, is another good omen for this year too.

It is indeed a very pleasant co-incidence that we are exuding this optimism in the birth centenary year of a great visionary and the architect of modern India—Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. The planned economic development, conditioned in difficult democratic set-up, conceived and initiated under his leadership has come a long way indeed.

Encouraged by the achievement of targtted growth rates in different sectors during the first four years of the Seventh Plan, and spurred by the urgencies of time, a higher growth rate of 6% in GDP and 9% in industrial production is being targetted for the Eighth Plan period. This would necessitate mobilisation of resources to the extent of Rs. 6,50,000 crores. Since, as per the approach paper to the Eighth Plan, the main thrust is on elimination of poverty and amelioration of common man's life, through better employment, food, clothing, shelter, education and health-care measures, all of us should feel obligated to extend our fullest co-operation for the success of this plan.

In the recently released Annual Report for 1988-89 by the Reserve Bank of India, while certain trends are heartening, there are indications for concern in areas like foreign exchange reserves, current account deficit and inflation. Our Government is seriously siezed of these problems and given the general co-operation and support necessary for such stupendous tasks, will be able to tackle the same effectively. We on our part pledge to contribute our mite in this national endeavour.

Turning to private industrial sector as a whole, I am proud to state that this sector has always shown its maturity and self-discipline and responded to somewhat hesitant liberalisation measures of the Government, with great aplomb. The initial apprehensions having thus been allayed, we hope that the policy of liberalisation will be pursued openly to ensure accelerated growth of our economy.

While entering the new decade of the nineties, if we pause and take an historic perspective, our hearts will be gladdened to see that a solid foundation, in hitherto non-existent, infrastructural industries, industrial and consumer product goods industries, as well as our backbone, the agricultural sector has already been laid. We also possess an over-flowing reservoir of trained man power to draw from. Notwithstanding the usual problems relating to accelerated growth, on the whole the nation is brimming with confidence.

CAPITAL MARKET

Turning to all important capital market, I would like to quote from RBI's Annual Report. "With noticeable improvements in basic economic fundamentals as also better performance by the private corporate sector, the capital market experienced considerable buoyancy during the year. Fresh Capital Issues were significantly larger and evoked better response. In the secondary market, the share prices registered a sharp rise in 1988-89 after a moderate decline in the previous year."

To this, I would like to add, that capital market owes its optimism to the liberal economic and pragmatic financial policies being pursued by the present Government. The continuation of vibrant trend at this juncture, in defiance of the normal uncertainties associated with the outcome of General Elections, reflects the faith of the investing public in the inherent strength of our economy. No wonder, our capital market is now being openly mentioned, if not reckoned, as one of the emerging giants in the world.

OUR PERFORMANCE

I am pleased to report that during the 11 months period under review, your Company achieved a record production of 22.26 lakhs tyres and a turnover of Rs. 413.84 crores. The exports of Rs. 16.22 crores during the period is also a record breaking performance. It is a matter of genuine pride for all of us, that we continue to maintain brand leader status in domestic market and No. 1 position on the export front. The operations during first quarter of the current year are also encouraging as we have achieved a turnover of Rs. 120.32 crores against Rs. 108.07 crores during the same quarter last year.

PROFITABILITY

During this period, the profitability of your Company, however, has not been as high as it should have been under the normal circumstances, due to over 50% increase in the costs of some of the basic raw materials like Natural Rubber and Nylon Tyre Cord. Moreover, due to acute shortage of some of the raw materials, the same had to be imported at much higher prices due to very high incidence of import duties.

Your Company made a profit of Rs. 17.51 crores during the 11 months period after providing Rs. 8.62 crores towards depreciation. The after tax profit was Rs. 13.51 crores against Rs. 14.78 crores for the last year (12 months). You will thus appreciate that on pro-rata basis we have been able to maintain our after tax profit at the same level as the last year.

DIVIDEND

Your Company has recommended, for your approval, a dividend @ 25% for a period of 11 months' operations, which on an annualised basis works out to 27.27%; and will absorb Rs. 259.50 lacs out of profits.

RAW MATERIALS

I have earlier stated that escalation in the prices of raw materials, which account for 80% of the cost of production of a tyre, had significantly eroded our profitability. In this context the following figures indicating percentage increase over last two years speak for themselves viz. Nylon Tyre Cord 54%, Natural Rubber 51%, SBR 26%, PBR 14%, Carbon Black 33% and Rubber Chemicals 71%.

It is an open secret that the prices of raw materials for tyres, in India are almost double the prices prevalent in the international market; in addition, some of the major items are generally in short supply.

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SPEECH DELIVERED BY SHRI. V.K. MODI, CHAIRMAN & MANAGING DIRECTOR AT THE 18TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, SEPETEMBER 27, 1989.

Natural Rubber

Since Natural Rubber accounts for 28% of the raw material cost for tyres any price increase on the same upsets the production costing of tyres. The average price of Natural Rubber was Rs. 18,000 per tonne last year. This year, the price has remained above Rs. 20,000 per tonne and peaked at Rs. 25,000 per tonne. Similarly as against release price of Rs. 17,500 per tonne last year, STC released imported Natural Rubber at prices varying from Rs. 23,500 to Rs. 27,400 per tonne. It has been assessed that this price increase put an additional burden of Rs. 100 crores on tyre industry during this year.

Without at rest the controversies on what is the fair price for Natural Rubber, three years back the Costing Branch of Finance Ministry had undertaken a production cost study on Rubber and come to the conclusion that a price of Rs. 19,500 per tonne shall be remunerative to the growers. The tyre industry accepted the price thus determined but pleaded with the Government to ensure that Rubber is made available at the fair price by STC releasing Imported Rubber at the fair price determined by the Government. It was requested that it should be ensured that the domestic Rubber price also stabilises at that level. Subsequently, based on the cost updating, Government has been revising the price of the Rubber, the last updating resulting in the fair price going up to Rs. 17,800 per tonne. Unfortunately the international price of Rubber went up last year and as the Government was reluctant to adjust the import duty to enable STC to release the Rubber at the fair price, STC had no other alternative but to release the Rubber at very high price influencing the domestic price also to go up to new high levels.

The tyre industry has repeatedly stated that the growers should get adequate price for Rubber. For this purpose a mechanism was evolved by Government, nearly three years back, of having Buffer Stock Scheme and adjusting import duty on Rubber to the level enabling STC to release Rubber at the fair price determined by the Government. Unfortunately during 1988 and 1989 this scheme did not work at all due to high release price by the STC.

In brief, the requests of tyre industry are:

- Rubber should be made available to the industry at the fair price determined by the Government. This can only be done by STC releasing Rubber at fair price and further STC could do it only if the import duty is reduced to 10%, and
- Import of adequate quantity of Rubber should be effected so that no shortage is felt.

Nylon Tyre Cord

Nylon Tyre Cord is another important raw material accounting for 30% of the production cost of tyres. Last year while tyre production went up by 26%, Nylon Tyre Cord production could not be stepped up. This resulted in shortage of Nylon Tyre Cord. On the one hand, import of Nylon Tyre Cord was an uneconomical proposition because with an extremely high import duty of 104%, imported Nylon Tyre Cord was costlier by Rs. 50,000 per tonne, on the other hand, the Government wanted tyre industry to increase production. The well-meented suggestion of the tyre industry to reduce the import duty on Nylon Tyre Cord to enable tyre industry to import the same at economical cost, unfortunately has not yet been agreed to. Thus tyre industry had to bear additional financial burden of Rs. 30 crores in import of Nylon Tyre Cord. What is maintained by the Government is that there would be no incentive to increase production of any product, and so also tyres, if the fiscal policies are such that cost of production becomes prohibitively high. If the import duty had been reduced as requested by tyre industry, revenue loss to the Government would have been only Rs. 30 crores. But on the ground that it is uneconomical to import Nylon Tyre Cord at high price and to produce tyres, had the industry not imported Nylon Tyre Cord the consequent drop in production of tyres, apart from creating shortages for tyres, would have resulted in Government losing revenue of more than Rs. 200 crores by way of import duty on Nylon Tyre Cord and excise duty on tyres.

Nobody disputes that indigenous industry should not be protected. But it does not make sense to keep import duty on any material at such a level that import becomes an uneconomical proposition. The request of the tyre industry is that import duty on Nylon Tyre Cord should be reduced to 104% enabling import of Nylon Tyre Cord at economical cost while at the same time giving full protection to the indigenous Nylon Tyre Cord industry.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Prime Minister and Government deserve to be complimented for valiantly grappling with challenges. Optimism about revival and strength of economy. Concern about diminishing foreign exchange reserves, deficit finance and inflation.
- Outlook for 1990's optimistic.
- Capital Market emerging stronger — conventional uncertainties and fluctuations reduced.
- Turnover increased from Rs. 400.13 Crores (12 Months) to Rs. 413.84 Crores (11 Months). Profitability affected due to unprecedented increase in the cost of inputs but after tax profits maintained.
- Dividend of 25% (27.27% on annualised basis).
- Emphasis on need to make raw material prices fair and economical by adjustments in duties.
- Export performance improved; 22.53% share of total exports captured CAPEXIL award for the third successive year.
- Import of tyres not necessary. Call to increase duty on import of tyres or reduce duty of inputs for a fair and even competition.
- Delicensing of tyre industry welcome as liberalisation measure but apprehension of fragmentation of capacity.
- Future of industry promising. Potential for 20% per annum growth.
- Strengthening of R&D and development of human resource capital undertaken. Modernisation and rationalisation results already discernible.
- Ambitious plans for future growth include new project for Nylon Tyre Cord/Fabric.

Butyl Rubber

The Butyl Rubber is a better substitute for Natural Rubber for the manufacture of inner tubes for tyres. There is no indigenous production of Butyl Rubber. Still there is an effective import duty of 85% on Butyl Rubber.

Where is the justification for such a duty, more so as tyre is already subjected to high rate of excise duty?

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EXPORTS

Considering its vital importance, I would like to make a special mention about our export performance, which continues to be a source of justifiable pride. As mentioned earlier, we could touch an all time high figure of Rs. 1622 lacs in exports which accounts for 22.53% share in total tyre exports from India. In the process, we have improved our exports to such technically advanced countries as the USA, UK and USSR and are consolidating our position in other countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Italy, Middle East, Singapore and UAE.

Your Company has also added yet another feather to its cap by winning CAPEXIL Top Export Award, for the third successive year.

However, exports remain a losing proposition. I request the Central Government that the industry should get total Cash Compensatory Support (CCS) of 12% on exports against 5% presently available. The CCS should not be linked to the value addition.

IMPORT OF TYRES

Although, the industry is in a position to cater to any increase in demand, and if I may say so, even yearning for such an increase, to make better capacity utilisation, yet in its wisdom, the Government has permitted import of tyres under OGL. The import duty on tyres has been reduced from 145% to 105%. This is contrary to the policy of giving Tariff protection to indigenous industries, by prescribing import duties on finished products at higher rate than the import duty on raw materials of the concerned item.

The industry feels that this is patently unfair and smacks of discrimination.

I, therefore, sincerely appeal to the Government that either the import duty on tyres be restored to the earlier level of 145% or import duty on raw materials should be reduced to 65% to give us a chance to fight competition on an even basis.

DELICENSING

It appears that reacting sharply to transient imbalance between the supply and demand of tyres, the Government has decided to delicence the manufacture of tyres and tubes. Its implications are too obvious to be highlighted. While we certainly welcome this measure as yet another step towards liberalisation of controls, we have a feeling that this would lead to fragmentation of capacity and would be against the policy of setting up plants of minimum economic capacity.

MOTOR VEHICLES ACT

The industry welcomes the promulgation of Motor Vehicles Act, as it will be instrumental in effectively curbing the practice of over-loading of commercial vehicles and reduction in air-pollution. It is felt that with control on over-loading the manufacturers would not be required to over-build their tyres for ensuring extra safety. The tyres would thus be lighter and more efficient. The demand for commercial vehicles and consequently tyres would also increase.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Large and diversified, as our country is, the role of road transport—passenger as well as goods, cannot be over-emphasised. Growing population, continuous development and improvement in standard of living will always put pressure on the production of tyres. It is estimated that as against a demand of 11 million tyres during 1987-88 the demand is likely to touch 28 million by the end of next plan, providing a potential for growth at over 20% per annum for the industry as a whole. The future seems to be bright and full of challenges.

EXPANSION/DIVERSIFICATION PLANS

Your Company is gearing itself to face the challenges of change by strengthening its R&D effort and improving human resources capital. In addition to this, we have undertaken a programme of modernisation, expansion and rationalisation at both the locations and the results of initial steps in this direction are already discernible.

In order to improve controls and decision making processes we are also enlarging and up-dating our computerisation programmes.

ALL STEEL RADIAL TYRES PROJECT

I have pleasure to inform you that we are seriously working on the implementation of our Radial Tyre project for the manufacture of 4,00,000 units per annum. Our foreign collaboration agreement with M/s. Continental Aktiengesellschaft, West Germany already stands approved by the Government.

NYLON TYRE CORD PROJECT

You will be glad to know that recently, your Company has been granted a Letter of Intent for establishment of a project for the manufacture of Nylon Tyre Cord/Fabric at Nanded in the State of Maharashtra. This will not only eliminate our dependence on others for this vital item but also reduce out- flow of precious foreign exchange from the country. Effective steps are being taken to implement this project.

DIVERSIFICATION PROJECTS

We have already identified a few other projects for which requisite sanctions are being obtained. We will keep you posted with their developments from time to time.

SECURED NON-CONVERTIBLE DEBENTURES

Your Company proposes to issue fresh Secured Non-Convertible Debentures amounting to Rs. 1038 lacs on Rights basis to meet a part of its working capital requirements. A resolution to this effect has been incorporated in the notice for this meeting for your consideration and approval.

I am positive that with your good wishes and co-operation and encouragement from the Government and Financial Institutions we will be able to implement our plans and earn for your Company, a well deserved status of a flagship, in its own right.

LABOUR RELATIONS

I am happy to acknowledge that cordiality and harmony in labour management relations have been a major contributory factor in our achievements of improved operational results. I am confident that the sense of belonging and excellent team spirit will continue to be the basis of our work culture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to record my thanks to my colleagues on the Board for their invaluable counsel and guidance. I also consider it to be my very pleasant duty to place on record our appreciation of the entire work force, staff and the management employees; for all the good work done by them during the year and hope that they will continue to excel their own performance. I would also convey my gratitude to the Central and the U.P. Governments. Financial Institutions, Banks, Dealers, Customers and Shareholders, deserve our praise for their guidance, co-operation and support as well as their faith in the bright future of this Company.

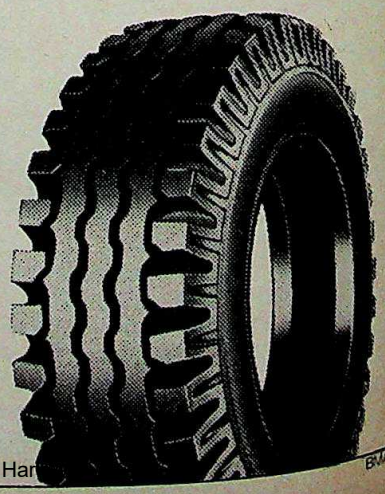
My thanks are also due to our collaborators M/s. Continental Aktiengesellschaft, West Germany, for making it possible for us to be what we technically stand for.

I profusely thank you too, ladies and gentlemen for having graced the occasion and heard me with attention and patience. My best wishes to you all.

Thank you.

V.K. MODI

Note: This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.



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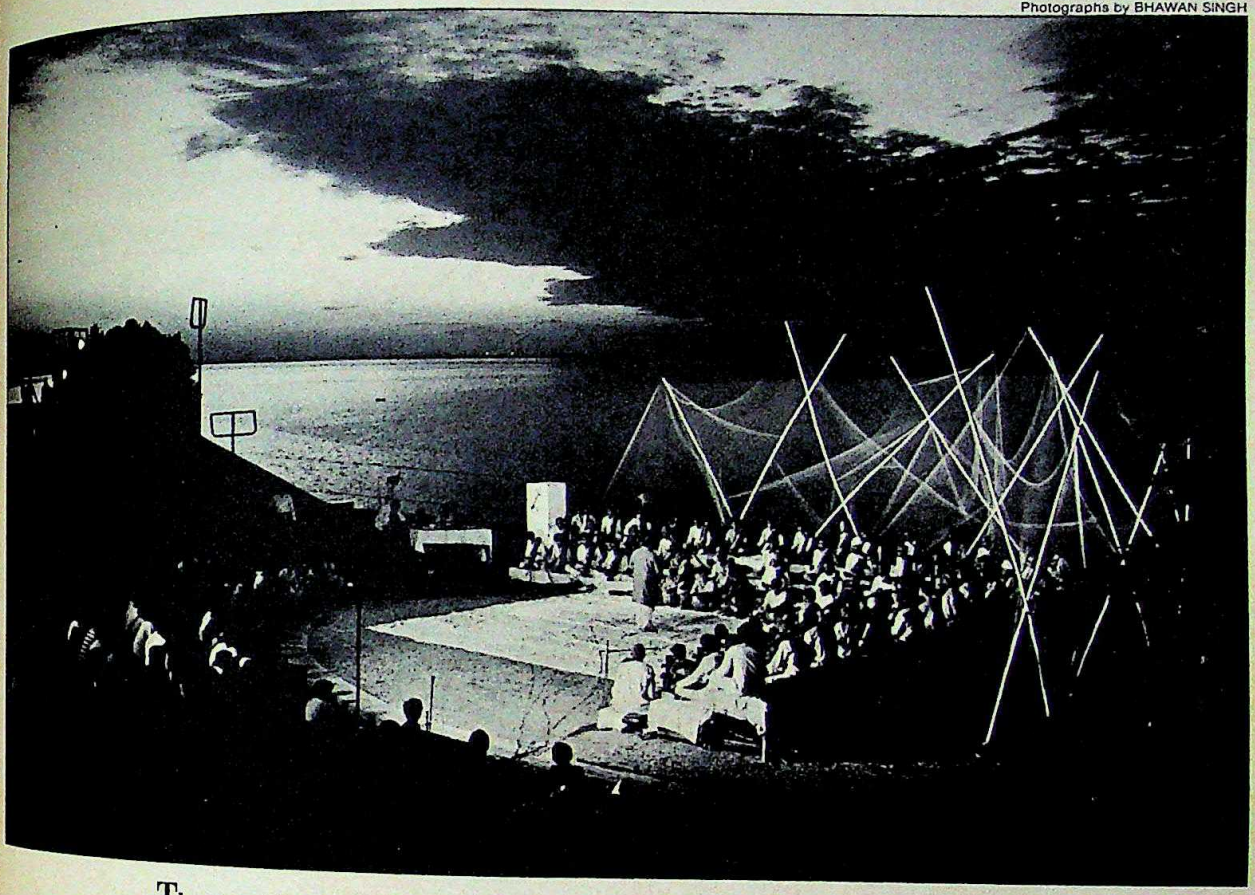
SARANGI

Strains of a Dying Art

The classical instrument faces an eclipse

Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH



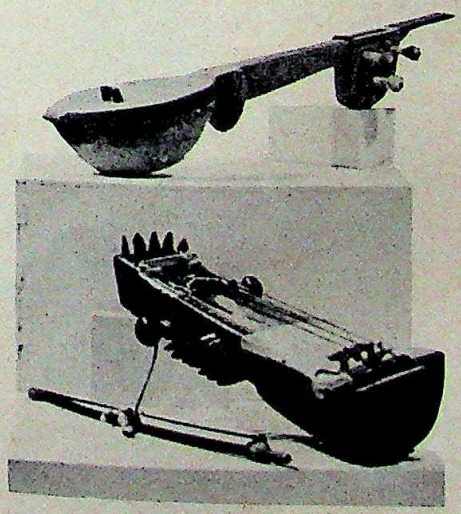
The grand finale of the Sarangi mela in Bhopal: a celebration of the instrument

THE music was lilting, the night magical. On the banks of Bhopal lake, more than 70 players—renowned ustads and little known radio artistes, seasoned septuagenarians and teenaged amateurs—played the sarangi to the urgings of Padma Shree winner, 62-year-old Pandit Ram Narayan.

It was the first time that as many as 125 exponents of an instrument congregated at one spot. And they all seemed to have struck the right chord. The finale of the three-day 'Sarangi Mela' organised in September by Bhopal's Bharat Bhavan proved a grand celebration of the sarangi. But there was a tragic note too—the threat of extinction hanging over the 400-year-old instrument.

The festival began with a soulful *mangal dhwani* by Rajasthani folk sarangiyas which drew applause from the masters—Ustad Sultan Khan, Pandit Hanuman Mishra, Pandit Ram Narayan and Dhruba Ghosh. But the *piece de resistance* was the recordings of the greatest sarangiya of the century—the late Ustad Bundu Khan.

But so dramatic has the slide of the sarangi been over the last two decades, that the Bhopal mela could well be its swan song. The instrument that once adorned royal courts—for solo performances and as an accompaniment for classical music and dance—has few patrons or players today. Sarangi manufacturers too are dwindling. One rare survivor is Ridmal Khan Langa, a Jodhpur carpenter. Says he: "It takes over a month to make one sarangi but I get about Rs 2,000 per piece."



This century had produced legendary sarangi players—Bundu Khan, Mamman Khan, Abdul Aziz Khan, Bade Ghulam Sadir Khan, Ashik Hussain (Panipatwale) and Gopal Mishra. But after their deaths, few have matched their standards. Says Sardar Khan, sarangi instructor at the Gwalior Sangeet Vidyalaya who complains of getting just three students a year: "This is a very difficult instrument to master. In today's

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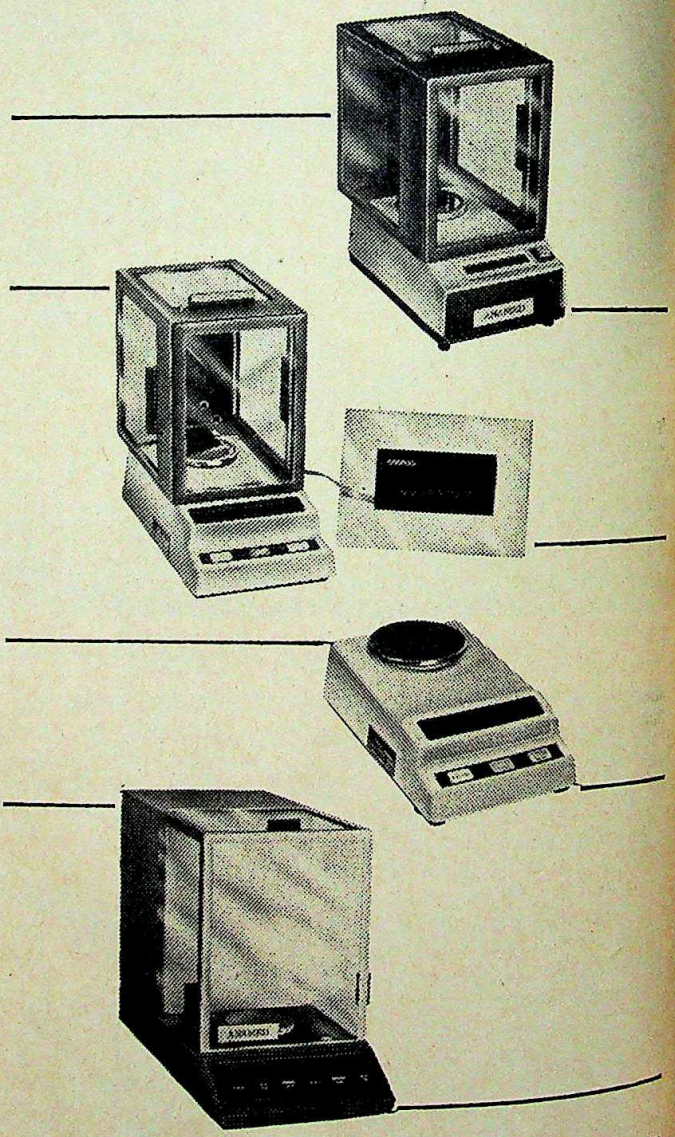

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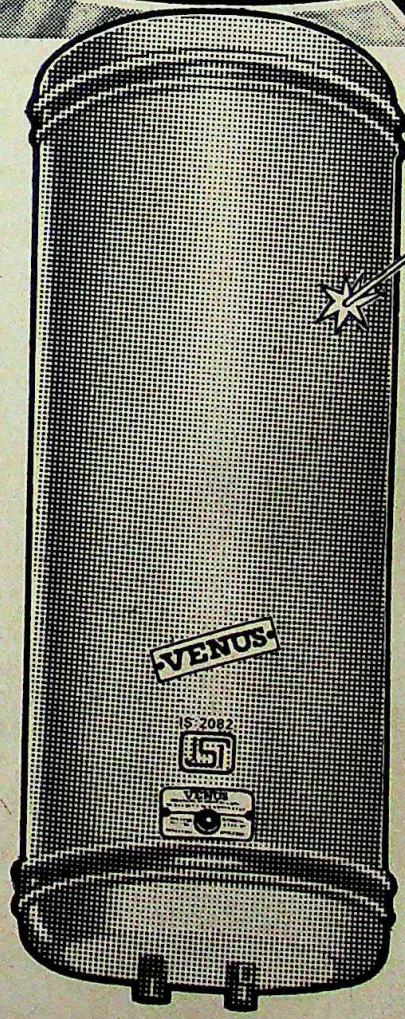

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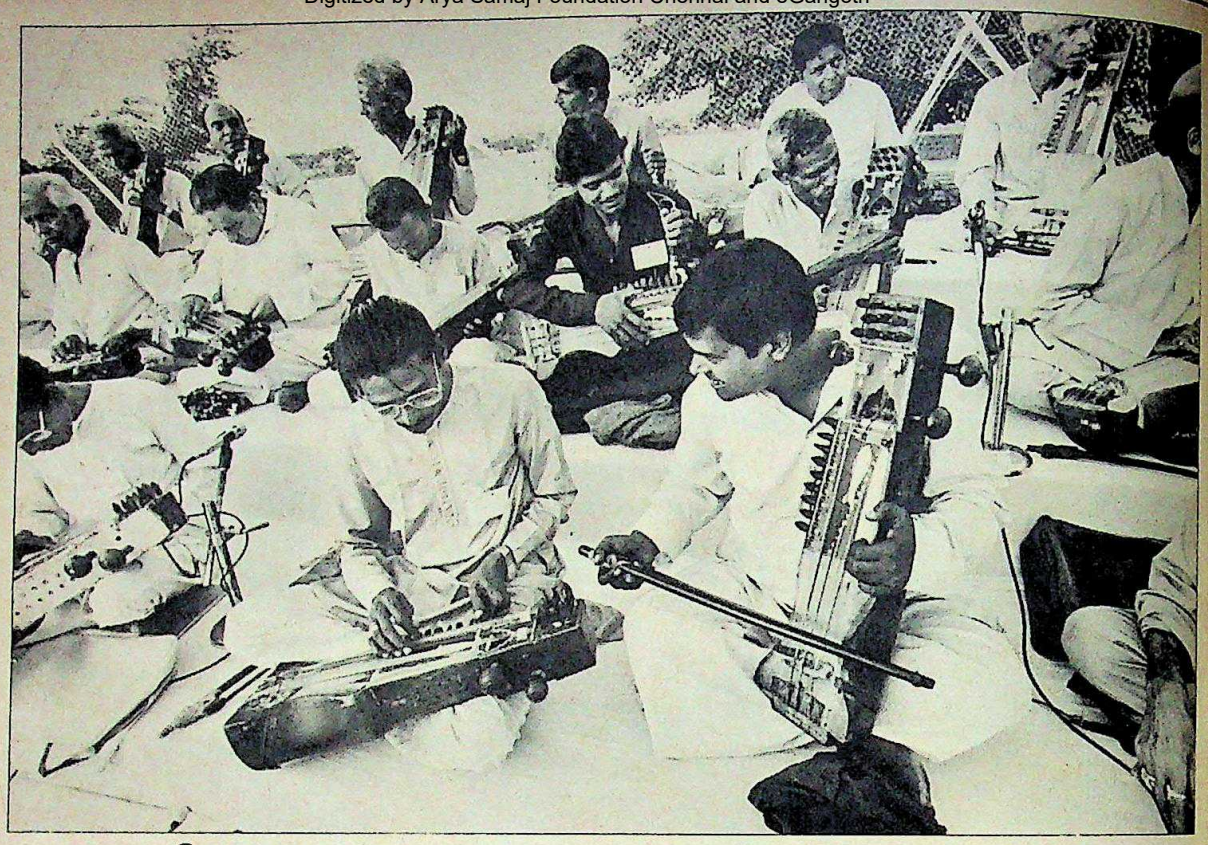

Sarangiyas tuning their instruments: a declining tradition in desperate need of patrons

world of ease and speed, few are likely to take it up."

Rajesh Bahadur, a former pupil of Bundu Khan, believes sarangi recitals must be livened up: "The media has reduced it to a morose instrument by playing it only when a public figure dies. But it's also an instrument of joy."

Public tastes have thus reduced the sarangi to a mere accompanying instrument. Pandit Narayan, credited with popularising the sarangi as a solo instrument, says: "The sarangi is both an accompanying and a solo instrument, but it has unfortunately got typified in its former role. It isn't called *saurangi* (having a hundred shades) without reason." Even as an accompanying instrument the sarangi faces competition from the harmonium. Says Joep Bor, a Dutchman who heads the Indian music department at the Rotterdam Conservatorium: "The harmonium, an inferior instrument, has taken the sarangi's place."

Ashok Vajpeyi, secretary of Bharat Bhavan, blames the decline of the sarangi on the "disappearance of the traditional trend of conserving expertise in the *gharanas* (music families) and unwillingness on the part of old masters to share their expertise with learners".

Ridmal Khan Langa: rare survivor

In fact, several accomplished sarangiyas gave it up for other forms of classical music. Abdul Karim Khan, Adbul Wahid Khan, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Amir Khan gave it up for singing; Sahabdad Khan for the sitar; and Abdul Aziz Khan for the veena. Pandit Onkar Nath Thakur, a master sarangi player, is now a classical singer.

If the sarangi tradition still survives, credit goes to a handful of old stalwarts and a few young innovative players. Dhruba Ghosh, already famous at 30, has introduced "methodical and scientific simplifications". Using his sarangi—he's replaced the traditional strings with gut from a tennis racket—it is possible to play for three hours at a stretch instead of the usual half-an-hour. Purists frown on such "corruptions" of the sarangi.

On a positive plane, the festival came up with a charter of suggestions. Among them: ask AIR and Doordarshan to give the sarangi more time; ban classical singing accompanied by the harmonium; make the use of the sarangi compulsory. There were others too: offer scholarships, simplify the sarangi, and ban the playing of the instrument during mourning. Some were impractical, others difficult to implement.

And so the instrument which Yehudi Menuhin had praised for "most poignantly and most revealingly expressing the very soul of Indian feeling and thought", today appears a case for charity.

—SHARMILA CHANDRA

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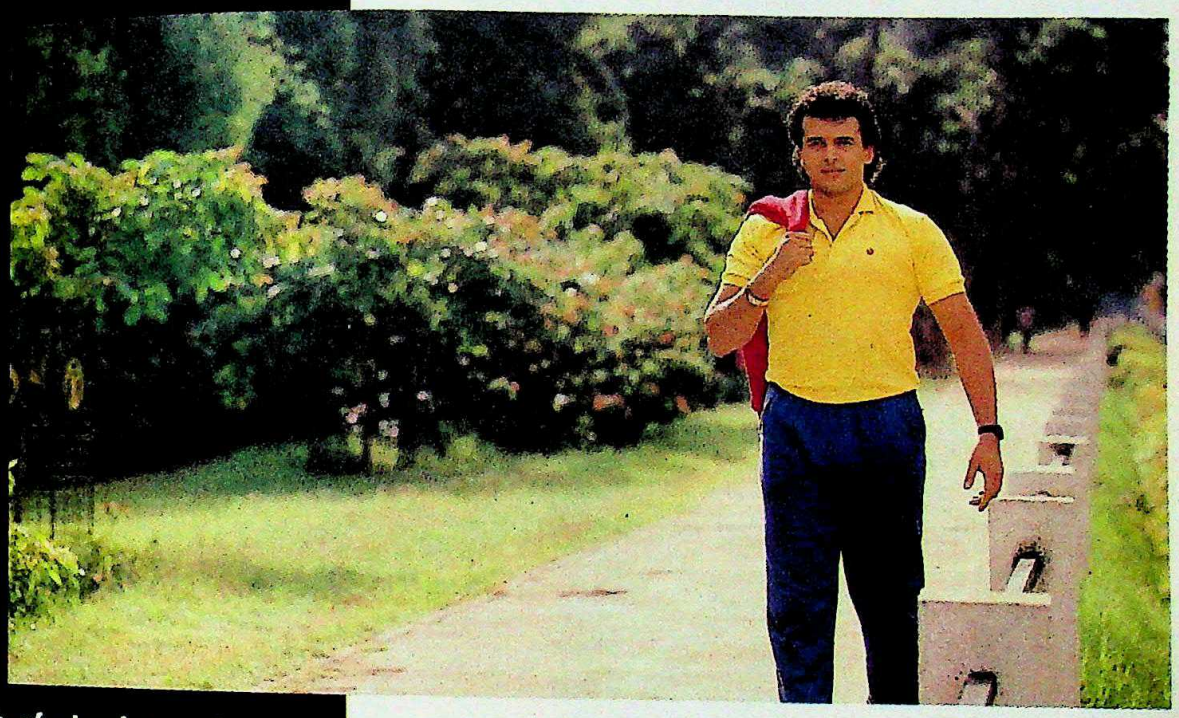
CHANDRA

Pounding five miles.
Pumping weights.
Fifty push-ups.
Four eggs.
And twin blade pleasure.



Touch of steel on skin.
Slice of lather in a stroke.
Cool smooth shave.
A Wilman shave.

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Photographs by RAGHU RAI

ENVIRONMENT

A New Militancy

The gathering of tribals, villagers and social activists in Harsud led to a dam-burst of protest against 'destructive development', attracting world-wide attention. More importantly, it announced the arrival of the Indian Greens.

IT was an environmentalist's nirvana. Gaily-dressed tribals from the Narmada valley, a victorious army from Baliapal in Orissa who have battled against a missile test range, Sarvodaya leaders from Karnataka, hundreds of villagers displaced by large irrigation and power projects in Madhya Pradesh and a star-studded galaxy of social activists—Baba Amte, actress Shabana Azmi, Sunderlal Bahuguna, Kannada writer Shivram Karanth and maverick saint-politician Swami Agnivesh. A gathering this large could hardly pass without attracting politicians, this time in the form of V.C. Shukla and Maneka Gandhi.

But what they collectively achieved was remarkable enough: a dam-burst of protest against "destructive development" that attracted attention from all parts of the globe and firmly placed the obscure town of Harsud (population: 18,000) in Madhya Pradesh on the international environmental map.

Harsud was at once a symbol and a show of strength. The town was symbolically selected since it will soon be submerged under the largest man-made lake in the world—a result of the controversial Narmada valley project. "There will be 50 feet of water where we are standing today," declared Satinath Sarangi, an activist who has been organising local

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villagers against the project. The two giant dams over Narmada in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat will submerge 40,000 hectares of prime teak forests, 84,000 hectares of cultivable land and displace 2 lakh persons.

But more than the medium was the message of Harsud: that the environmental movement in the country has finally come of age and is building up into a potent force. The Harsud rally was organised by over 100 environmental and social action groups and actively supported by several international organisations. It was by far the biggest ever environmental protest in the country.

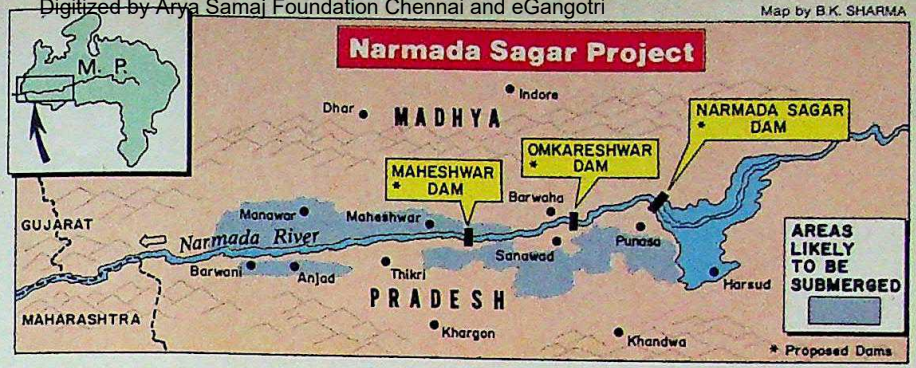
IT also, more significantly, announced the arrival of the Indian green movement, the idea born last summer in Baba Amte's Anandvan, the leprosy patients' home he runs. Says Amte: "The time is ripe for such a green front which would act as a pressure group and force political parties to take notice of the millions who suffer from degradation of the environment and the destruction which so-called developmental projects wreak."

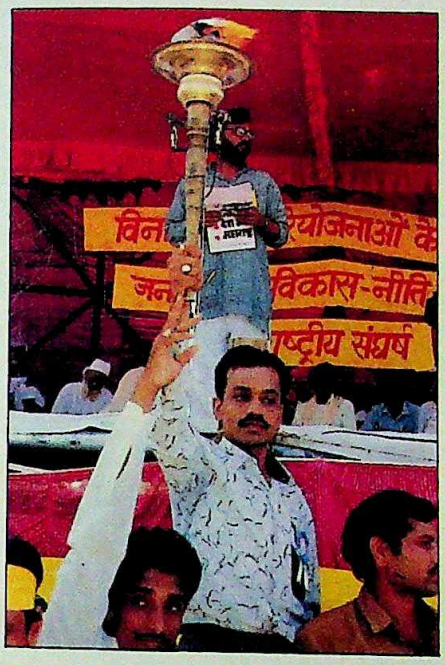
But it was the enthusiasm of the villagers, who bear the brunt of development projects, that was most infectious. They came from all over, bearing packets of mud from different parts of the country to erect a pillar symbolising the new collective will of environmentalists. After the rally, thousands of people formed a human chain to encircle Harsud as an eloquent expression of their concern for the 1,000-year-old town.

The man who towered over the proceedings was, of course, Murlidhar Devidas 'Baba' Amte, 75, winner of the Padmashree, Rastra Bhushan, Jamanalal Bajaj and Magasaysay awards, best known for his work among tribal leprosy patients. Although he had fractured his arm a week earlier, Amte, who cannot sit erect because of spinal problems, motored 500 km of rough road in an ambulance to reach Harsud. The moving spirit behind the rally, Amte was brought to the stage on a cot and a passionate roar greeted his pledge that: "As long as I breathe I am with you. The dam will not be allowed to come up."

The most fiery speech was delivered by Shabana Azmi who declared: "Have the urbanites more right to live than the rural folk? The people of Harsud have only one place to live, and that is Harsud." Despite her busy schedule, Azmi, known for her support to the Bombay shanty-dwellers' struggle, spared three days for the rally.

Map by B.K. SHARMA



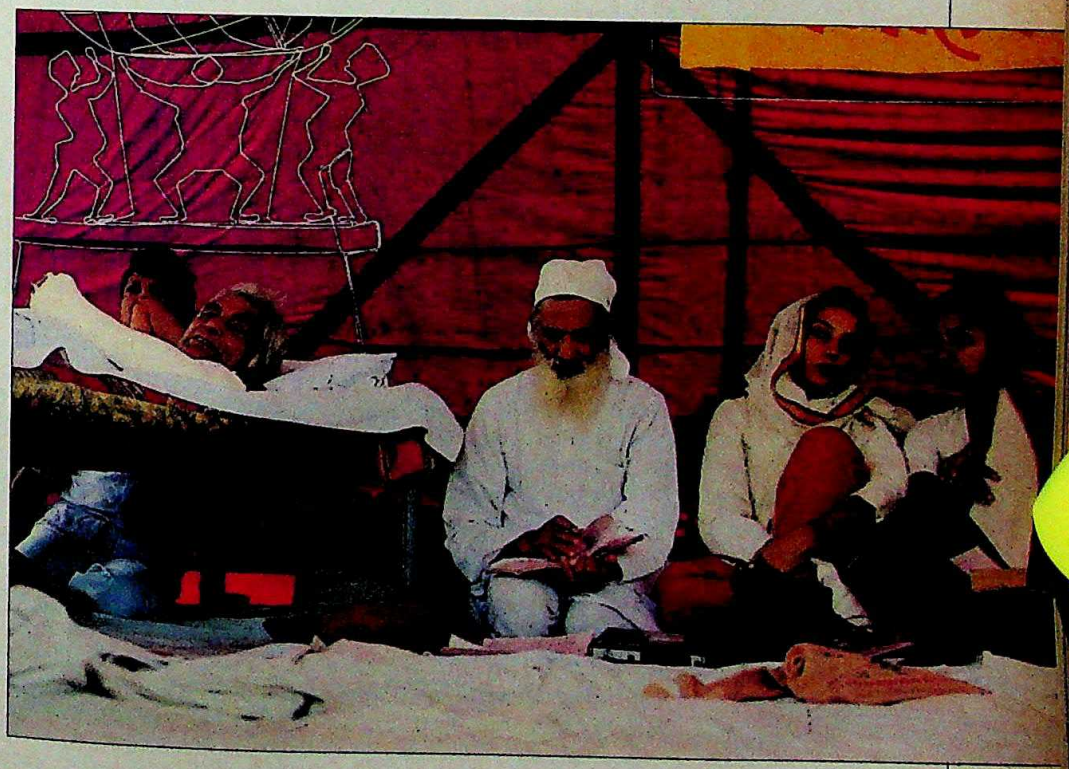


Torchlight procession; Amte, Bahuguna, Azmi and Patkar

Sunderlal Bahuguna, one of the pioneers of the 'chipko' movement in the Himalayas, was his usual eloquent self. The frail, white-haired environmentalist told the people of Narmada valley: "I've brought for you the message from the Himalayas." The message: consumerism was destroying nature everywhere.

Kannada writer Shivram Karanth, 87, was another star of the show. The elderly author, few are aware, is actively involved in the struggle for protecting the unique Shola forests of the western ghats. Another prominent personality was the saffron-clad opposition politician Swami Agnivesh, known for his work among bonded labourers. There was Megha Patkar, whose battle against the Narmada valley project has been inspirational. And there was Srilatha Swaminathan from Rajasthan to register her protest against the submerging of 30 tribal villages "to provide water to sprinkle the lawns of the rich in Udaipur".

But the real emotion came from the simple village folk who were invited to



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speak. There were several from the Narmada project submergence area. Setun Apa, 50, a farm labourer of Harsud declared simply: "I do not want to leave Harsud because this is where I want to die." An illiterate tribal, he told the rally: "No government has any right to make us homeless."

There was also a protest of a different kind. The environmentalists clearly resented the presence of politicians. "We do not want politicians here," Patkar told Shukla. And Bahuguna threatened to get down from the dais if Shukla or Maneka addressed the rally. Before storming out in a huff, Maneka said: "Obviously the movement has passed in the hands of leftist intellectuals and I have my doubts whether they can be successful on their own."

But whether it has or not, it is a movement whose time has come. The Indian Greens promise to make their presence forcefully felt in the months ahead. Nothing symbolises that more than Harsud, the town that refuses to die.

—N.K. SINGH in Harsud

LARGE IRRIGATION PROJECTS

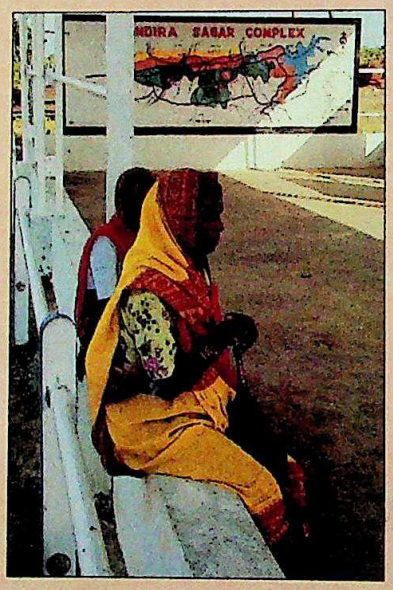
Questionable Record

FOR 16 years, we have poured in money. The people have got nothing back, no irrigation, no water, no increase in production, no help in their daily life." This wasn't the Opposition lambasting the Government, but the prime minister himself recognising a bitter truth: the disastrous failure of the irrigation strategy based on huge, costly irrigation projects—providing debatable benefits but notching up mounting losses and threatening environmental implications. Ironically, Jawaharlal Nehru had celebrated these very projects—Bhakra, Hirakud and Damodar Valley Corporation—as the temples of modern India at their inception.

Significantly, the criticism of these major projects has a strong economic basis. India has invested planned resources worth Rs 33,771 crore in the last four decades to acquire an irrigation potential of 80.4 million hectares. But even official statistics concede the gap between the potential created—on paper—and its utilisation in terms of actual irrigation facilities at the ground level. The ineffectiveness of the irrigation policy is evident from the fact that today 104 million hectares—59 per cent of the cultivated area—remain unirrigated.

Currently, nearly 9 million hectares of the irrigated potential which theoretically exists in the planners' files remain unutilised, primarily due to the states' inability to ensure that land is properly levelled. C.G. Desai, Planning Commission advisor (irrigation), laments: "We are not able to tell a farmer whether his land would come under irrigation or not once the project is complete." There is an obvious lack of co-ordination between the policy makers and the farmers.

Even the yield on land which has been showered with irrigation funds—more than Rs 40,000 per hectare—has been a dismal 1,700 kg, which is way behind the expected level of 5,000 kg. What is worse is that the yield from irrigated areas continues to steadily drop. I.P. Abrol, deputy director-general of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, said: "The yield is half of that expected on 90 per cent of the irrigated land." The declining yields are primarily due to siltation and waterlogging which have already rendered 10 per cent of the irrigated land useless.



Dam site: contentious debate

Today, 182 irrigation projects stand incomplete, some of them soaking in investment resources since the First Five Year Plan: the Nagarjuna Sagar project started in 1959, the Gandak project launched in 1960 and the Indira Gandhi Canal project begun in 1970 are the worst culprits. Recently, the Public Accounts Committee has castigated the Planning Commission for sanctioning major schemes without ensuring the availability of funds or technical personnel. These projects seem to be caught in a vicious circle of escalating costs and delays.

The irrigation sector has been parasitic on public funds with losses amounting to Rs 1,757 crore during the first three years of the current plan. Besides the expenses incurred during the initial investment stage, the Government provides other subsidies: the average day-to-day running cost for irrigating a hectare is estimated at Rs 3,250, out of which a farmer pays Rs 100 leaving the Government to bear the rest of the burden.

The widespread disillusionment with the large-scale irrigation concept is increasingly leading to a search for alternatives. Abrol suggests: "Tube wells and other traditional irrigation systems are environmentally safe and economically viable." Prominent soil scientist, S.S. Khanna, explains: "The cost of creating a hectare of irrigation potential through large projects is about Rs 40,000 while the cost of achieving the same in the small sector is a much more affordable Rs 8,000." If the cost of draining waterlogged land—estimated at Rs 25,000 per hectare by the Central Soil Salinity Research Institute—is added, the cost of large projects would spiral.

But, not all economists see a dichotomy between large and small scale projects. C.H. Hanumantha Rao, former member of the Planning Commission, reasoned: "There is no contradiction here. What is required is a good combination of large, medium and small projects."

Even as fundamental questions are being raised about the irrigation policy, the Government seems to be merrily marching towards hitting its target: creating an irrigation potential of 113 million hectares at an estimated cost of Rs 100,000 crore by 2010 A.D. What is problematic is that decisions made today—if ill-conceived—may continue to have ecological and economic implications which might be irreversible in the future.

—SUDHIRENDAR SHARMA

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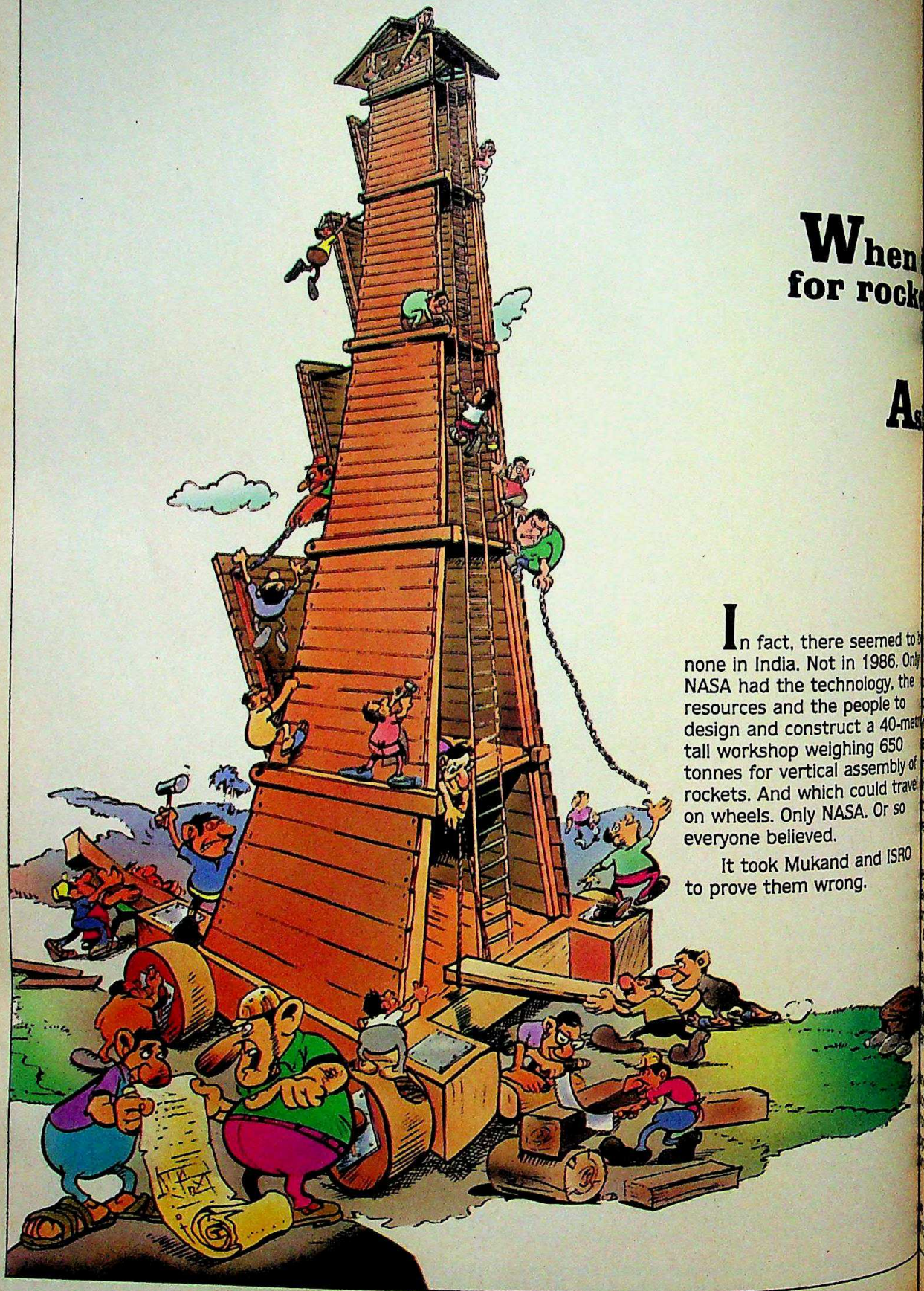

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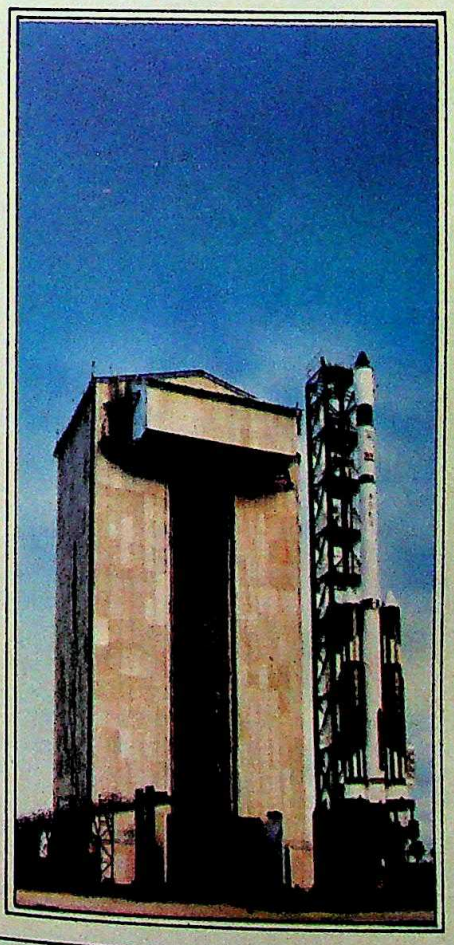

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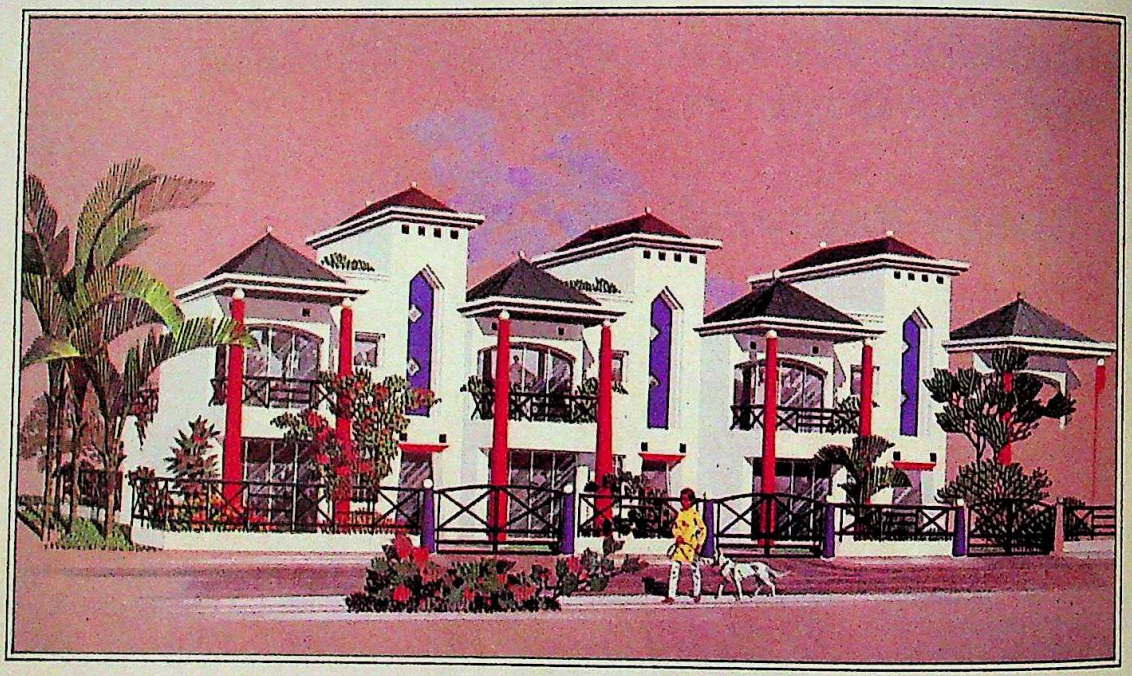

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An Infirm Institution

JUST when the newspaper world was beginning to wonder what had happened to the high-profile ombudsman, appointed by *The Times of India*, we have been given the first progress report on his work, admittedly for a limited audience.

Briefings, the in-house Times group journal, has announced that P.N. Bhagwati, the former chief justice, has been pegging away at his innovative work, despite the lack of evidence in the paper of his existence.

We are told that Bhagwati has entertained 150 complaints of varied nature. About half of them had nothing to do with the *Times*. Bhagwati, it was assumed, was a general tribunal for complaints. There were complaints against government departments and public and private sector corporations and all sorts of petty grievances like pensions, insurance claims and legal disputes.

Many sought redressal of grievances with regard to articles published in other Times group publications. But Bhagwati is ombudsman only for the *Times* and is concerned with judging the newspaper's news and editorial columns.

What happens to the complaints that fall within his scope? The complaint, and a resume of the action taken, goes to him. If the editor feels no action need be taken or the complainant remains dissatisfied, the ombudsman gives his directions.

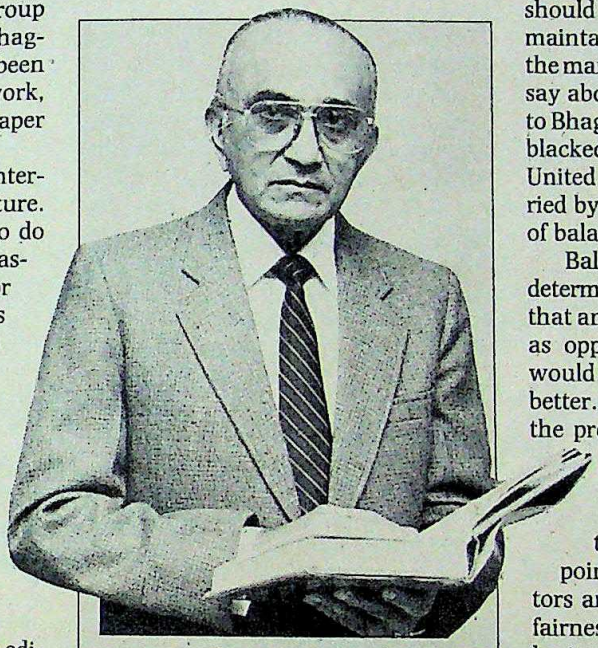
Let's look at the complaints. Cartoonist R.K. Laxman's use of the popular expletive "Aw Jesus" was objected to for offending religious sensibilities. Result: editor's assurance that casual use of such expressions would be avoided.

We, as a people, singularly lack a sense of humour. The sometimes funny and sometimes not-so-funny third leaders provoked complaints. One, on a Goa church group's report on tourism's ill-effects on the environment, was objected to by a reader for the casual treatment of an issue of major public concern. He was propitiated by the editor's offer that he write an article on the subject, which was published.

Bhagwati wrote to the offence-takers that they should treat such leaders in the spirit in which they are written.

On occasion, Bhagwati has decreed that an article on the experiment to melt Himalayan snow and another on the statute on cow slaughter should be balanced. A report describing a complainant as a "rumour-monger" led to the editor's apology and a stern reprimand of the reporter concerned.

Apart from such grievances which dealt mostly with articles which had religious overtones, there were the more predictable complaints of the traditional tribe of enthusiastic letter-writers. The ombudsman's sphere of intervention has been circumscribed to letters which make a new point on a published article.



Bhagwati has given *Times* a clean chit even though its reporting on the *Mathrubhumi* take-over issue was partisan.

It is a pity though that on the most significant issue to emerge during this period, the attempted take-over of the Malayalam daily *Mathrubhumi* by the Times group, the institution failed to measure up to the billing. On the take-over move itself, Bhagwati said that corporate moves were beyond his jurisdiction. Fair enough. But on the nature of the reports carried by the *Times* on the controversy, Bhagwati has astonishingly given the editor a clean bill of health.

Anyone familiar with the controversy will recall the rank partisan nature of reporting by the *Times*. Since the newspaper group was involved, it should have bent over backwards to maintain a balance and report all what the management of *Mathrubhumi* had to say about the take-over bid. According to Bhagwati's finding, the *Times* had not blacked out the opposition view. Two United News of India (UNI) reports carried by the paper are cited as instances of balanced reporting.

Balance in a newspaper cannot be determined by such criteria, and it is here that an ombudsman with a newspaper, as opposed to a judicial background would serve the institution's functions better. The UNI reports in question were the proverbial fig-leaf to maintain the pretence of fairness.

The *Briefings* account draws comfort from the view that since the ombudsman's appointment, "*Times* reporters and editors are extra sensitive to the need for fairness in their work." This might well be true, but the conclusion that "this new ethos is a true measure of the success of the ombudsman even as the post begins to evolve" is unwarranted.

Thus far, the appointment of the ombudsman has raised more questions than it has answered. Is a person with a judicial background suitable? Isn't it inhibiting an ombudsman to appoint him for a short term? Shouldn't he have a more visible presence in the newspaper in terms of periodically commenting on his decisions on significant complaints?

The management's objection to appointing a journalist as an ombudsman seems to be that there would be the danger of his becoming a super-editor, despite the encouraging traditions of newspapers like *The Washington Post*. The short term can be justified on the ground that this is in the nature of an experiment; hence the need for caution. And, as has been suggested, the institution is evolving.

The jury is still out, but the *Mathrubhumi* verdict can scarcely endear the institution of the ombudsman to those readers who know of its existence.

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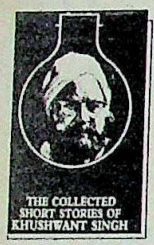
In his Calling

Khushwant's stories enthral

THE COLLECTED SHORT STORIES OF KHUSHWANT SINGH
Ravi Dayal Publisher
Price: Rs 90; Pages: 219



IT is with efforts such as this that he unmasks himself. That he tears down for fleeting moments, the facade of superficiality, lascivious senility and uncaring irreverence that he has so wilfully fashioned for himself over the years through innumerable journalistic columns.

Beyond the drooling over bottoms and breasts, beyond the naive if bona fide vacillations of political judgement, beyond the pandering to cretinous jokes and the lowest-common-denominator, there reclines Khushwant Singh the writer. And to those who may beg to differ: stand referred to his collected short stories which have recently been put out in hardback.

The 32 stories included represent his true metier. The exertions of four decades, they are based around a panoply of characters and settings. But the tone is distinct, unmistakable: the sardar may be in the terrain of art, and no longer lucratively ensconced in the ephemera of the editorial bulb, but his propensities remain unaltered. The stories are hedonistic, they are erotic. But above all, they are woven around the spine of debunk.

Here is the classical man of means, driven by no dogmas, possessed of no passionate principles—except of his own choosing—and seized by no sect's shenanigans, taking a bemused look at the claptrap, the ironies, the foibles that make for men. The chasm which separates these stories from his daily outpourings that syndicate across languages countrywide, is that of skill.

Whether he is tackling high farce as in *The Interview*, or drawing poignant cameo as in *The Portrait of A Lady*, or being ruminative as in *The Fawn*, or debunking as most of the time, the quality of the craft is of the finest: never the overstatement, never the self-conscious false-note, never the over-explanation, skilful side-stepping of the maudlin, and the touch always inclusive—drawing the reader in, making him a party in the unravelling of the tale.

Then there is the entertainment. Khushwant is not hewed from the modernist mould, where short stories are dense clumps of angst, stream-of-consciousness, surrealism and stylistic experimentation. This is a writer who sets out the traditional rules for himself and obeys them: the stories are short not novellas, amazingly they have a beginning, middle and an end, and in the last paragraph they carry the twist, the proverbial sting in the tail. And what if hemmed in by these self-imposed limits he cannot convey the ineffable or manufacture great literature, he can certainly entertain, and tell a whacking good story which also illustrates a point.

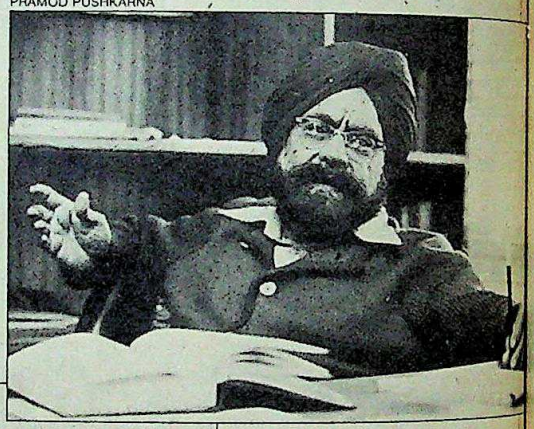
Thus, *Man, How the Government of India Run!*, amuses even as it sums up the workings of the Government of India in one fell swoop. Sunder Singh and his two fellow clerks, Sambamurthy and Ghosh Babu, spend the day consuming tea, shifting the odd file, reading and discussing the day's news, deriding superiors for their ability to seem busy without working, and participating in a volleyball match. In the evening Sunder returns home to irritably impress his wife with the fatigue of a hard day's work.

Several stories are written in the first person, and convey the quality of raptness which is invoked by a raconteur. With the narrator invariably being a Sikh, one can almost see a young Khushwant as the protagonist in *The Man with a Clear Conscience*, *The Great Difference*, *My Own My Native Land*, *The Bottom-Pincher*, *When Sikh Meets Sikh*. These are written engagingly, and in particular the last two entral. *When Sikh Meets Sikh*, a pithy four-page effort, remarks on the pioneering spirit that marks Sikhs, and goes on to illustrate it with the story of Nanjo—Niranjan Singh—in Toronto who has married a Canadian and become a professional wrestler in order to survive. One statement of Nanjo's towards the end of the story is enough to sum up the indomitable nature of the Sikh spirit. In the dressing-room after a bout in which he has beaten a Californian hulk Mazurki, the short, thick-set Nanjo tells the narrator in rustic Punjabi: "I could floor the lot of them, but my manager won't let me."

Not all the stories work well. *Death Comes to Daulat Ram* and *The Memsahib of Mandla* are supernatural forays which deflate for lack of emotional content. Others like *The Riot* and *The Insurance Agent* are trite, while some like *Mr Singh and the Colour Bar* are predictable. But the strength of the writer lies in the quotidian nuances of life that he manages to catch, and in the gamut of settings he manages to exploit: from the rural to the urban, from the Raj to independent India, and from Toronto to London to Paris. An ability akin to that of Somerset Maugham, the writer whom Khushwant regards as perhaps the best short story craftsman of all time. Maugham had another ability that he personally rated—albeit controversially—as paramount: the ability to entertain intelligently. Khushwant has it too, and for that alone his stories demand to be read.

—TARUN J. TEJPAL

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Singh: the skilful touch

EXTRACT

Their bottoms presented a tempting variety of sizes and coverings. One was a young girl's in blue skin-tight jeans; her buttocks were like two nicely rounded, unripe water melons. Besides her was an older woman in a bright red sari. She was massive like one big pumpkin. The third in the row was a twelve-year Lolita in a white and so mini a skirt that when she bent down it exposed all her thigh and a bit of her bottom as well. I could see Pesi Lalkaka's left arm twitch. The triumverate of bottoms thus served up proved too powerful a temptation to resist. His hand came out of the pocket and caressed the three in quick succession.

—from *The Bottom-Pincher*

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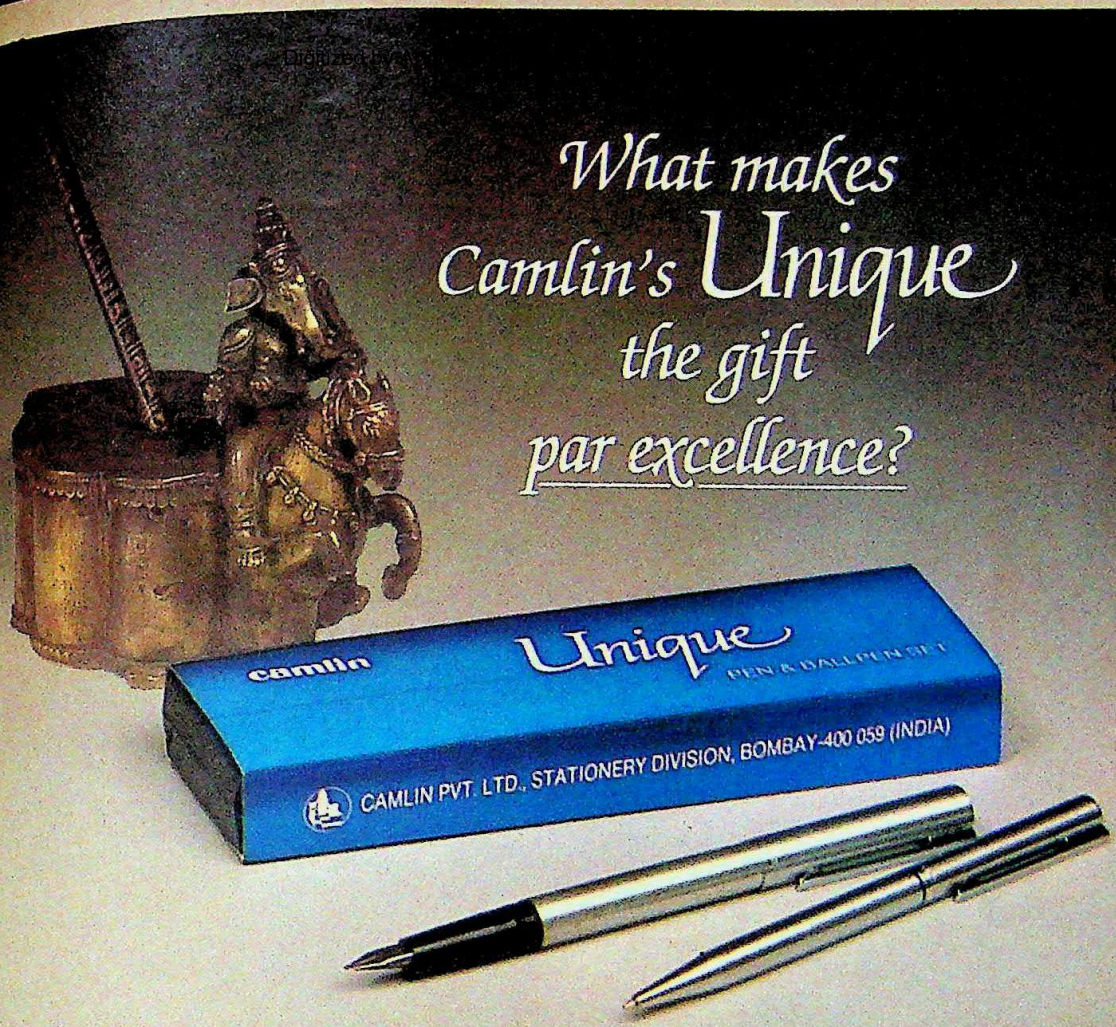

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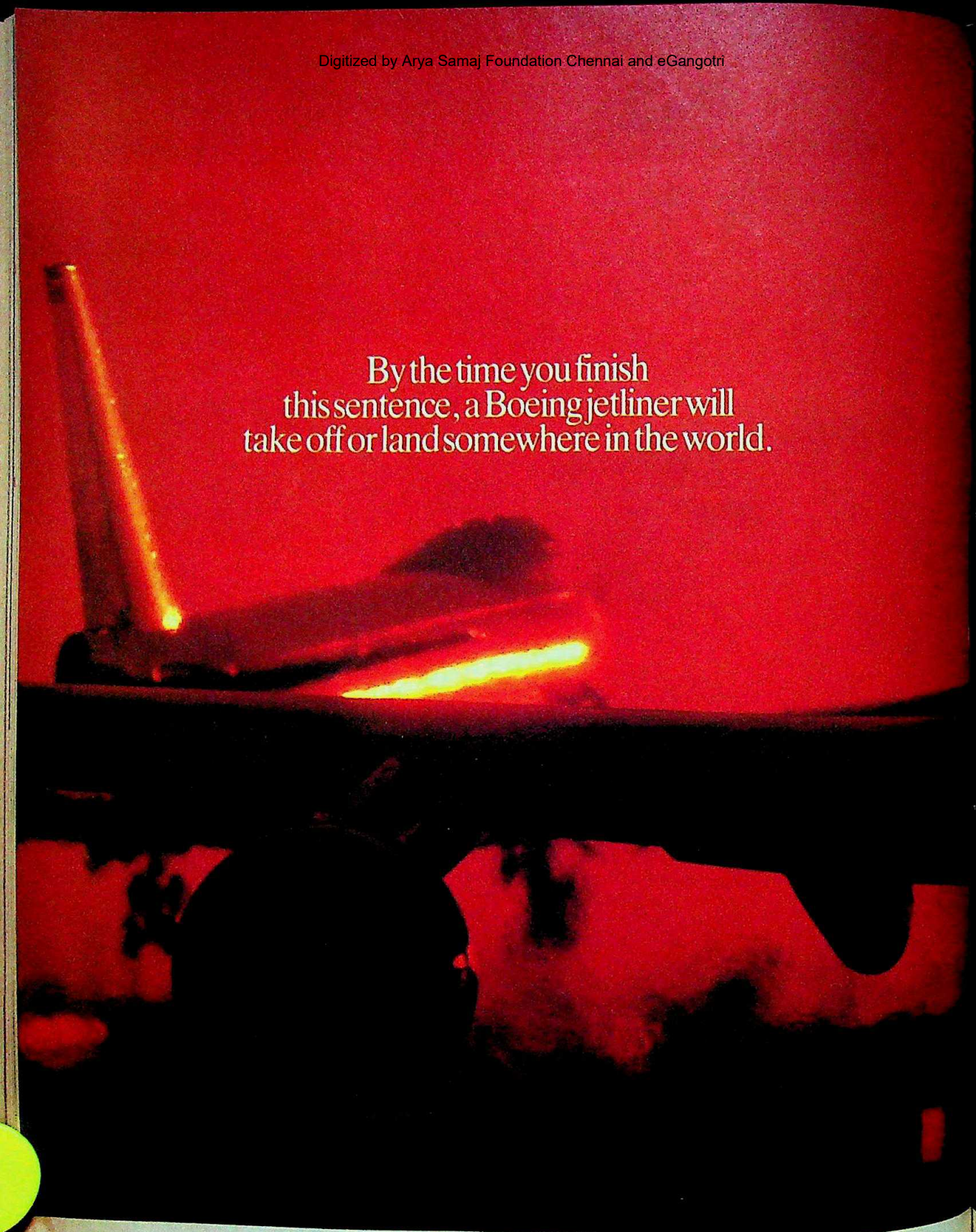

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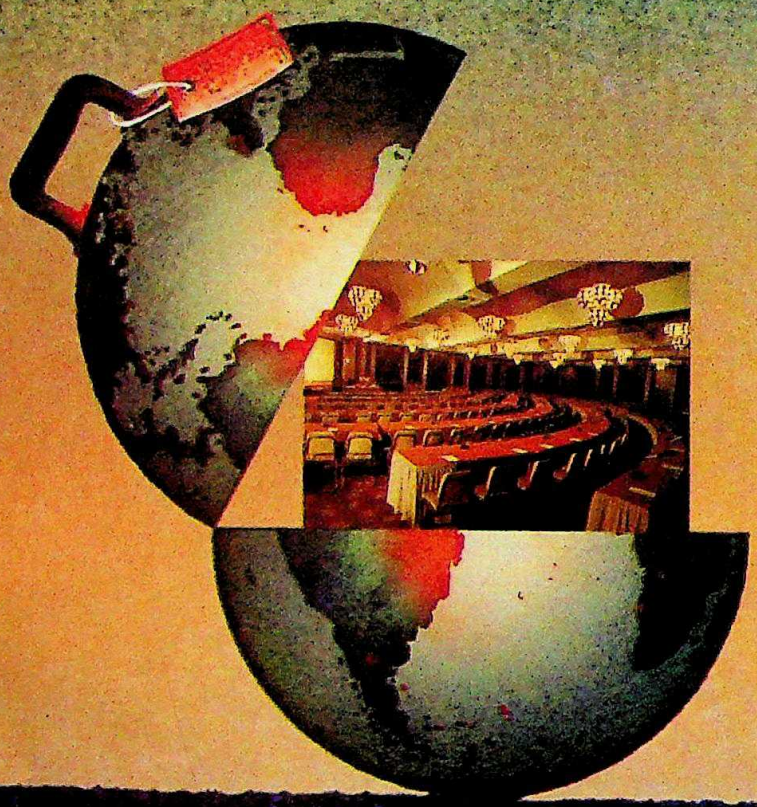

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Valuable Guide

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INDIA DECIDES:
Elections 1952–1989
by DAVID BUTLER, ASHOK LAHIRI, and PRANNOY ROY
Living Media
Pages 372; Price: Rs 350

UNLIKE the steel mill, the television station, the national airline and the national news agency, psephology cannot be a badge of new nationhood. Regrettably, much of the Third World is not governed by a democratic polity and hence can have little use for the study of elections.

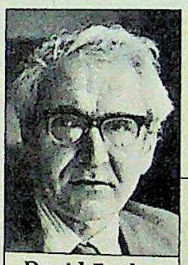
In the developing world, India is unique in the 40-year record of elections held for the better part, in a free and fair atmosphere. The new vogue for public opinion polls is a sign of the times.

Psephology has, indeed, arrived in India and this admirable, sober work is the most definitive and exhaustive of its kind. Yet those who expect to discover who will win the next election will be disappointed. They themselves must find the answers from the wealth of data on candidates, parties and constituencies. Almost magisterially, the authors tell us: "The pattern lies in these pages for those who have the patience to look for it." They rightly make a sharp distinction between forecasting and analysis. "Election forecasting," they say, "is a fascinating game. Election analysis is a serious business." But they start from the premise that patterns can be found "in the inchoate mass of Indian voting figures" and they believe that, granted the killing costs, sample surveys on a nation-wide scale can be a better indicator of voting intentions and political attitudes than any other method.

Veteran politicians will, of course, disagree because they rely on an almost intuitive feel for the political wind. Human beings, we must remember, are not always logical in their behaviour: numbers meticulously totted up with the refined aid of differentiated gradients do not always add up to political reality.

But veterans have also been proved wrong in their forecasts—witness 1967, 1977, 1980 and 1984. The authors of the present volume deserve respect and attention because they give us what they describe as an unvarnished presentation of facts—the what, not the why, of the electoral record. It is raw material for the politician to work on. The only cautious forecast they make on the result of the next general election is that it will reflect the combined impact of a change in the "index of opposition unity" and the swing in votes from the 1984 election, which is not saying much as far as the politician is concerned.

Briefly, the authors' conclusions are: the Indian electorate is volatile. It generally votes more for the party than for the candidate. No party has survived the last 40 years without splits and amalgamations. India was never as close to a two-party system as at the 1977 election. The Congress has never obtained more than 49 per cent votes in any general election.



David Butler

Ashok Lahiri

Prannoy Roy

The authors give an unvarnished presentation of the facts—the what, not the why, of electoral record.

There are other interesting nuggets culled from the study. The Opposition is far more divided in the north than in the south. In all eight general elections, opposition splits have affected changes in margins of victory by as much as one-third. Fifty-seven per cent of the opposition members of Parliament elected to the Lok Sabha in 1984 were from regional parties. An amazing 80 per cent of candidates forfeited security deposits in 1984. By-election results are not a true indicator of a general election result.

Here's food for thought for the politician in the thick of battle. This volume is an invaluable reference work for the party strategist. It is not the political worker's cup of tea.

—S. NIHAL SINGH

New Heights

Mountaineering chronicled

MOUNTAINEERING IN INDIA
by CAPTAIN M.S. KOHLI
Vikas
Pages: 196; Price: Rs 495

INDIAN mountaineering gained momentum in the closing years of the 19th century and by the 1930s, Indian participation began in earnest. By 1951, the first Indian ascent of a major Himalayan peak (Trisul) had been made by Gurdial Singh, a Doon School teacher who inspired later expeditions like the one led by Captain M.S. Kohli in 1965.

Now Kohli—India's leading mountaineer whose 1965 expedition put a record nine persons atop Everest—has taken time off from his Air-India job and his management of adventure sports to write a landmark book which traces not only the first struggling footsteps of Indian mountaineering, but goes on to chronicle the peaks it has conquered since. The story begins with the initial exploratory Indian ventures, moves on to the larger expeditions of the '60s, and climaxes with the small groups now attempting extreme grade climbs.

Along with detailing the important expeditions undertaken by men, Kohli also highlights the ascent of Kamet, Nanda Devi and Everest by Indian women. The efficient accounts of disaster expeditions drive home the fact that in mountaineering, tragedy is ever at hand. Kohli's concern for the fragile mountain environment being steadily degraded by the rush of trekkers and expeditions is evident throughout.

Kohli highlights the trend of foreign mountaineers teaming with Indians to scale peaks of the Gangotri basin, the Nanda Devi sanctuary, Jitchu Drake and the Inner Line summits in the Karakoram. The contribution of the armed and paramilitary forces to Indian mountaineering is not overlooked.

Of course, Kohli's book is not elegantly written. It is the account of a mountaineer: ranging stolidly over the material, proceeding firm step by firm step, resolved to get there, rather than to bedazzle. And therein lies its worth.

—SUDHIR SAHI

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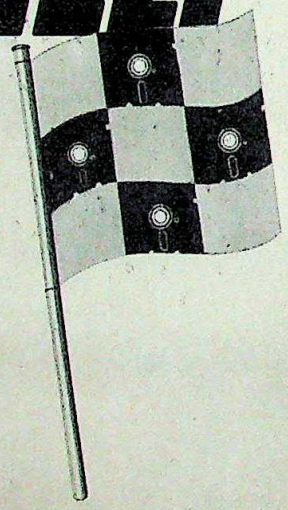

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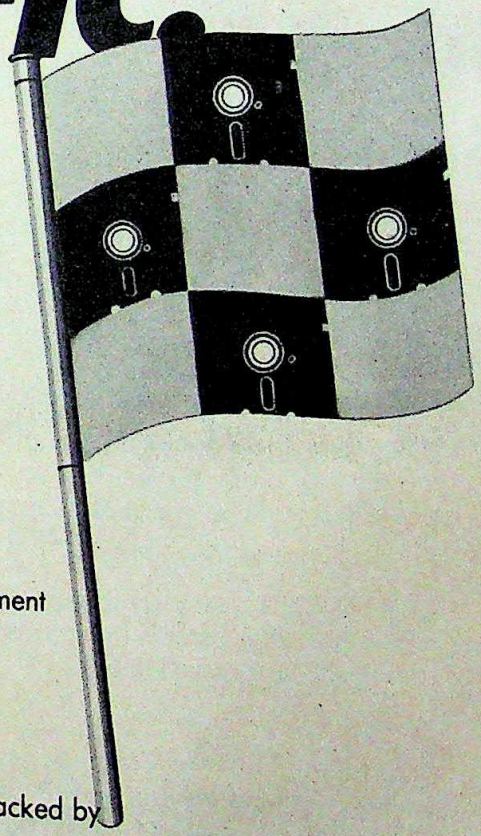

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KHARIF CROP

An Election Harvest

But prices may not register an immediate fall

As a harvest, there was none as crucial as this for Rajiv Gandhi in his five-year term as prime minister. Coming just three months before the general elections, it would determine the mood of rural India. Anxiety about its outcome had, in fact, mounted in the past two months as the southwest monsoon played truant for a while and prices of certain essential commodities experienced a dramatic surge.

The tension was palpable at last fortnight's meeting of state agriculture ministries in New Delhi to review the progress of the kharif (monsoon) crop. As state after state presented its crop estimates, one worrying trend emerged: rice production would not be as high as 1988's bumper yield. But crucially, the overall foodgrain production was unlikely to fall below last year's record output of 96.5 million tonnes. As a senior Union agriculture ministry official said: "Barring a few hiccups, it's been an excellent kharif season. And the mood is upbeat."

On the overheated sugarcane and oilseeds front, however, the mood was mixed. Happily, for harried civil supplies department officials, this year's sugarcane crop is heading for a bumper yield. With overall production likely to cross the magical figure of 200 million tonnes, by November the sugar squeeze is likely to loosen considerably. And officials cautiously predict a drop in the sky-high prices that sugar has reached.

In oilseeds, however, the situation is less optimistic. With rains failing initially in Gujarat, the major groundnut producing state, yields were expected to drop by as much as 40 per cent. But showers in September have raised hopes of a substantial recovery in production.

Harvested rice in Punjab

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

■ Total rice production may drop only marginally despite poor yields in Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

■ With a bumper sugarcane crop expected, the current sugar crisis is likely to ease considerably.

■ Groundnut production after initial hiccups is staging a dramatic recovery. Result: prices may decline.

Overall foodgrain output may beat last year's record.

Coupled with good yields from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra, only a marginal drop in last year's record of 7.3 million tonnes is now expected. That could see groundnut oil prices, which had risen steeply in the previous two months, decline.

But for the Central Government there were several dampening factors. In Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, all major rice growing states, output was likely to drop by 3 million tonnes as compared to last year. In Haryana and Rajasthan, the bajra crop was hit badly by lack of rains and yields are likely to drop significantly. And in Tamil Nadu, pulses are in trouble.

Fortunately, much of the drop in production in these states has been offset by some excellent yields in others. With Punjab and Orissa reporting outstanding harvests, the overall drop in rice production would be less than a million tonnes. In coarse cereals, Maharashtra and Karnataka are likely to produce record yields of jowar. And to ease the pressure, overall pulses production is likely to go up by half a million tonnes. Since 1988 saw a massive upswing in foodgrain production, this year, with the monsoon slightly less favourable, the performance is, as one official puts it, "satisfactory".

Importantly for the Government, in Punjab and Haryana, the major contributors to foodstocks in the public distribution system, rice production has been good. With last year's procurement of rice turning out to be poor, rice stocks in government godowns had reached an all-time low of 1.7 million tonnes.

Worse, last month the Government was forced to import 5 lakh tonnes of rice from Thailand and Vietnam to tide over the crisis. Civil Supplies Ministry officials are now hopeful of procuring 9.6 million tonnes of rice—more than enough to meet the coming year's needs as well as to rebuild its buffer stock. And with the coming rabi (winter) crop expected to be good, it could boost stocks further.

Despite these encouraging trends, few officials are willing to predict a dramatic fall in prices in the coming months. The ruling party at the Centre can at least take cold comfort in the fact that the good kharif yield may prevent prices from escalating further.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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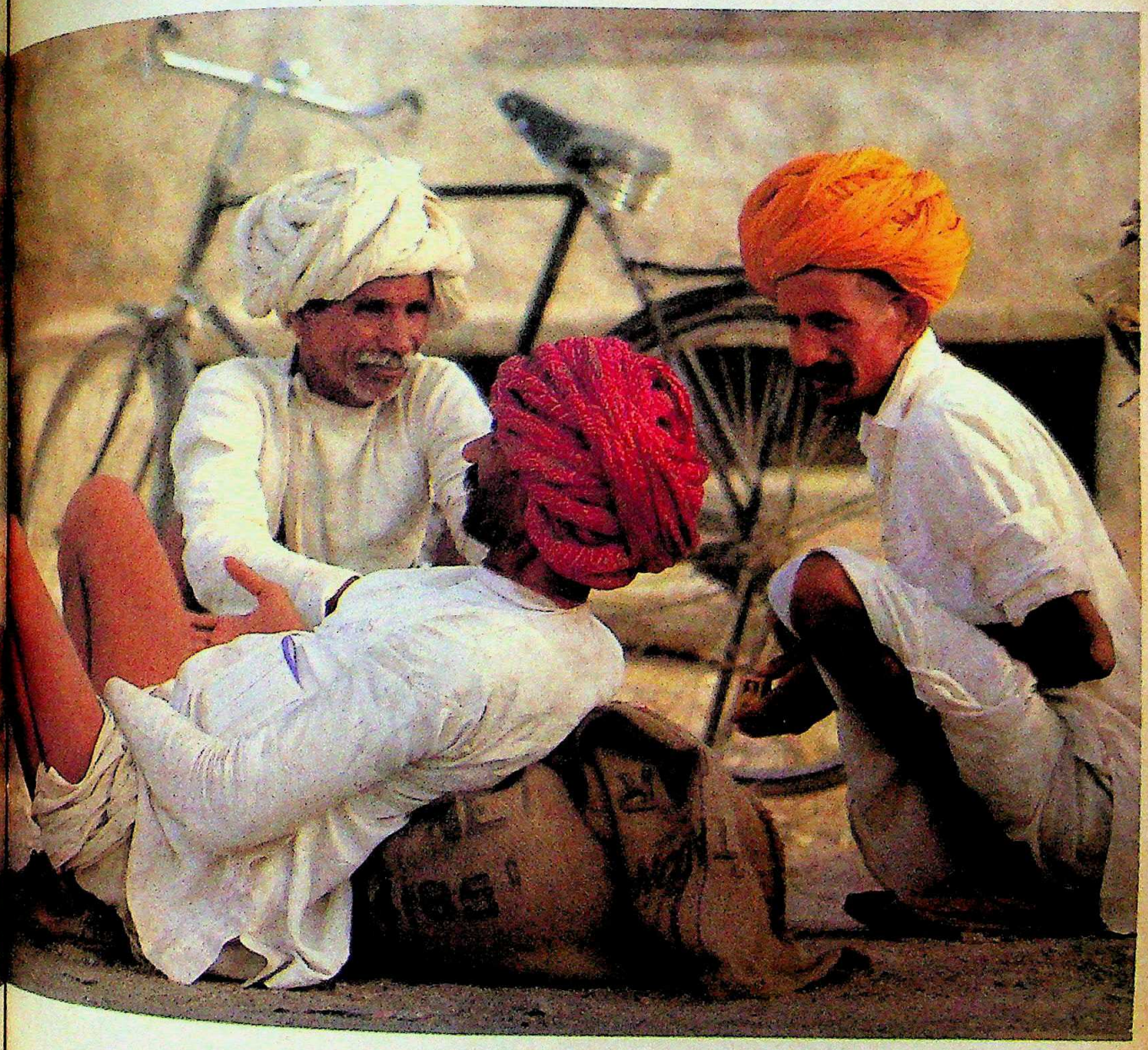

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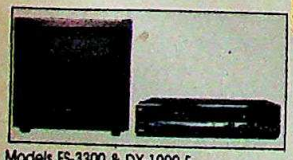

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IMPORTS

Booking Culprits

Rs 70 crore scam in book imports unearthed

THE imported volumes bear impressive titles: *Golden Claims, Foreign Exchange in Britain* and *Europe 1987*. Ostensibly, they are educational and scientific publications which can be easily imported under open general licence. But in reality these books are rejected volumes bought at throwaway prices abroad, simply *raddi* (waste). Many importers of such books in India quote the cover price less trade discount and get the equivalent in foreign exchange released after paying rupees in cash here. The companies exporting such books are owned by relatives of these importers, so valuable foreign exchange is siphoned out of the country.

Since September last year, a series of scams involving a staggering sum exceeding Rs 70 crore have been unearthed by the Enforcement Directorate and the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence. To put this figure in perspective, legitimate imports of books are valued at around Rs 60 crore a year. Hansraj Madhavji Thakkar and Pushpa K. Sitlani, both Bombay-based importers, allegedly masterminded two of the biggest scams, each costing the exchequer about Rs 22 crore.

Thakkar floated a proprietorship concern in Singapore in September 1986 and a year later, transferred its ownership to his daughter-in-law Yasmin Mohammed Yunus Walibhoy alias Rupal. This firm used to buy the books and sell them to Thakkar's own firm in Bombay.

After Thakkar was arrested on September 7, 1988—he could not explain to whom he had sold imported books worth Rs 22 crore—he was detained under COFEPOSA. On April 20 this year, the Bombay High Court ordered that he be released on bail of a record Rs 50 lakh but later reduced it to Rs 25 lakh on condition that he surrender his passport. Thakkar, however, remained in jail custody. On May 18 he was removed to Breach Candy Hospital where he is now.

Sitlani, described in official records as a "high profile socialite", and her relatives control many firms in India and abroad including one in UK called Title Zoom. Following her arrest under COFEPOSA she managed to get a bail in Bombay for Rs 10,000 with the help of lawyer Mahesh Jethmalani. On April 17, Sitlani obtained an interim stay order from Justice Paritosh Kumar Mukherjee of the Calcutta High Court—she falsely claimed she was a resident of Andaman and Nicobar islands so that the case could be heard in Calcutta—restraining the Government from detaining her under COFEPOSA. Satisfied about the "extreme urgency" of the case, the judge waived the requirement of the court having to serve notice on the detaining authorities before issuing the stay order. The stay order was finally vacated by a division bench of the court on July 31. But before that date Sitlani had fled the country violating court directives. Early last month, the Bombay High Court proclaimed Sitlani an absconder.

Among other cases which have been detected is that of P.V.Subramaniam and Virendra Mehta of Image Agencies, Madras. The firm imported books which had an invoice value of Rs 3 crore but were sold in India for Rs 4 lakh. Both Subramaniam and Mehta have obtained anticipatory bail.

Another case is that of J.S. Manchanda of Bombay. Between 1986-89 Manchanda's firms had imported 87 consignments of books with a declared value of over Rs 19 crore. Records show that the imported books were sold to shops which turned out to be non-existent. In fact much of such imports are sold by weight as waste. Manchanda did not stop at such frauds. In one case, he went one step further and got foreign exchange released after producing documents purporting to show that a consignment of books had been shipped to India. The consignment never arrived.

With such cases of major fraud being detected the question now is whether the rule on book imports should be changed. Says C.M. Chawla, managing director of UBS Publishers (one of the largest book importers): "We want all book importers to be registered with the Department of Education." Chawla who also heads the import committee of the Federation of Publishers and Booksellers Associations in India feels that, among other things, all importers should be asked to furnish documents under the Income Tax Act.

The Government is yet to act on many such suggestions but there are indications that the book import policy may be changed next year. Judging by the extent of the current frauds, however, it will obviously be a long time before this particular chapter is closed.

—PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA

■ Imported books at a pavement stall: major fraud

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Books bought from abroad at throwaway prices are overinvoiced by quoting the cover price resulting in a major drain of foreign exchange.

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PRIESTS

Modern Rites

An unorthodox approach

FROM 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., the phone rings incessantly in the office of T.S. Ashwini Sastrigal and T.S. Rohini Sastrigal in Madras. The brothers have their hands full, answering calls and recording the callers' names in a rexine-bound book. Occasionally, they zip off on their motorcycles to keep appointments.

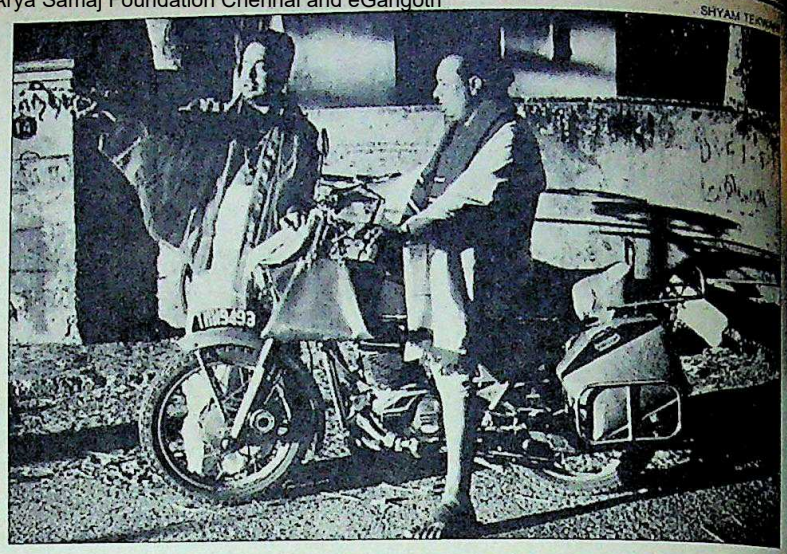
No, the Sastrigal brothers are not businessmen assiduously cultivating clients. The two happen to be priests. And the office is that of a unique agency for Vedic priests. On their roll call are an assortment of priests, part-time and full-time, specialising in various rites: *shraddam*(death anniversary), *upanayanam*(thread ceremony) or a wedding.

Ashwini and Rohini are the new breed in town—priests as professionals. The two maintain that the agency is "not a business, but a service to people". With priests dwindling in numbers, it isn't easy to find one at short notice.

The brothers have shed their orthodoxy. Their father was a *panchagacham*-clad priest. The sons wear three-piece suits, sport long hair and swank wrist-watches. And they also act in films, albeit as priests.

Today, only astute priests like them manage to survive—by exploring a traditional occupation to its farthest boundary. Asks priest Mani Iyer's son: "With the world getting computerised, where will people find time for pujas?" Not surprisingly, some rituals—including mantras—are lopped off on the way. Says Rohini: "We have cut down the ceremonies by half by leaving out the frills." The new generation priest is scaling down on unaffordable items like ghee and coconut required for pujas—from the traditional requirement of a *padi* (1.5 kg) of each item to a tumbler-full of each. While earlier, 64 *kalasams* (jugs) were a must for a 60th birthday function, today, some make do with even five.

SHYAM TEKWANI



Sastrigal brothers: zipping ahead

Audio-cassettes are also storming the priests' bastion—telling the lay person how to perform pujas without a priest. The most popular are Gayatri Japam tapes for Brahmin boys at their thread ceremony. Another venture, a do-it-yourself videotape, however, did not meet with the same success.

Priesthood is increasingly becoming an "on the side" profession. With monthly earnings between Rs 750 and Rs 2,000, priests are pushed to seek other sources of income. Says Lakshmi Narayan, a priest working in a bank: "It's difficult to earn three square meals a day through priesthood."

Ashwini and Rohini also have an alternative profession—acting in films. The 'Cinema Sastris', as the brothers are dubbed, have featured in over 100 films, while their agency supplies priests to the film industry. At present, they are working in Dasari Narayana Rao's teleserial *Vishwamitra*. Claims Rohini: "We are considered portenders of good fortune. So we are called to perform the puja for the launch of a film." Their clientele include stars N.T. Rama Rao, Sridevi, Nageswara Rao, Vijaykanth and director Balu Mahendra.

Expectedly, conservative priests are up in arms. Says an elderly priest at an Egmore temple: "It is not in keeping with our tradition." Adds another: "A sacred profession has been reduced to a business." The harsh truth, however, is that priesthood is a dying profession. But in their office on a bylane off Pondy Bazaar in T. Nagar, Madras, the Sastrigal brothers show a way of survival. And if it proves successful, hi-tech priesthood may soon become a way of life for many more.

—KAVITHA SHETTY in Madras

CASSETTES

Hymns Go Pop

THERE is big money in religion. And audio-cassette manufacturers are certainly cashing in on it. Result: a staggering 50,000 devotional music cassettes sell in the south every month. Riding on the crest of the wave are Sangeetha, AVM, Echo, Indreco and even CBS. Sangeetha, with a 1,200-title catalogue, sells more than four lakh cassettes a year.

But the sales have a rhythm coinciding with the seasons. For example, during the Sabarimala season, sales of songs worshipping Lord Ayyappa peak, while during Navaratri, Amman songs are more popular. Says Shrikrishna of Sangeetha: "While the demand for film music dies down once the film is off the theatre, the demand for devotional songs keeps returning."

With devotional cassettes priced at an affordable Rs 12, they find an easy patron in the middle class. This assures steady royalties for the singers. While classical artistes like Bala Muralikrishna and the Bombay sisters are popular, the best sellers are film singers, S.P. Balasubramaniam, K.J. Jesudas and S. Janaki.

With some waning film music directors, such as M.S. Viswanathan, switching to devotional music, some of it now sounds like crass film music. Questions a music critic: "What kind of devotional music will have a sixty piece orchestra?" The sad truth is the lure of lucre has driven devotional music from a sublime religious experience to popular entertainment.

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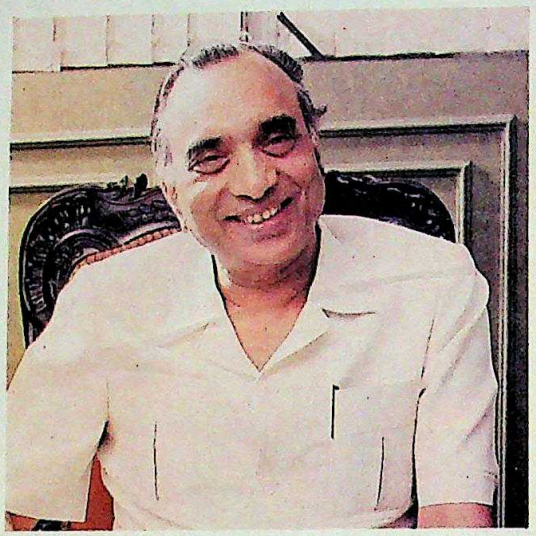

M.L. Mittal, Chairman

Chairman's Statement at the Fo Annual General Meeting of the Company held on 19th September, 1989

Dear Shareholders,

I welcome you all to the Fourth Annual General Meeting of your Company. The Directors Report and Abridged Accounts for the 18-months period ended 30th April 1989 have been with you and with your permission I would like to take them as read.

As always it gives me the greatest satisfaction to see our Shareholders grow from strength to strength in each year. Today, we are a large family of over 2 lakh Shareholders spread throughout the length and breadth of this country as also abroad. I welcome all the Shareholders present here with an assurance that we will endeavour to ensure that our relationship is mutually rewarding and fruitful.

Economic Scenario

Before going into details about your Company's performance for the period covered by the Directors Report, I would like to make a brief reference to the current economic scenario in the country. In the past few years, we have seen an unprecedented rise in Industrial Productivity, Exports and overall Development of the Economy despite several natural calamities which the country had to face during this period. The emerging picture for the future is also, therefore, encouraging. A wind of change is presently sweeping the Indian Steel Industry. The recent announcemen the Government for Liberalisation of the Indi Policy as regards Steel as also the increase i minimum economic capacity of various plants different types of Steel Products augurs well for future of the Industry. There is still scope for fu liberalisation and in my opinion, the mini economic size of different types of Steel Plants still substantially lower as compared to Inte tional Standards. Your Company is also poise take up New Challenges by setting up a new b of Steel Making and Processing Facilities and out with a range of specialised Flat Products.

Expansion & Modernisation

The production of the Cold Rolling Mill rec commissioned was, as envisaged, well receiv the market. As a result of the tremendous resp received from the end users, the Company proposed to double the capacity for Cold R Steel Sheets. The increasing shortage of Ma Scrap and escalating prices in the Interna Market has increased the demand for Sponge leading to an explosion in its demand all ove world, including our country. With the exp gained by the group in operating Sponge Plants in the West Indies, I see this as an business opportunity for the Company Company proposes to set up a Gas Based Sp Iron Plant for the manufacture of 8,00,000 to of Sponge Iron per annum.

Capital Market

The Indian Capital Market has undergone change in the last few years. An improveme the overall Corporate Results together improved Economic Conditions have led to gr confidence of people in the Corporate Secto finance the new ventures, your Company also be issuing fresh capital and we w informing you shortly the details of the Investment Opportunities.

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SPAT LIMITED

ghlights

- **Cold Rolling Mill Commissioned – tremendous response from end users**
- **Expansion and Modernisation of CR Mill – doubling capacity from 1,25,000 to 2,50,000 tonnes**
- **Proposal to set up a 8,00,000 tonnes Gas-Based Sponge Iron Plant – to meet the accelerating worldwide demand**
- **Turnover of Rs.155.81 Crores, Gross Profit of Rs.16.99 Crores and Profit Before Tax of Rs.5.77 Crores for the period ended 30th April, 1989**
- **30% Dividend**

erations

Turnover of the Company during the period 30th April, 1989 was Rs.15581.66 Lakhs. Profit and Profit Before Tax for the same was Rs.1699.73 Lakhs and Rs.577.42 Lakhs tively. As mentioned in the Directors Report, esults have been satisfactory in view of the constraints under which the Company was ing during the period. Accordingly, your tors have recommended a Final Dividend of for the year after taking into consideration the Dividend of 12% already paid. This is in line the Company philosophy of continuously ing its Shareholders. The outlook for the year continues to be satisfactory. In the first onths there has been over 100% utilization sed capacity in the Galvanizing Plant and % in the Cold Rolling Mill. It is expected that the current year the Company's turnover ceed Rs.300 crores.

ket Standing

As far as the Products are concerned, we are the Market Leaders in the Thin Gauge ed Steel Sheet Market. As a result, we e a steady growth and a further rise in the tage of sales accounted for by this division. production of the Cold Rolling Mill commissioned during the period was well received in the market because of its precisely controlled shape, flatness and other superior features. With the advent of the PVC/Colour Coated Steel Sheets by the end of the year, a new dimension would be given to the applications of Flat Steel Products in the country. For the first time Steel Sheets in a variety of colours and designs would be available for the Interior and Exterior Applications in Construction, Architecture, Electrical Appliances and other Industries.

In order to maintain our competitive advantage, we must continuously upgrade our Product Quality and make the most efficient use of Financial Resources and achieve higher returns on investment. By constantly working to improve value addition, reduce costs and tighten control of working capital management, we aim to increase the overall profitability and to ensure a position of leadership in our various product lines.

Work Force

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It is with utmost confidence I pledge to you the dedication of **THE ISPAT GROUP** to growth as the "Continuous Pursuit of Excellence".

With best wishes.

M.L. Mittal
Chairman

NOTE : This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

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PRESSMAN

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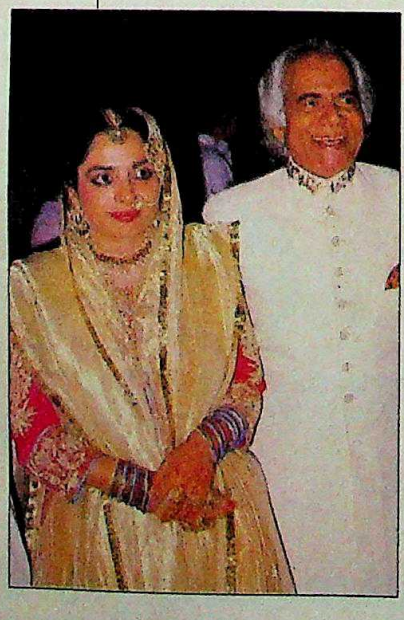
◆ All she wanted to do was be an air hostess—and they declared her the prettiest one doing the rounds. From the backwaters of Chandigarh, 21-year-old **Suneeta Sodhi** had to go all the way to Paris to win her laurels. When she appeared at the Casino de Paris, first in her uniform,

Sodhi: flying high

NAMAS BHOJANI

then in a swimsuit, she needed to outdazzle 16 others. No problem. In a flash of ivory teeth, she had the Miss World Airlines sash draped across her shoulder. Modestly, she says: "I want to remain an air hostess and serve Air-India." Maybe that'll make travel by the airline 'a great new experience'.

◆ This is one Indo-Pak match in which the Indians have been clean bowled. At least **Sadia Dehlvi**, 31, is sure about that. Says she, cheekily:



Dehlvi and Pervaiz: Indo-Pak overtures

MRF Shuttle: out of the world

"All the Indians lost out." The vivacious Delhi socialite who edits the Urdu fortnightly, *Shama*—occasionally popping up in the who's who columns of various publications—has just tied the marital knot with snow-haired **Reza Pervaiz**, a 52-year-old Pakistani executive who works in the automobile industry in Islamabad. It was a wedding to remember: a round robin of parties, including one by the Pakistani ambassador. And then Khushwant Singh finally gave Dehlvi away with champagne, cake and tears. Says Pervaiz, known for his wild parties in Pakistan: "I love her for her non-conformity." Good luck, Islamabad.

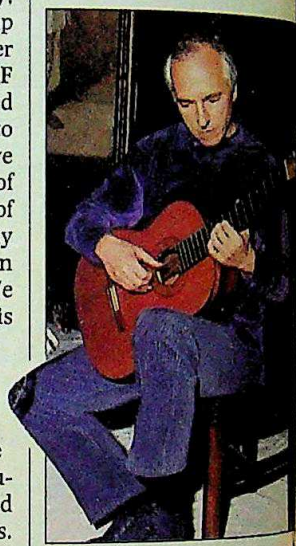
◆ How do you improve on Viv Richards, Kapil Dev, Imran Khan, and Allan Border? No you don't. Because you can't. But then how do you make one world cup more impressive than another? By improving the effects. So, while the Reliance extravaganza of 1987 innovated with a motorised drinks trolley, MRF for its Nehru Cup matches has slapped together a space-age craft. The **MRF Drinks Shuttle** is equipped with a music system. And to avoid bickering, rules have been spelled out: choice of music rests with the captain of the fielding side. Asked why something so outlandish, an MRF spokesman said: "We wanted something out of this world." Literally so?

◆ She's the Portia the Indian judiciary has never had. And by becoming the first woman judge of the Supreme Court, she's crumbled one of the last male bastions. But that's been the story of her life from the very day she stepped into the Quilon district court in Kerala. For **Meera Sahib Fathima Beevi**, 62, has steadfastly fought the conservativeness of her middle class Muslim background to notch up the successes. The jurist feels there ought to be many more women judges, for they are less corrupt, and can help to "awaken women in general". Says she: "In the modern world it is not very difficult for a single woman to survive if she has self-confidence and is true to herself." The Shylocks had better beware.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Beevi: scaling male bastions

◆ Indians do not always have to be at the receiving end of awards emanating from the West. They can also confer some prestigious ones of their own. So one of the four artistes of international repute honoured by the Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan Memorial Society, is classical guitarist **John Williams**. The other three to be awarded the Hafiz Ali Khan Award are Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, M.S. Subbalakshmi and Ustad Bismillah Khan. Says a pleased Williams, who has been a student of Andrés Segovia: "It is a tribute to western classical music from the other great musical tradition—Indian classical music." Also a tribute from one musical great to another: for handing over the award is none else than Amjad Ali Khan, the society's president.



Williams: eastern accolade

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COVER STORIES

CONGRESS(I)

Playing it Safe

By nominating most of its sitting MPs to contest the coming general elections, the Congress(I) has firmly plumped for the status quo and against change. More important, the decision seems to be an admission that Rajiv cannot win on his own without the support of key regional bosses.

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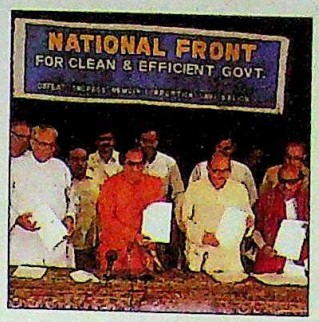

THE OPPOSITION

Cocky Confidence

The Opposition is in an upbeat mood. In a rare display of unity, various parties spanning the entire range of the political spectrum have tacitly agreed to come together and take on the Congress(I) in what effectively amounts to one-to-one contests in a majority of constituencies.

38

RAJIV GANDHI

Promise that Failed

Last week, Rajiv Gandhi completed five roller-coaster years in office, a tenure that has traversed giddy highs and gut-wrenching lows. But the dazzle of his initial promise only serves to spotlight his subsequent failures.

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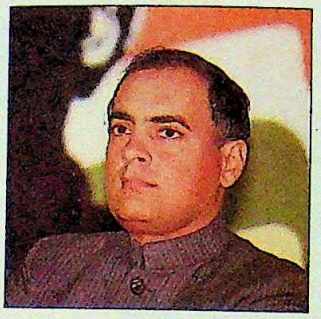

REGIONAL PARTIES

Growing Clout

The influence of three regional parties—the Telugu Desam, the DMK and the Akali Dal—is essentially restricted to their home states. But in a closely contested election, they could determine who rules at the Centre.

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PUNJAB

An Orphaned Future

In the absence of state policy, Punjab's many traumatised orphans live in shattered households. Amid this darkness, one man's crusade to help the innocent victims of terrorist slaughter has lit an inspiring flame of hope.

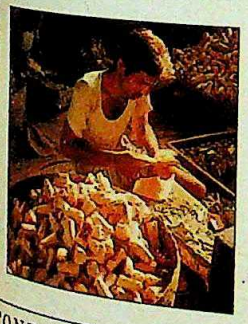
SPECIAL FEATURE.....96

CRICKET

A Gruelling Battle

The Nehru Cup has produced enthralling cricket with fortunes swinging incredibly. India and West Indies which started off shakily, soon got their bearings and entered the semi-finals along with Pakistan and England.

SPORTS.....162



BEEDI BARONS

Rolling in Money

The few families dominating the Rs 3,000-crore beedi industry cling to traditional methods and a conservative life-style. But some are now installing computers, setting up laboratories, and diversifying into other areas.

BUSINESS FEATURE.....104

BENGALI PAINTERS

A Brush with Bounty

Calcutta has become the new vogue-city in the business of art. Its almost-comatose art market has come alive, with new galleries doing brisk business. As Bengal painters emerge from the shadows, a renaissance is on.

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WILL YOU ALLOW YOUR DAU
A MAN WHO LOVES HIS EEP

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He conforms to contradictions: Combining velvet-glove elegance with animal energy.

But take courage in your hands and invite him to tea one day.

OUR DAUGHTER TO MARRY HIS JEEP?

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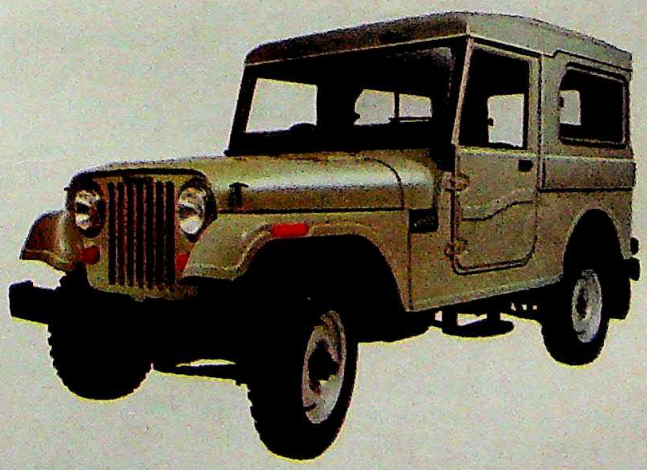
That should help you arrive at a decision. Though you will grow to see that he really won't care. One way or other.



Mahindra Jeep MM 540 DIESEL

DRIVEN BY A PASSION...FOR COMMON SENSE

*At current diesel prices. Fuel consumption: 15 km/lit. at 40 km/hr under test conditions.

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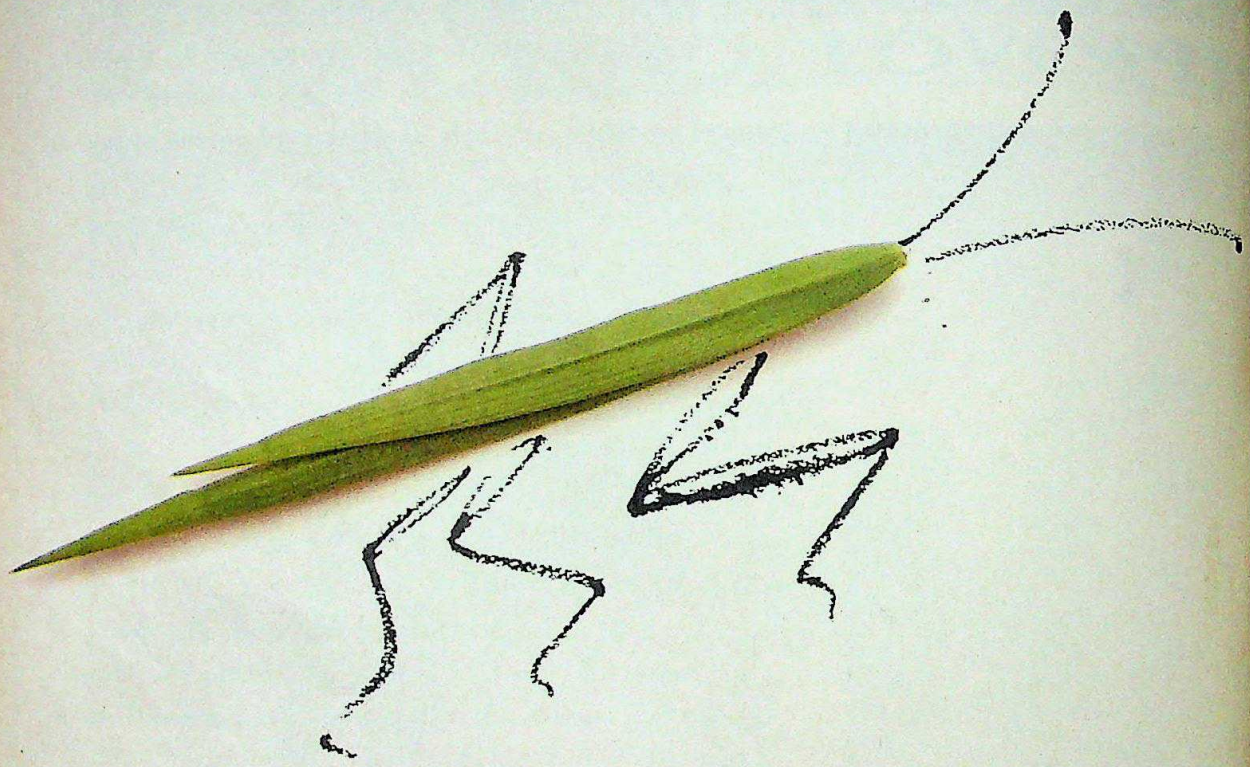

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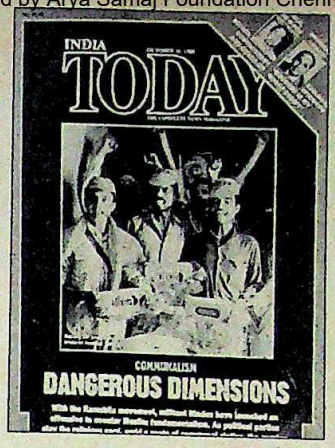

COMMUNALISING POLITICS

The quest for the Hindu vote ("Dangerous Dimensions", October 31) is on in right earnest. The call for Ramshila pujas given by the BJP has hastened the communalisation of Indian politics. The Government is equally to be blamed for this situation: the timing for granting second language status to Urdu had an obvious ulterior motive. The result is that communalism is now rapidly spreading to all parts of the country. The loser in this political game, of course, is as always the Indian citizen.

New Delhi — V.A. MENON

SOARING PRICES

The spiral in prices ("Crisis on Prices", October 15) is a result of bad planning and mismanagement of resources. The frenetic activity to curb it will, in all probability, be forgotten after the general elections leaving the middle class consumer in the lurch.

Bombay — PETER YORKE

■ The prices of all essential commodities should be strictly state-controlled and monitored by government agencies.

Chandigarh — R.K. SUNDAN

■ The Government's failure to check the rising prices has given a big blow to the middle class. Unless a tangible change is brought about quickly, the results are likely to be devastating.

Kanpur — RAAJ GOPAL MEHROTRA

■ An effective consumer movement is the only answer to force the Government to bring down the prices.

Bombay — N.G. WAGLE

■ The present crisis stems from deficit financing, inept management and pouring in of money into unproductive ventures like the Jawahar Rozgar Yojna.

New Delhi — PUNAM RIJHWANI

■ Will the Government list how many more public welfare schemes (like the Jawahar Rozgar Yojna) it has in mind in order to pay tributes to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in this election year, so that we citizens can plan out how much less we will get to spend over the coming months?

Vadodara — AJAY KUMAR

■ The rise in prices will be an effective weapon for the Opposition in the coming general elections and it will blunt the achievements of the Government.

Kottayam — V.K. SATHYAVAN NAIR

■ With the rise in prices, hoarding and profiteering have become rampant. It is imperative that the Government take immediate measures to curb this growing menace.

Trivandrum — K.C. MADHAVA KURUP

■ Price rise is the last nail in the political coffin of Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress(I).

Jabalpur — RAVI OSWAL

THE GUN CULTURE

"March of the Gun" (October 15) lays bare the genesis of the growing gun culture in India—whether it is the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute or terrorism in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. Most of these problems are kept alive by the government agencies because they gain by accentuating fanaticism.

Ludhiana — K.S. SOIN

A NEW AWAKENING

"Changing Sexuality" (October 15) does not quite apply to the Indian woman, though the frustrations of marriage like male impotence and brutality of the husbands have been well discussed.

Hyderabad — MUTHENDER VELISHALA

■ The experiences recounted in the article are not new. The only difference is that economically independent women have become more expressive about their sexual needs.

New Delhi — DR L.K. SINGHAL

■ The change in the people's attitude towards sex is not really sudden; it is a belated fulfilment of old desires.

Bhagalpur — ALOK KUMAR JHA

■ It is wrong to suggest that women of the earlier generation were conservative and unhappy. The present openness

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is a sign of degrading intellectuality in urban India.
Tiruchirapalli — J.P. MAHESHWARI

■ Changing sexuality in the middle class women is a result of our changing behavioural patterns.
Indore — DR PRATEEP VYAS

■ It is nice to know that in our male-dominated society, women have begun to assert their rights to indulge in sex outside marriage.
Ranchi — SUBHASH SERAPHIM

■ It is not only women who have changed their attitude towards sex in the past decade, men have also understood the importance of a fuller expression of love during sex.
Hyderabad — VIJAY SONI

■ Infidelity is on the rise in India as people seek sexual stimulation outside marriage. Traditionally, it was always the wife who accepted her husband's infidelity. A man's behaviour was never questioned. In fact, keeping two wives was even considered a status symbol.
Kanpur — KUMUD MEHROTRA

■ Your article tries to glorify extra-marital affairs. That women are increasingly indulging in extra-marital sex because their husbands are incapable of providing them with what they want is being unfair to the husbands.
Jaipur — RAJESH KABU

■ We should credit traditional society with some intelligence. If sexual affairs had been fun and safe, our ancestors would have approved of them. The moral streak is inherent in every man and woman and the guilt attached to extra-marital relationships can never be overcome.
Madras — S. VENKATESH BHAT

■ Sigmund Freud has used sex in a very vast panorama. According to him unfulfilled sexual desires have many socially and morally accepted outlets. Story and poetry writing, painting, acting, singing and other such acts are modes of fulfilling these desires.
Patna — JASBIR KAUR

■ I was surprised to be quoted, or rather misquoted, in the story. I don't believe that the three lines which have been boxed make much sense. The discussion with your correspondent took place over a period of time. And suddenly to see in print a jumble of words which seem to say nothing is not doing any good for the person who is being quoted, for the reader or for the magazine. I was talking from the point of view of the need for a sense of identity for the Indian woman, all of which does not appear in the copy. Moreover, I would like to add that I am still very much with Saheli.
New Delhi — PRABEEN SINGH

SMEAR CAMPAIGN

The St Kitts bank account controversy ("Calling the Bluff", October 15) is aimed at tarnishing the reputation of V.P. Singh. The release of documents involving Ajeya Singh, their projection on Doordarshan, and banker George McLean's meetings with selected pressmen make this motive clear.
Kanpur — ROHIT MAINDWAL

■ Can one believe that an educated banker, whose mother tongue is English, could ever sign a paper which states, "Daily interest $211.18 per day per $10,00,000.00"?
Calcutta — APARAJIT SARKAR

FATAL FLAWS

It is paradoxical that a country like ours which invests so much on training aviation manpower still suffers from flaws ("Heading for a Crisis", October 15). Perhaps we are the only country where there is a shortage of trained pilots as well as experienced crew. This despite a large number of Air Force pilots who retire early and can be re-employed. Many of these pilots are also experienced traffic and radar controllers and can meet any exigency affecting air safety.
Ahmedabad — R.N. BALI, *Group Captain (Retd)*

■ Frequent air crashes, delay in departure of flights, and the rude behaviour of airline staff have put the future of Indian Airlines (IA) and Vayudoot in jeopardy. Veteran transport pilots, with wide administrative experience from the Indian Air Force should head IA and Vayudoot to streamline the administration.
Calcutta — B.N. BOSE

VENDETTA KILLING

It is wrong to ascribe every killing in Punjab to terrorism ("Dangerous Strategy", October 15). The murder of Rajan Bains, son of SSP Gobind Ram, is a case of retribution. Proper redressal of the people's complaints by the police could have prevented this incident.
New Delhi — SUDHIR K. NAIR

GREAT LANGUAGE

Urdu is a popular link-language of India ("Urdu Uproar", October 15) which is widely spoken and understood. The language is not confined to the Muslims alone. All those who are opposed to Urdu ought to be condemned. In your article, it has been said that a population of 30 per cent is required under Article 347 of the Indian Constitution to make Urdu an official language. The status of the official language is conferred under Article 345 of the Constitution, which does not lay any restriction on population.
Patna — DR ABDUL MOGHNI

■ History is proof of the significant role of Urdu in every aspect of Indian culture and politics. The attitude adopted by the BJP and the Shiv Sena towards this language is totally unfair.
Allahabad — RAHILA SAYEED

LAGGING BEHIND

The Nehru Centenary Athletics Meet ("Tracking the Stars", October 15) has once again proved that Indian sportspersons are still far behind international standards. To bridge this gap, what the sportsmen need is vigorous training and more participation in international competitions.
Madras — ROBIN PALARAMB

TURBULENT VALLEY

Your comment ("Indianise Kashmir", September 30) analyses the causes of trouble in Kashmir in their proper perspective. Every description of turbulence in the valley as communal and pro-Pakistani demoralises the nationalist Muslims and perpetuates a sense of alienation from other Indians.
Bhopal — ZAKI-UR-RAHMAN KHAN

GOOD REJOINDER

General K. Sundarji has convincingly answered the questions raised by the Government's rejoinder to his revelations ("Sundarji Replies", September 30). In turn he has also raised new questions to be answered by the prime minister and his party.
Tilhar, Uttar Pradesh — L. SHARMA

■ How long could General Sundarji remain silent when the quality of the Bofors gun was being questioned by those who have little knowledge of weaponry?
Calcutta — M. THIRUMURTHY

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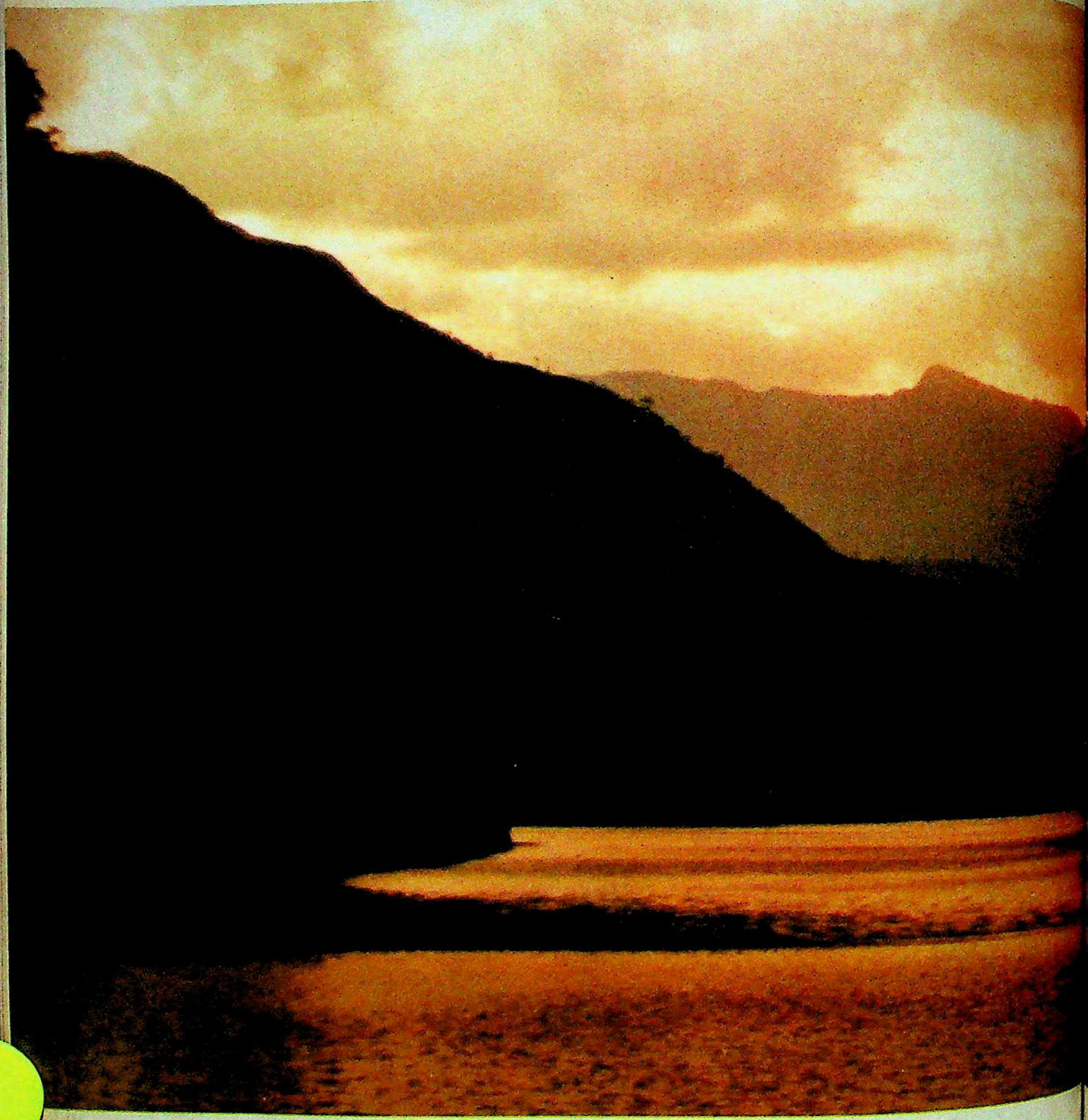

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An Indelible Blot

OUT, damned spot! Out, I say!...All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand....Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? No, my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red."

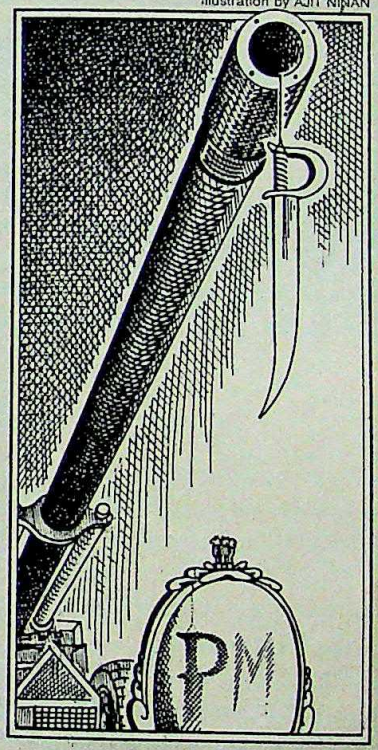
Like the permanent bloodstain that Lady Macbeth saw on her hand, the Bofors scandal has become an indelible blot on the Rajiv Gandhi Government that cannot be wished away either by a general election or by Doordarshan's new attempt at exorcism wherein, as a matter of policy, newsreaders have been instructed not to refer to Bofors by name but only to the 155 mm Howitzer gun. And all the statements by officials and ministers and all the "investigations" the Government has ordered have failed to sweeten its odium. If anything, the stench of Bofors gets more rancid by the day.

The real issue is not the sum of Rs 64 crore or even Rs 100 crore in pay-offs that may or may not be eventually recovered from the Swedes. The sum is immaterial. It's not the money. The real issue is one of faith. Faith in the system, faith in the Government, faith in the prime minister. This is what makes a democracy and a country tick and move forward. And this loss of faith is not because the Opposition has willed it for its own selfish political advantage, or because anti-Rajiv Gandhi conspirators in the press have calculatedly worked in tandem with invisible foreign forces to destroy it.

This sordid situation is squarely the creation of the Government. And that's where responsibility must ultimately be placed. Immediately after the scandal surfaced in April 1987, the prime minister, along with his cabinet colleagues, made solemn, drumbeat pledges of punishing the guilty by getting to the bottom of the matter. "The Government will leave no stone unturned to get at the facts," they said. "We want to know who opened these (Swiss) accounts and when, and who operated them." "If we are guilty then hang us....somebody had run away with the country's money. Let us find him....Let us show this country that we want to get at the truth." With its own words, the Government was demonstrating that nothing short of the national honour was at stake and that it would be satisfied with nothing less than the punishment of the guilty—whoever they were. It was telling the Indian people that the system is accountable. Pursuing the culprits in the Bofors scandal, going by the Government's own statements, was made a *national objective*.

In keeping with this, the Government sent delegations to Switzerland and served notices on Bofors representative Win Chadha. These, as *The Hindu*'s stories have revealed, were a game of charades. And precisely because it has not followed its own directives with any seriousness, the Bofors scandal has refused to go away. Now it has sent yet another team to Switzerland after *The Hindu* revealed that all along, the Government's attempts to get at the truth—the Joint Parliamentary Committee's investigation, the kid-gloves treatment accorded Chadha—were farcical.

Illustration by AJIT NINAN



BUT that's not all. The Government's spokesmen have gone so far as to attack the motives of the press. Journalists and others who have followed the Bofors trail are not necessarily ill-wishers of Rajiv Gandhi or even his party. They are, after all, pursuing the national objective laid down by the Government itself. Their revelations, if credible, and if leading to the truth should be lauded by the Government. Instead, they are derided and attempts are made to put the brakes on their investigations. By doing so, the Government not only keeps Bofors alive but also commits a breach of faith with the people who have reposed their trust in it.

For more than two years Bofors has hobbled what was surely one of the most popular governments elected by the Indian people since Independence and prevented it from getting along with the business of effective governance. The pity of it is that even if Rajiv Gandhi is re-elected, the paralysis will continue, as new exposes are bound to prove embarrassing and destabilising to a new government. And with the prospect of a far more numerically powerful opposition in Parliament, the issue can hardly be expected to die out. What is at stake is the very stability of the system.

Equally dangerous is what foreign governments may do to blackmail a new government. There is speculation that the superpowers with the enormous resources at their command, may already have a pretty good idea of who is behind the Bofors deal and who may have taken the money. The fear is that this kind of information in the hands of foreign powers could render the Indian Government vulnerable to blackmail from abroad—thereby jeopardising the very sovereignty of independent India. It is for these reasons that the Bofors scandal is not just a question of a Rs 64-crore bribe. And it is therefore paramount that in the interest of faith, stability and sovereignty, Indians must get to the bottom of the matter.

Bofors must be buried. In order to get the nation moving again we have to get it out of our system. And the only person who can do this effectively is Rajiv Gandhi. As he goes into his second general election he must treat the event not as something that will deflect Bofors into a side issue but as an opportunity to force his government to come clean on the subject—and the devil take the hindmost. If he can do this he will, in a single stroke, be able to restore both the national pride and his own honour and will have earned a vote of thanks from the entire nation. If he does not, and still emerges the victor, he will, like Macbeth, perhaps "feel his title hang loose about him like a giant's robe upon a dwarfish thief".

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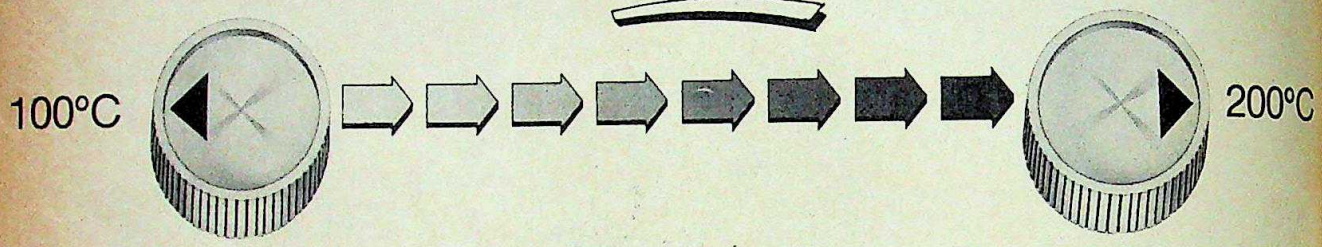

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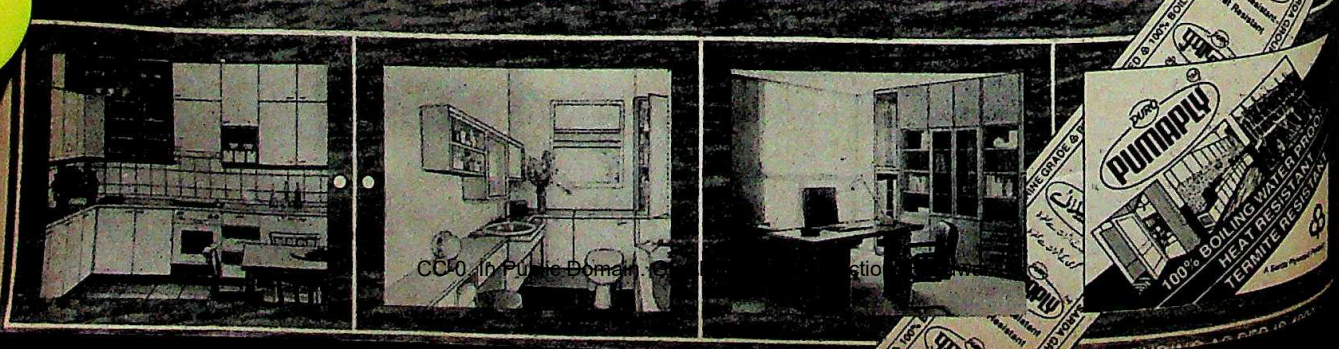

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Brusque Bureaucrat

● Bureaucracies are known to become catatonic as a general election nears. But T.N. Seshan, Union cabinet secretary, has different ideas. The country's most powerful bureaucrat has instilled fear among his colleagues by launching into a review of the performance of all additional

and joint secretaries in the various ministries. The idea of the exercise, apparently, is to screen the best of the Government's 'B'-team and weed out the non-performers.

Seshan has been doing it in his usual brusque, no-nonsense style. The key bureaucrats in a ministry are asked to prepare a brief on what their departments have been doing and need to do in future. He then convenes a meeting of all top-level staff, where individual members are asked to make 12-minute presentations. They are then subjected to an intense grilling by Seshan, who loses no opportunity to tear them apart.

Those who come out unscathed either retain their posts or are recommended for promotion. Others are transferred peremptorily to insignificant ministries. Recently, an additional secretary in a key ministry was given the short shrift by Seshan when he found her performance lackadaisical. A week after that, her transfer orders came. Meanwhile, Seshan has been busy giving other ministries his special treatment.

Singh Snafu

● Last fortnight, the Malaysian Government made the unusual announcement that nobody with the surname of Singh would be granted an entry visa into the country until the end of the three-day Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kuala Lumpur. The edict was passed out of solicitude for the Indian Government—a clumsy attempt at preventing the entry of terrorists.

But the Indian External Affairs Ministry found itself in an embarrassing position. After all, Minister of State for External Affairs and the Foreign Secretary, are both Singhs—K. Natwar Singh and S.K. Singh. Worse, India's High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur is P.M. Singh.

S.K. Singh brought this to the Malaysian Government's

Illustrations by AJIT NINAN

notice, which said it was a security measure for Rajiv Gandhi who was expected at the summit. But a concession was made: any Singh coming on official or diplomatic business would be allowed in. So Natwar Singh and S.K. Singh were ensured entry at Kuala Lumpur airport—unlike other ordinary Singhs.

Giani's Memoirs

● Guess what is considered the hottest forthcoming prospect in the capital's publishing world? No, it is not Shobha De's sequel to *Socialite Evenings*. It is, instead, the memoirs of former President Giani Zail Singh.

While avoiding publicity for the past many months, the

Giani has been busy penning down the story of his chequered life—or rather telling it to a former AIR official who is writing it for him.

With the Giani having been a ringside witness to the making of India's recent history, it is not surprising that publishers are making a beeline for his story of his life.

An international publishing house is ahead of the rest of the pack, but it has a problem. The hard-headed editors are interested only if the Giani writes in detail about the tumultuous political happenings when he was home minister and President.

On the other hand, the Giani, who is on a trip of narcissistic nostalgia, is more keen to ramble about his humble childhood, his village, his youth and things of that sort. And as the publishers persuade him to write a sensational political kiss-and-tell, many in the ruling party are worried.

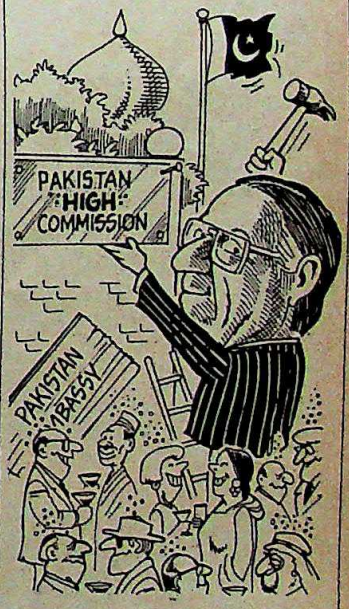
But now, even if the Giani decides to say it all, can he meet the deadline his fans in the Opposition want him to keep: before the elections?

Changing Times

● Unknown to the outside world, profound changes have been taking place in the neighbourhood. Last month, Delhi's press corps, so used to making do with lime 'n soda at Pakistan Embassy receptions, were surprised to find liquor flowing freely at a reception to celebrate Pakistan's re-entry into the Commonwealth.

But other things have to change too. The Pakistan Embassy will now become a high commission, the ambassador the high commissioner and so on. This will require a change in stationery, name-plates et al. The expense involved: approximately Rs 50,000.

That too when the mission reprints stationery only for external communications. For internal communications within the mission and with Islamabad, old stationery will



continue to be used with a rubber stamp to erase 'embassy' and inscribe 'high commission'.

Given the nonchalance with which Pakistan walked out of the Commonwealth in the past, it may indeed be wise on the part of the embassy/high commission to keep its old stationery handy.

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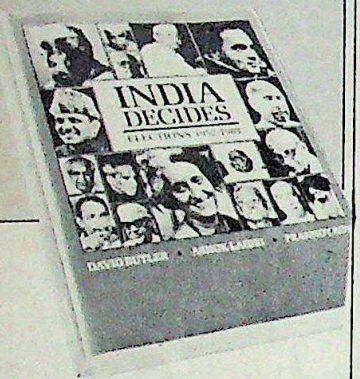
ELECTIONS 1989



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The Times of India

- *It is a courageous step by Rajiv Gandhi.*

■ MOTILAL VORA, on the election announcement

- *Let us resolve to achieve these objectives (the ouster of Rajiv Gandhi and a sizeable presence of* BJP *in the 1990 Lok Sabha). If other opposition friends cooperate: with them. If they do not: without them. And if they oppose: in spite of them.*

■ L.K. ADVANI in *Sunday*

- *It is a matter of great regret that not even four persons from the opposition parties could muster up enough courage to stand up for the weaker sections of the society and others whom the act (Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika bills) would have benefited.*

■ RAJIV GANDHI

- *This is a verdict against the bullying tactics of the Government.*

■ M.S. GURUPADASWAMY, on the Government's failure to get the Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika bills passed in the Rajya Sabha

- *Sir, I need your help.*

■ AJEYA SINGH in a letter to President R. Venkataraman

- *It is Tikait's proximity to Delhi that has made some of his blurbs newsworthy. But I think it's time we called a spade a spade and an idiot an idiot.*

■ SHARAD JOSHI in *The Sunday Observer*

- *I, or I should say we in the Cabinet, have merely fulfilled an election promise made in 1980.*

■ N.D. TIWARI, on granting second language status to Urdu, in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

- *I am isolated in my party because if I say the right thing, nobody supports me.*

■ KAMLAPATI TRIPATHI in *The Statesman*

- *I am a coward. I don't like unpleasantness. I run away from controversies.*

■ MURLI DEORA in *Bombay*

- *They have disbanded the relay team which was formed by the 'golden girls'. You are talking about cricket, here our best girls have been thrown out thanks to politics.*

■ MARGARET ALVA, on the AAFI, in *Sportsworld*

- *I love to see my face in the mirror. But even I'm getting bored of that face.*

■ KAMALAHASAN in *Newstrack*

- *At one time Manmohan Desai used to call Amitabh Bachchan a castor oil hero. Today he claims to be his mentor.*

■ PRAKASH MEHRA in *Movie*

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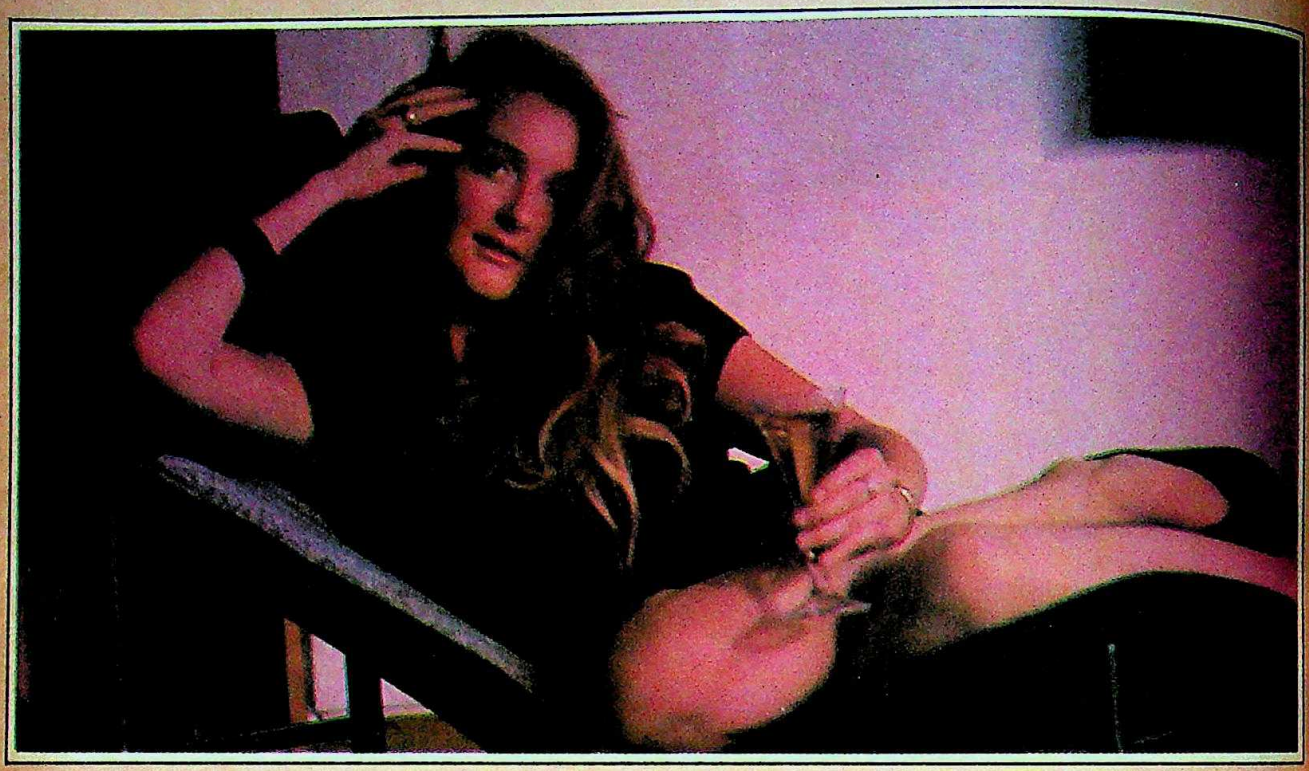

Nicole le Chevalier.

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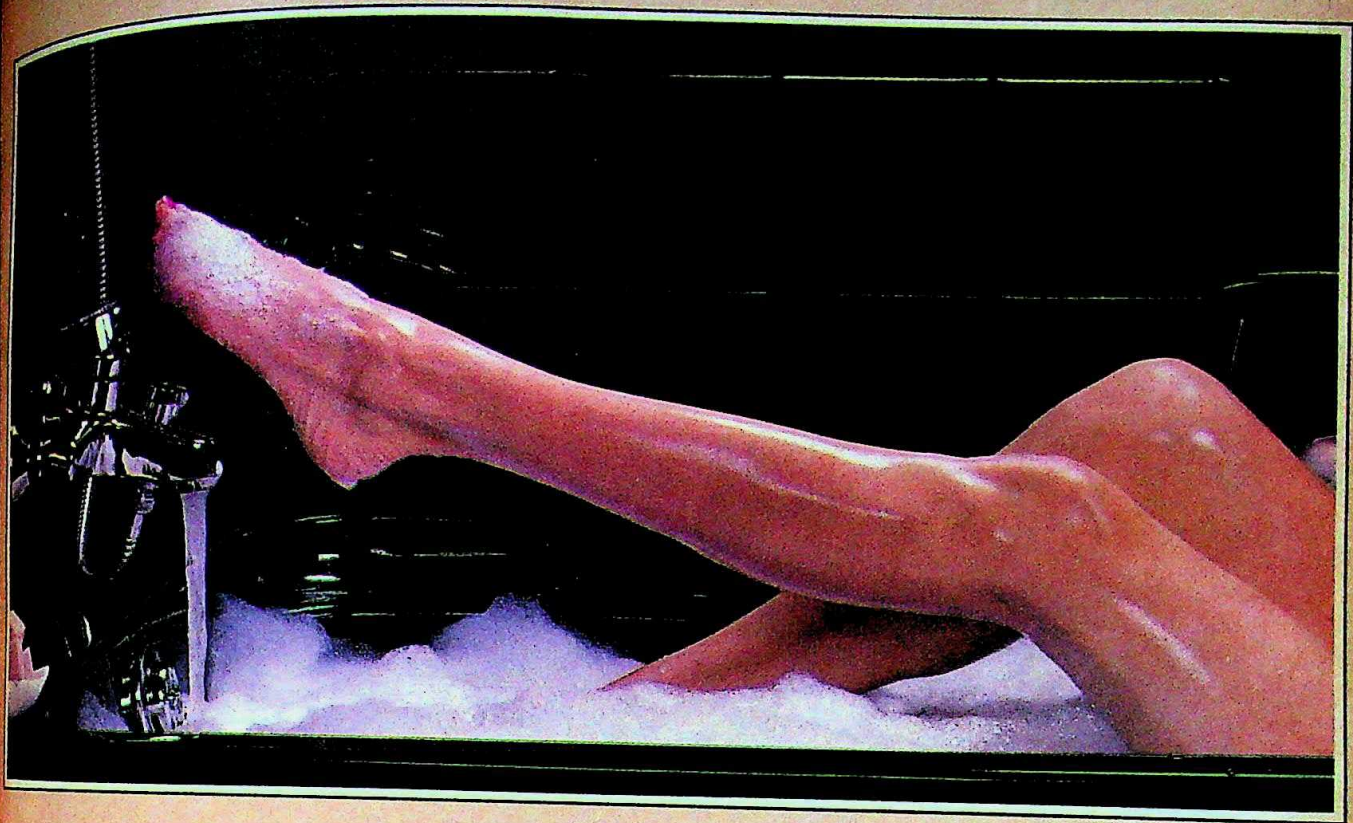

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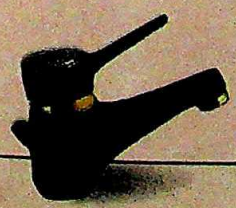

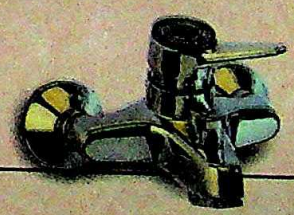

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Highly recommended by all who fly.

Lufthansa

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PAYING ACTS

■ Tinsel-town Bombay is not the only place where a performer's success is rated by the price he, or she, charges. The same now holds true of small-time performers who come out of hibernation around Dussehra time.

Those playing the lead role are not always the highest paid. The price depends on how the actor interprets his role. So the highest paid at a Ramlila in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, was the angry Parshuram. His rate: Rs 300 per day. Surprisingly, the lowest paid was Ram whose beatific smile, the organisers felt, was worth just Rs 55 a day. The price of the actor playing the ten-headed demon Ravana was Rs 150 and the aggressively enacted Lakshman was worth Rs 100.

With Ramlila performances becoming money-spinners, the astute organisers have perfected their own star system which apes the Bombay model. Bombay had better beware. Today's Surpanakha might just be tomorrow's Rekha.

DOGGED BY RED TAPE

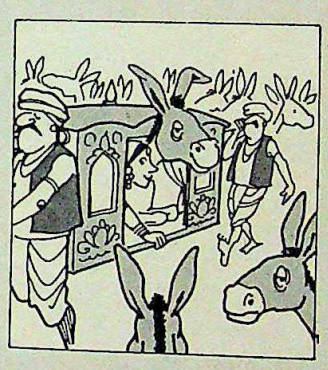
■ Human beings are not the only victims of red tapism. Canines too can suffer bureaucrat-inflicted indignities. A case in point: Vespa, the golden labrador acquired by the Calcutta Detective Department for its dog squad two years ago, who still awaits an appointment letter from the Government.

Although Vespa has an impeccable track record in the police—having doggedly sniffed out drugs and explosives and even having stood guard during one of the prime minister's visits to Calcutta—his future seemed very bleak. For all his snooping, he had failed to find a place in the Detective Departments's six-strong dog squad.

But Vespa was not the only one growling. His previous owner, Nilanjan Banerjee, a dog-breeder, complained that the police still owed him Rs 2,000. However, since two dogs in the squad died recently, Vespa may finally fill one of the vacancies. Every dog has his day.

ASS ASSEMBLY

■ Never heard of a donkey mela? Then you better head for Luniawas, a tiny village near Jaipur, known all along for its beautiful pottery or tie-and-dye dupattas and, more recently, for its annual donkey mela. Or the mela at Majra, Haryana, which is billed as the biggest in the world, and attracts traders from Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. Around 40,000 donkeys are paraded at the fair. And they sell at prices ranging between an abysmal Rs 200 and a whopping Rs 1 lakh.



One lakh for a donkey? Surprisingly, yes. This is because donkeys are an important dowry item among members of the potter community. The donkey mela also serves as a marriage mart for the potters; many matches are made and feuds forgotten. And which groom do you think stands the best chance of winning a winsome Haryanavi belle? The one with the sturdiest donkey, of course.

MIRACLE MAN

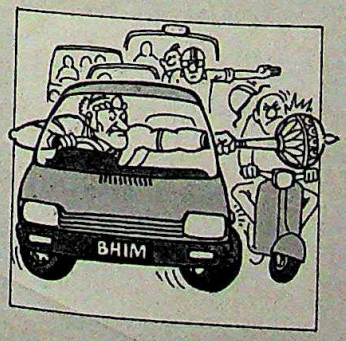
■ In a country where religion and superstition go hand in hand, crusaders against superstition often feel they're banging their heads against a wall. One such crusader is Shyam Manav, who has even been beaten by irate people who feel he is questioning age-old beliefs.

To prove his point that most miracles "performed" by sadhus and godmen were mere sleights of hand, Manav recently gave a demonstration in Bombay, where he converted a vessel of water into *pedas*. He then invited members of the audience to come up to the dais and taste them.

An elderly man ambled up to the stage, reverently picked up a *peda*, lifted it to his forehead as if it were holy prasad, before eating it. The purpose of the rationalist sermon was totally defeated. Instead of provoking the audience to question such "miracles", the rationalist had become a miracle man!

MARUTI BHIM

■ The *Mahabharat's* big man Bhim in a Maruti? Incongruous, maybe, but that's the sight that Delhiites see when this monstrous Pandava comes to visit his family.



Bhim, alias Praveen Kumar, was recently mobbed by shoppers in the capital's Connaught Place, who followed him shouting "Bhim, Bhim" and offered currency notes to be autographed.

Not many people know that the 6 ft 7 inch, 129 kg Praveen Kumar has actual feats of strength to his credit: his national hammer throw record is unbeaten.

Things are going well for Bhim. Was it divine intervention that made the BSF settle his pension claim after an eight-year wait? Bhim picked up his cheque and drove off in his Maruti. Does he have problems fitting into the tiny car? No, he says, it has more headroom than the Mercedes 300 he drives in Bombay. Bhim in a Mercedes?

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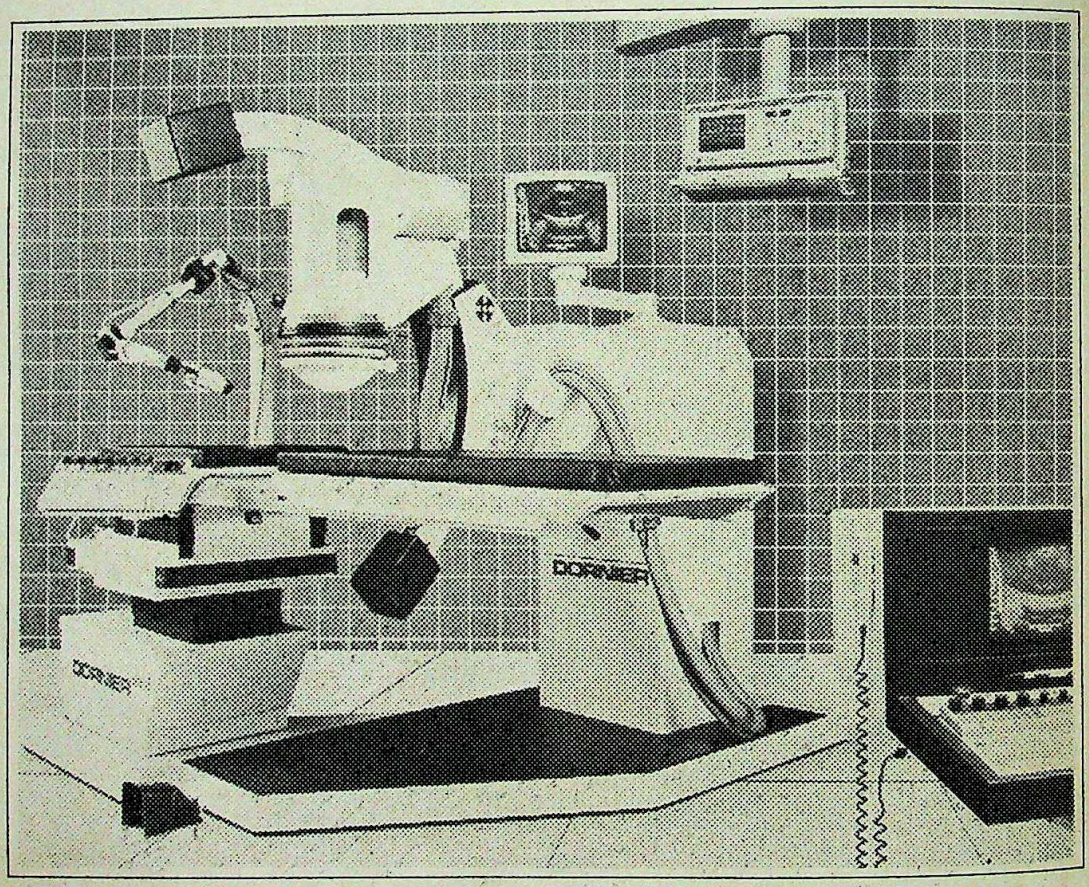

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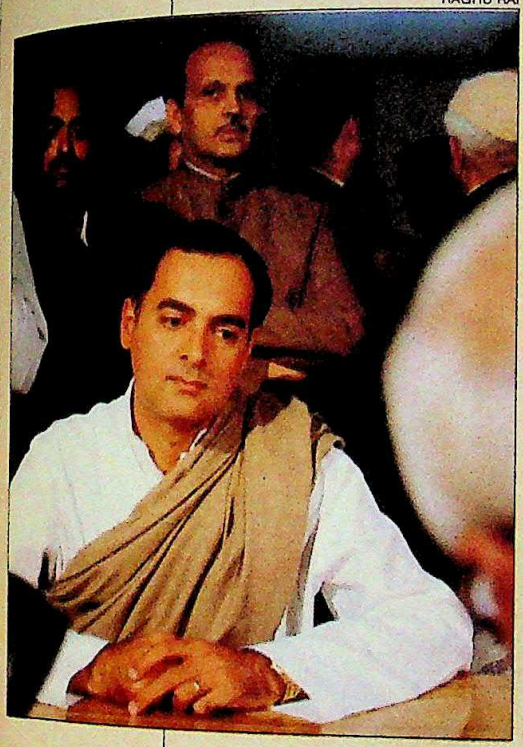
Edge of History

NOW it is down to the wire. In the blink of a fortnight, India suddenly finds itself teetering on the edge of history. A decision relegated to the basement of the collective mind now suddenly looms frighteningly near. It is, at every level, a decision that has never been more vital for this fractious republic. What India will decide in the dizzying span of three weeks is not the political fortunes of 529 mostly invisible politicians. What India decides will be crucial for the future course of Indian democracy.

RAGHU RAI



It is not, in the end, a question of stability. The alarmist advertisements and posters, so flagrantly flung around by the ruling party, would have been inexcusable were not hyperbole an accepted weapon in electoral battle. The truth is that India is too large in size and population, too federal in its political configuration, too strongly pillared on institutions immune to political upheavals, to disintegrate into pieces merely because of a change of government.

The truth is that it is essentially governments which encourage the aura of instability for political ends. The truth is that it is essentially politicians who aggravate the communal itch for the same objective. The truth is that it is political parties who conspire in the erosion of institutions to suit the political dictates of the day. The truth is that India is no less or no more unstable than at any time since 1952 when the first Lok Sabha elections were staged.

If anything, it is infinitely more mature, more immune to political manipulation and more resilient to political change. Even its most vulnerable phase—the insecurity and infighting within the Janata government between 1977 and 1979—did not lead to any great instability as far as the country was concerned. India not only survived, but emerged much stronger in its democratic credentials.

The key issue is that the politician has betrayed his pact with the Indian people.

The real test of Election 1989 is the message the electorate sends to its future leaders.

That is what makes this election so suddenly crucial. More so, since the choice before the electorate has never been more difficult or more ambiguous. That the major electoral pitch of the ruling party centres around the imagined threat to the country should the Opposition come to power, in the end, says more about the Rajiv Gandhi Government than it does about the Opposition. What it does convey is that his government has a shortage of successes to proudly parade before the electorate. Equally, the Opposition is armed with one solitary election plank; the removal of Rajiv Gandhi. In terms of issues, this election will harp on the negative rather than the positive.

The Opposition may present a confusion of ideological hues. It may also possess the potential to self-destruct before its designated mandate should it find electoral favour for the second time in Indian history. But political ideology—except at a limited level—is no longer an overriding issue in the public mind. It has, and often enough, been sacrificed in the desperate scramble for power.

The issue is that the politician, whether of the ruling party or the Opposition, has betrayed his pact with the Indian people. At no other time has the credibility or image of the country's political community sunk so low. At no other time have electoral pledges and promises been less meaningful.

That will be the real test of Election 1989. Not which party is finally elected to power. But the message that the electorate sends to its future leaders come November. In the midst of a bruising, brawling electoral battle, it is easy to forget that the collective wisdom of the Indian electorate has always instinctively led it to take the right decision. There is no reason why this time should be any different.

—DILIP BOBB

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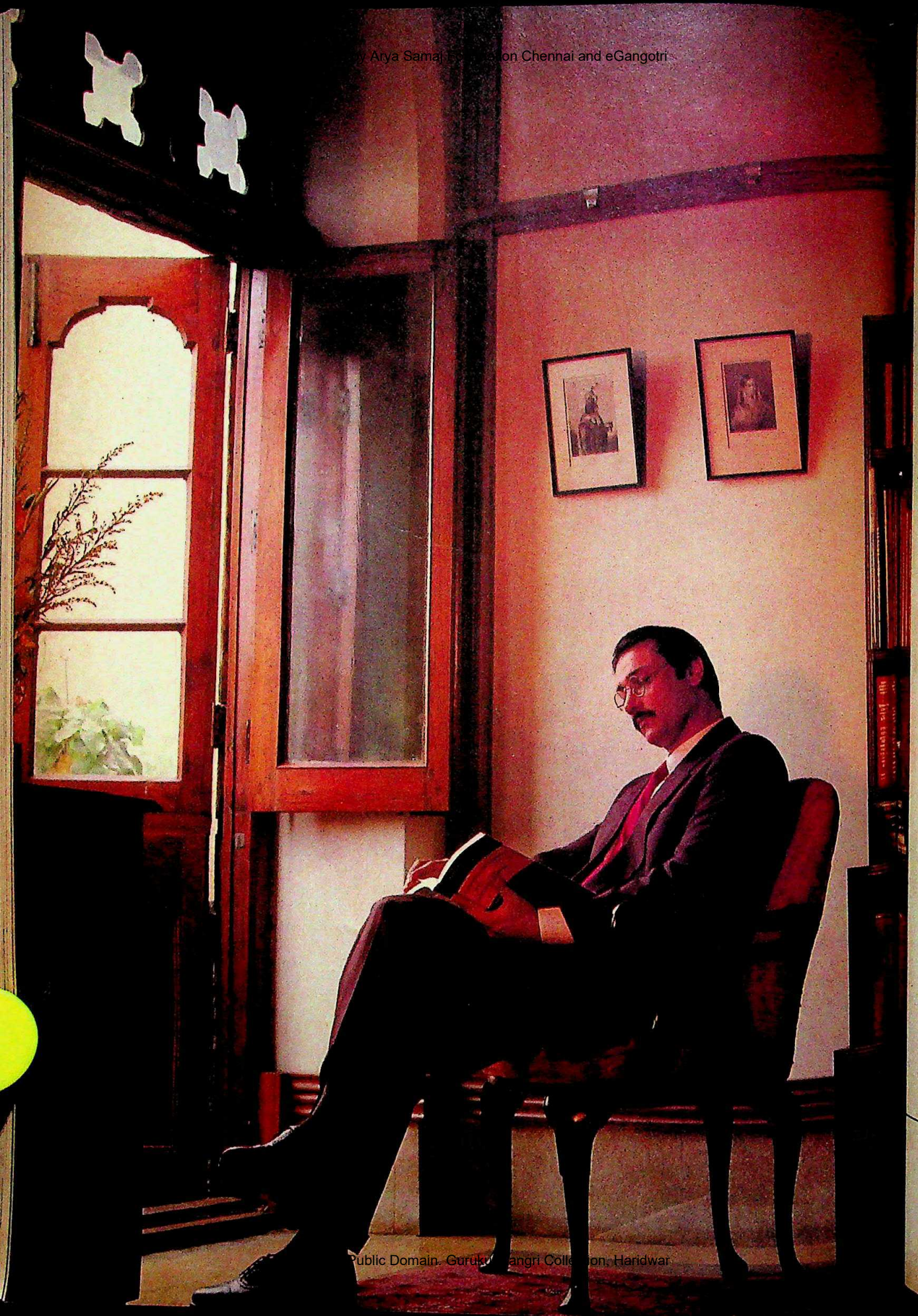

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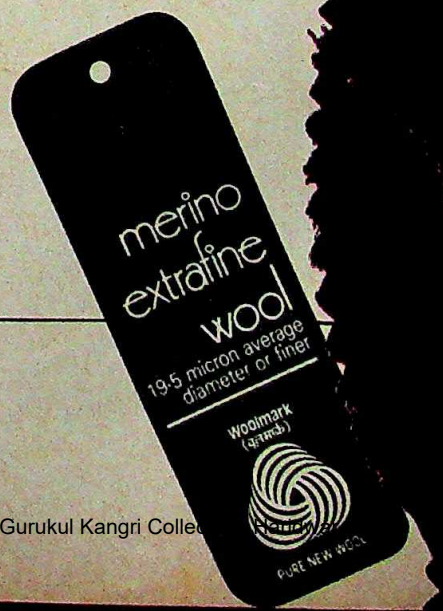
For every changing
whim and fancy ...

A man of principles.

Fabric
Royal Gold
Blend
Super 80's
extra fine
Merino Wool
Season
Autumn, Winter
Occasion
Whenever the intention is
to make headlines

Royal Gold



Raymond's
The Final Word.

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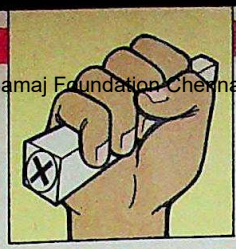

GENERAL ELECTIONS

CLEAR CHOICES

WHAT the country will witness during the next three weeks will be nothing short of a political eruption unmatched anywhere on the globe as the people of the nation exercise their birthright to hold to democratic accountability—to punish or reward—those to whom they loaned their power for the last five years. A mind-boggling 489 million voters, nearly twice the entire population of North America, will parade to thousands upon thousands of makeshift polling booths in an open franchise, once again demonstrating to the world that this wretched, illiterate, strife-torn, sectarian, poverty-bedraggled land that by every notion of conventional wisdom should degenerate into chaos and anarchy, still clings tenaciously to a precept that gives back to the humblest and the unlettered, even if for a fleeting moment, his dignity as he votes. And in a world that is a silent spectator to tanks and jackboots that crush freedom and dissent, India's elections, more than her guns and warplanes, are her most potent demonstration of her innate strength. Her badge of honour.

And at the heart of this maelstrom stands the ragamuffin Indian voter. This question-mark of a man who befuddles the pundits, amazes the pollsters, defeats the doomsayers, and sends academics and social scientists scurrying for new research material with which they try and make sense out of his mind. For illiterate though he may be, he is politically mature, he is wise, and a far cry from being a head of cattle in a multitudinous herd that moos guffishly in support of politically-engineered waves of religious, sectarian and xenophobic emotionalism.

To those who argue that there are never real issues at the grassroots level and that all that counts in elections is the creation of, systematic pandering to, and exploitation of vote banks, the year 1967—when the fourth general election took place—should serve as a ready counterpoint. It bears some striking resemblances to 1989. Prime minister Indira Gandhi—a creature of dynasty, modern of mind, ambitious, politically hobbled by power-brokers within her own party, and challenged by equally influential politicians outside—was struggling to find her political identity. There was widespread government corruption, mismanagement of agricultural policy in a drought year, and a Jan Sangh-led anti-cow slaughter agitation. But the conventional wisdom was that these "issues" were only of interest to an incestuous urban elite and would count for nothing in the minds of the still semi-mature and illiterate grassroots voter who would choose the comfort of his vote bank.

BHAWAN SINGH

The biggest surprise of the simultaneous national-state elections of 1967 was when, with uncanny precision, the Indian voter dumped not only politicians identified with corruption but also important state agriculture ministers belonging to the ruling party and reduced Mrs Gandhi's lead to a slim majority in Parliament.

Mrs Gandhi learned a crucial lesson from this. The people of this country did respond to issues. If she were to escape the captivity of the Syndicate, she would have to abandon the comfortable vote bank political patronage scenario and appeal over the heads of party bosses along ideological and issue-based lines in order to gain effective political purchase on the Indian voter. Even if it meant splitting the party. So in 1971, in the face of the Syndicate's betrayal, she was able to deflect the *Indira hatao* line with an effective and catchy slogan: *Yeh kahten hain Indira hatao, main kahti hoon*

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garibi hatao (they say remove Indira, I say remove poverty). It worked. And she later consolidated her position by nationalising banks and abolishing privy purses. She was able to create herself and her party in her own image—that of a leader with a will, with decisive ability.

And her opponents, minus unity, minus issues, continued on the defensive until 1977 when they were able to defeat her, not on the strengths of patronage and vote banks, but again, on an issue—punish Mrs Gandhi for diluting democracy during the Emergency. Then came 1980, another solid, issue-based year where the anti-Janata wave knew no caste or religious barriers. The people voted intelligently to throw out the rascals who had betrayed their confidence and electoral mandate. And Mrs Gandhi's slogan—"a government that works"—a brilliant dig at the Janata government that obviously didn't work, as well as her making the rising cost of onions a campaign issue, served to help the Janata-ites clown themselves into political oblivion. They were left with no defence.

According to current political punditry, there were no real issues in the 1984 election, that a pro-Hindu, anti-Sikh backlash brought Rajiv Gandhi into power. But has anybody really made a micro-analysis of this hypothesis? After all, 1984, by all counts, was supposed to be a bad year for Mrs Gandhi. Power-brokers had re-emerged, the nation was drifting into corruption and Mrs Gandhi's era of decisive leadership was, in a sense, coming to an end. And the Opposition, splintered though it was, stood to gain a dramatic advantage. The post-assassination pro-Congress wave, a sympathy wave, as it were, was also a vote for stability, perhaps half of it. The other half, by many interpretations, was indeed an anti-Congress vote which, ironically, also went to Rajiv because he appeared to represent action, change and cleanliness. And in a country in which politician had become a dirty word, a vote for a non-politician. By that count, the 1984 vote was also a public outcry against national drift and decay.

No matter what the campaign rhetoric and ad campaigns, unless they match reality on the ground, the Indian voter has repeatedly cast his lot against corruption, against the mismanagement of his mandate, for stability, and does not hesitate to take a chance on a new face.

In 1984 he had turned to a new face, to Rajiv Gandhi for deliverance. The electorate votes with discernment and wisdom but once it puts a leader into power, instead of treating him as the mere mortal he was when they gave him his vote, it begins treating him like a demi-god, a redeemer, a saviour. And when the leader cannot perform miracles, those who elected him can be ruthlessly unforgiving and the demi-god comes crashing from the pedestal.

INDIA moves ever so slowly. Even giants like Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi found themselves reduced in stature before the Indian public at the end of their days, unable to reach their destined tryst. So it is no surprise that Rajiv, who bounced upon the political stage promising speedy movement out of the grime and lethargy that had enveloped the nation, found himself as he entered 1989, a defensive and shaky counter-puncher reeling under hammer-blows of accusations of a breach of faith, of promises unhonoured.

And a government on the defensive extracts a heavy price from the nation because, for one thing, it is deflected from its promise of providing an effective government. For another, in the process of defending itself, it uses every institution on which democracy is based—the bureaucracy, judiciary, Parliament, the press—and compromises their integrity. And a compromised system is unable to ensure that governments are made accountable within the system itself. Without accountability, governments rise above the law of the land. And democracy perishes.

Surely, this is the critical issue of the 1989 election. Will the highest court of this land—the bar of the Indian electorate—now judge Rajiv's Government as one that sought to escape accountability while it reigned? Will it pass a harsh verdict? Will the Indian voter ignore economic issues and concentrate instead, on issues of constitutional relevance? In 1977, even though the economy had done well during the Emergency, the voter chose to deal with a politically fundamental issue—whether the perpetrators of authoritarianism deserved to remain in office. In 1989, does he believe that vital national institutions which are supposed to serve as checks on government wrongdoing have been debased for political gain? Will he then vote to restore the majesty of these self-corrective mechanisms so essential to maintaining the equilibrium of the democracy of which he is the beneficiary? Will the voter also pass a verdict on the contents of four years of government-controlled radio and television broadcasts and stun the world by showing that the illiterate Indian peasant does not take kindly to being bombarded by puffery and bafflegab from the official media?

Or will he vote for stability? Even with the Opposition coming together, the voter has not forgotten his betrayal by the Janata government. And could he not just as well dismiss the new-found opposition unity as nothing more than a temporary truce between power-grabbing opportunists whose track record on communalism and corruption is as murky as that of the ruling party? Is he wise enough to vote in a strong opposition—as an opposition—and watch its performance in Parliament for the next five years before deciding that it is fit to be given a chance as a ruling party in the future? In that case, will the voter give Rajiv—notwithstanding his sullied record—a second chance, restore him to his office but not to his pedestal?

That question mark of a man can pull any surprise. Don't take him for granted.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR

Illiterate the voter may be, but he is politically mature; no head of cattle in a teeming herd that moos guffishly in support of politically-engineered waves of religious and xenophobic emotionalism.

Will this voter then judge Rajiv's Government as one that sought to escape accountability? Or will it vote for stability by dismissing the Opposition unity as only a temporary truce between opportunists?

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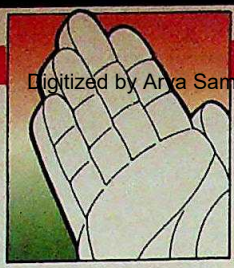

THE CONGRESS(I)

PLAYING IT SAFE

The list of candidates shows that Rajiv Gandhi has realised he cannot win on his own but needs regional bosses.

THE more things appeared to be changing, the more they remained the same. This was the political message flashing last fortnight following the Government's dramatic announcement of an early general election. Until days before, the nation's political circuits had been abuzz with talk—some of it coming from the prime minister's closest circles—that Rajiv's decision to call an early poll was a calculated gamble in which he would wipe his party clean of troublesome regional bosses and tainted politicians, and go before the electorate with fresh faces in an attempt to recreate the dynamism of 1984. That he would even take the risk of splitting the party to salvage his image and independence.

Suddenly, as suddenly as the poll had been announced, nothing happened.

The gambler seemed to have folded his cards. The Mr Clean of 1984 had acquired a new title in 1989—Mr Safe. The return of people like Gundu Rao, Pranab Mukherji, Chenna Reddy, and R.K. Dhawan to the fold indicated a return of wheeler-dealers and musclemen to the ruling party, and the beginning of the end of the reformist process Rajiv had initiated in the winter of 1984. Even a cursory glance at the Congress(I) candidate list of 1989 reinforces the impression that the party—the system—has closed in on its president. Rajiv has to go along in order to get along.

The new message is status quo and compromise. To pre-empt major dissent on election eve, the party has renominated over 80 per cent of its sitting MPs. This, despite the fact that the intelligence agencies he had so keenly depended on for information on candidates, sent depressing reports on the chances of dozens of MPs. Selection criteria established by the party such as performance in Parliament during the past five years were thrown to the winds. And the party did not even dare touch some of its known dissidents. For example, former general secretary Nawal Kishore Sharma, openly critical of the party leadership, was renominated. Also, Rajiv went back on his word that most of the AICC(I) general secretaries and PCC(I) presidents would not contest. Many have been included in the fray. A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury in West Bengal, Virendra Patil in Karnataka, Murli Deora in Bombay, and K.N. Singh in Uttar Pradesh. Perhaps what most grotesquely symbolises this phenomenon is the nomination of Abdul Rahman Antulay from Bombay and Kali Pandey from Bihar, both with besmirched reputation and dubious track records.

Key groups which were targeted by the Congress(I) as new vote banks—youth, for whom a constitutional amendment was passed lowering the voting age, and women—found themselves out in the cold. In the first list of 206 names, there were only 17 women, far short of Rajiv's promised 30 per cent representation. The youth did no better. And many Youth Congress(I) activists, who had camped in the capital for days urging party bosses for tickets, left bitterly disappointed.

The obvious advantage of the emerging electoral scenario within the ruling party has gone to what is known as the Syndicate—the regional party bosses whose power Rajiv had been trying to diminish. They have demonstrated that the party's prospects—and the future of the prime minister—depend on them.

Since the Hindi heartland will decide the fate of the ruler in South Block, the role likely to be played by Chief Minister N.D. Tiwari, Bihar PCC(I) chief Jagannath Mishra, former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Arjun Singh, and Haryana's former chief minister Bansi Lal has been the subject of intense debate. Each has his power base, and a record of serious differences with Rajiv over the way they have been shunted around by the Centre.

And now, on election eve, they were extracting their pound of flesh. Tiwari, for instance. In Nainital, a constituency he had nurtured for years, he wanted to field a close relative. And when the high command expressed its intention of putting up Defence Minister K.C. Pant from there, Tiwari put his foot down.

Pant, who said that the prime minister himself had earlier given him the go-ahead to contest from Nainital, hit back. On October 30, the last date for filing nominations, he called a press conference where, in a strongly worded statement, he criticised the "revival of state party bossism". Pant read out two letters he had written to Rajiv. One said: "You may have had to change your mind under pressure, but I am unable to accept the presumption behind the change. My father abolished zamindari from Uttar Pradesh. I am not

An avalanche of

Rajiv Gandhi

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SHARAD SAXENA

Rajiv Gandhi posters for the elections: salvaging an image

that the Centre has always played a divide-and-rule game between him and Amarsinh Chaudhary.

As much as to catch the Opposition on the wrong foot, the device of calling an early election was aimed at letting the Syndicate bosses know that they ought to fall in line for Rajiv had his own organisation of bureaucrats and campaign managers who could run an election. Dissidents were being told, in effect, that if they left the party unhappy over not getting a ticket, they would not be accommodated by the Opposition which too would be scrambling for tickets.

That this strategy was nixed largely because of a groundswell of resentment from the party bosses is now obvious. Rajiv has perhaps realised that he cannot win on his own wave. But at least he tried, and in deadly earnest.

The real compulsions were somewhat different. For the last three months, Congress(I) leaders have been speculating about an early poll. The Bofors scandal, they believed, had been all but buried during the monsoon session of Parliament. Rajiv's advisers believed that the party could win big once they were able to coin an effective slogan. This, eventually, emerged with the Panchayati Raj bill: "Power to the People." The bill could have been introduced in the last session of Parliament. But it was delayed to time it closely with the elections. That an early election was in the air was being discussed as early as in June. Its timing and logistics were a closely held secret, discussed only within an inner circle—Dhawan, Satish Sharma, Arun Nanda, Mani Shankar Aiyar, and Sam Pitroda.

But by mid-October, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) received three lists totalling about 4,000 prospective candidates. The lists were prepared after careful surveys by S.S. Ahluwalia, an MP from Bihar, who worked directly under the prime minister; by the IB, also reporting directly

> The new message is status quo. To pre-empt major dissent on election eve, the party has renominated 80 per cent of its sitting MPs.

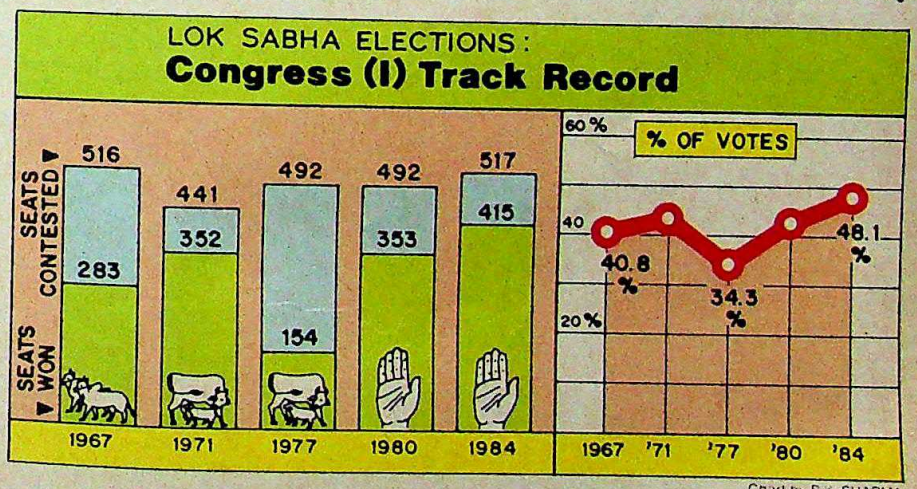

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

about to accept anybody's political zamindari in my home district." Moreover, he complained, when he tried to contact Rajiv, he was told that the prime minister's telephone extension was out of order. Pant refused to accept the party diktat to contest from Unnao or New Delhi. Still, he insisted he was a staunch partyman. Asked whether his position in the Cabinet was not untenable, he replied: "I will have to decide about that."

The north's not the only problem area. In the west, Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar and former Gujarat chief minister Madhavsinh Solanki can hardly be accused of conducting a lovefest with the Centre. Pawar, the high command has always feared, would abandon the party if it is defeated. Solanki, though professing to be a loyalist, has complained

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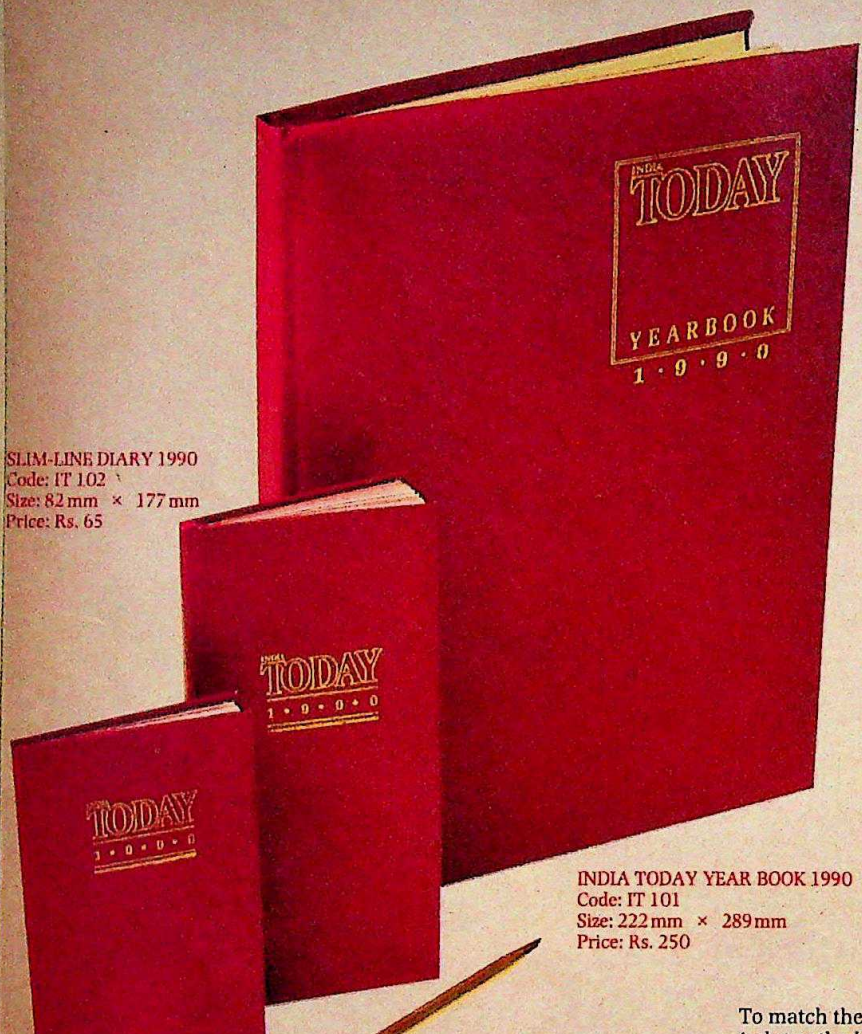

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to him; and by state intelligence units, whose lists were forwarded to Delhi by the chief ministers. Completing the final exercise would have taken at least a month. Speculation was that the election announcement would be made sometime in November, that the party would use whatever fate befell the Panchayati Raj bill as its key electoral plank: if it was passed, the slogan would be "We gave power to the people;" and if defeated, "The Opposition has deprived you of the power we were trying to give you."

But what hastened the pace and threw all timing out of gear was Bofors. Following the new expose in *The Hindu*, the scandal was beginning to stick like a magnet. Rajiv's aides argued that another expose, if it came close to linking him with the scandal, could give the party bosses and other disgruntled elements an excuse to defect. Besides, it would give more ammunition to the Opposition which was planning a march of all elected opposition leaders to Rashtrapati Bhawan to seek permission to launch a criminal case against the prime minister.

The PMO also received information that some senior MPs from the north had raised the slogan: *Rajiv Hatao, Congress Bachao*. It was no rebellion, but a hint of trouble ahead. One signal was Kamlapati Tripathi's attending a public meeting organised by Janata Dal leader Chandra Shekhar in Bihar to oppose the criminalisation of politics. Then there was a meeting in Delhi where he shared a platform with V.P. Singh.

A quick poll, Rajiv was told would:

▸ Reduce the period during which another Bofors revelation could do any

POLL ANNOUNCEMENT

Bid to Surprise

THE drama preceding the announcement of the early poll began unfolding on October 16. It was business as usual at 7, Race Course Road, the fortress-like office-residence of the prime minister. Rajiv Gandhi had just returned from his southern tour and was about to retire for the day. But before joining his family members, he had a word with his trusted aide, V. George who then directed all 58 members of the Union Council of Ministers to attend a meeting the next morning at 9 a.m.

SHARAD SAXENA

The party list being finalised

At dawn, Rajiv summoned all five members of the powerful Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs to a meeting at 8.30 a.m. Three of them—Home Minister Buta Singh, Defence Minister K.C. Pant and Foreign Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao—came promptly. The other two, Finance Minister S.B. Chavan and Human Resource Development Minister P. Shiv Shanker, were out of the country. The meeting, held in the teak-panelled small drawing-room of the Prime Minister's Office, was to the point. Rajiv announced: "I am ready for the polls." None questioned his decision. For the next 20 minutes, only the logistics and legal formalities for the poll were to be discussed so that the formal communication could be sent to the President and the Election Commission.

Then, the three ministers led by Rajiv walked into the next meeting hall where over 40 ministers had arrived. Said Rajiv: "We have decided to go to the polls." Again, if his ministers had any doubts, they did not display them. One of them, however, did raise the question of how the party could be ready for elections at such short notice. And here's where Rajiv really stunned them. He explained that the advertisement campaign, transport and all other ingredients of an election campaign were ready. The general secretaries would brief MPs on the details.

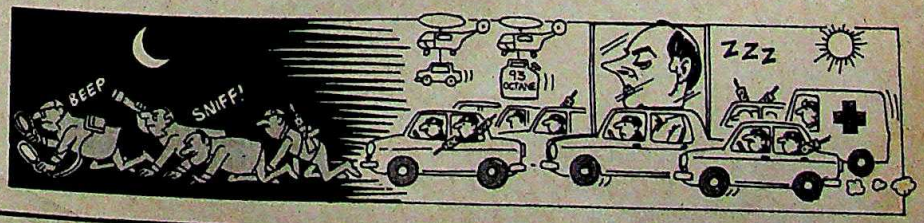
The whole idea was to create the image that the prime minister was a man in control, capable of making detailed logistical arrangements with the help of a few aides, without the party's involvement. He seemed to be saying, symbolically, that he did not need the party but rather that the party needed him, and that contrary to the impression that he had been bogged down by scandal and indecision, he was still a man of action. He had created, what it turns out to be, a tactical illusion to tell not only his party but the country, that he is still a leader.

POLL TALK

FORTRESS RAJIV

☐ Rajiv seems to be well fortified, if not politically, at least physically for this year's elections. A Special Protection Group (SPG) is sending Intelligence Bureau (IB) and SPG officers to places on the prime minister's campaign schedule for security liaison with state officials. Other SPG groups will organise anti-sabotage checks of aircraft, helicopters, VVIP cars, helipads and rostrums. In view of worsening threat, perceptions about security in high risk areas have been altered. Even the motorcade plan in the Blue Book—which provides guidelines for the protection of the prime minister—has been reworked.

The revised plan provides for a warning car, pilot car and media vehicle; prime minister's bullet proof car; escort I (SPG) and escort II (state police); spare car and ambulance; car for the governor/chief minister; car for state administration; party cars; and tail car (which prevents any vehicle from overtaking the motorcade).



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damage. And even if a new expose did appear, it could easily be dismissed as a political stunt during election time.

▶ Defectors from the party over the Bofors issue could then be painted as disgruntled Congressmen who had quit not over the scandal but because they could not get tickets.

▶ Give even less time for the still-feuding opposition to get its act together.

▶ Give him the upper hand in choosing candidates as well as allow him to dictate terms to regional bosses by not holding simultaneous elections. In other words, Rajiv would reward or punish his chief ministers in future assembly elections by judging how loyally they had worked for candidates of his choice during the parliamentary elections.

But no sooner did Rajiv make the dramatic announcement than things began to go haywire and he was forced to abandon his plan of dropping at least 30 per cent of the sitting candidates. He was able to change only about 50 names—the lowest in the Congress(I)'s recent history and a firm indication of the prime minister's helplessness. In the 1984 Lok Sabha elections and the subsequent as-

BACKROOM BOYS

Holding the Reins

THE mammoth Congress(I) election campaign has various layers and facets. If members of the party's parliamentary board had gruelling, non-stop sessions to select candidates, a small group, comprising mostly Rajiv Gandhi's personal friends, was busy directing the battle from behind the curtain last fortnight. Known in Congress(I) circles as 'backroom boys' they took control of the party's propaganda and logistics.

Visvajit Prithviraj Singh, a Doon School alumnus and Rajya Sabha member from Bombay, has taken charge as the central election coordinator, helping to despatch publicity material to the states. Soon after the elections were announced catching everyone by surprise, Singh was in action: he started contacting the PCC(I)s about their requirements.

Others roped in for the election effort are Arun Nanda, managing director of Rediffusion advertising agency, and Doon School friend Romi Chopra. Both have been entrusted with the task of giving a sharp edge to party publicity. They have decided the tone and theme of the Congress(I) poll propaganda. Mani Shankar Aiyer, also from Doon School, who resigned from the IFS immediately before the announcement of the polls, has chalked out the prime minister's tour programme for electioneering. And Surinderjit Singh Ahluwalia, a young Rajya Sabha member from Bihar, is in charge of the control room set up at the party headquarters for communicating with the state units. Thirty hotlines have been installed at a daily rent of Rs 4,500 each. He has also worked out the campaign programme of different Central ministers and state leaders. PCC(I)s are in constant touch, writing to him about the leaders they want for electioneering in their respective states. The odd senior person in this group is the reliable veteran Congress(I) Treasurer, Sitaram Kesari, who is in charge of distributing funds.

The resources at the disposal of these backroom managers are enormous. According to the Opposition, the central Congress leadership will be incurring an expense of over Rs 200 crore on the Parliamentary elections alone. This will be spent on a massive newspaper blitz and video war, 4,000 vehicles, over 1 crore multi-coloured posters, 1.5 lakh banners, and over 5,000 hoardings. Aerial support in the form of four planes and four helicopters has also been requisitioned.

The most crucial aspect, however, is being handled by the more earthy duo of R.K. Dhawan and Satish Sharma, perhaps suggesting the limitations of Rajiv's Doon School acquaintances. They are engaged in manoeuvres to entice an odd legislator from the Opposition camp or in engineering moves to embarrass political opponents. The latest entrant into this circle is Anand Sharma, former Youth Congress(I) president who, after being in the wilderness for long, has recently taken over as party spokesman. Briefed by Aiyer and some friendly newspaper editors, he turns up at the party headquarters for the evening press conference. Known for his vociferousness, Sharma has already acquired a distinction of his own. He has been dubbed as the "K.K. Tewary of the AICC(I)".

Prime Minister
RAJIV GANDHI

Resources
SITARAM KESARI

Co-ordinator
VISVAJIT SINGH

Political
R.K. DHAWAN SATISH SHARMA

Control Room
SURINDERJIT

Press
ANAND SHARMA

Travel
MANI SHANKAR

Publicity
ARUN NANDA

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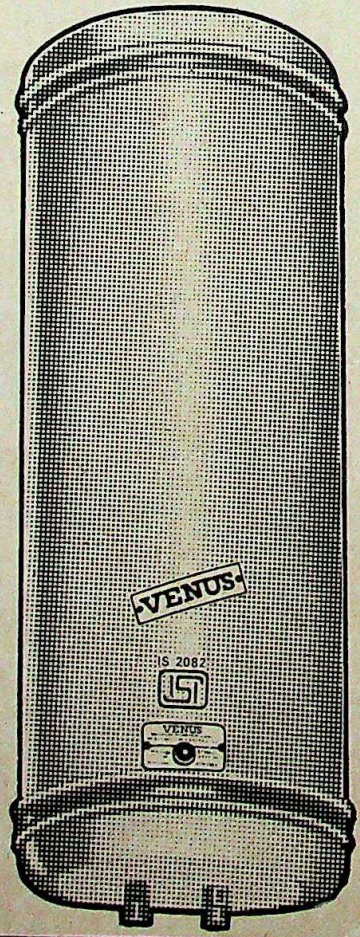

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sembly elections, the prime minister and his advisers were able to change nearly 40 per cent. And throughout his tenure he wanted to change more. It was because he had tried to make changes at the state level that massive dissidence had broken out in Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, turning into a near-revolt against the high command last year. The prime minister's fire-fighters—Buta Singh, M.L. Fotedar, and the late Bir Bahadur Singh—were unable to take control and Dhawan was brought in to cope with the problem.

Last fortnight, Rajiv found himself confronted with a similar problem. When he sprang his surprise on the state leaders by announcing the Lok Sabha election, he was expecting total support in the selection of candidates and conduct of the elections. This was an obviously naive assumption. Arjun Singh, Pawar, Solanki and Tiwari began immediately to lobby for simultaneous elections. They surmised that in a Lok Sabha poll, with a limited number of seats, their candidates would be left out thereby eroding their base of support. But if state elections were held simultaneously, the number of seats available to accommodate supporters would increase.

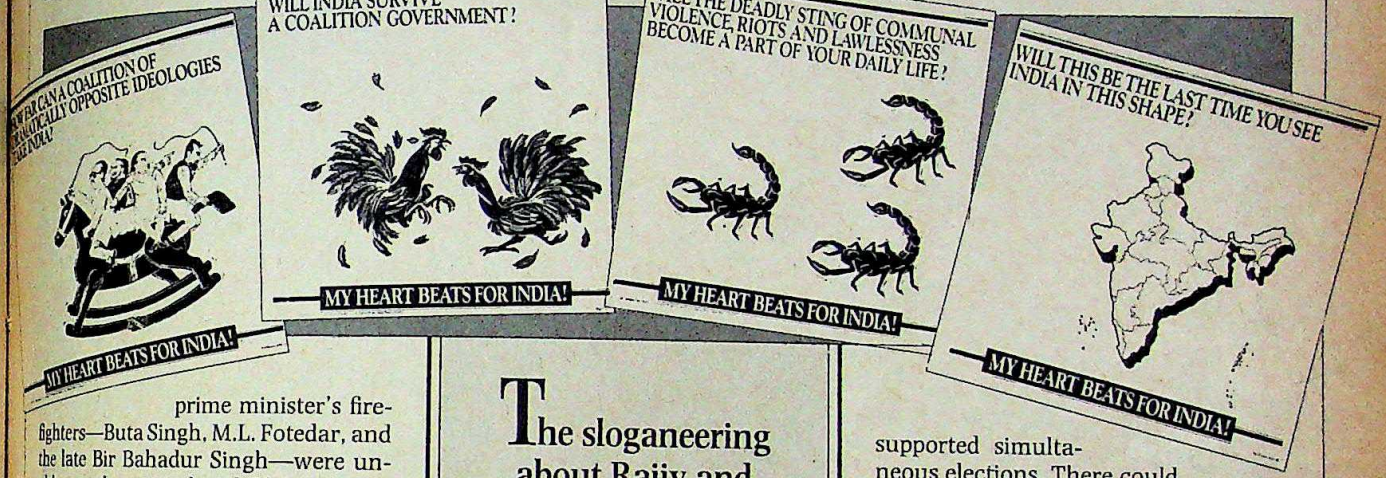
The strategy they chose was simple, but effective: refuse to recommend any candidates for the Lok Sabha election to the high command, and subsequently direct the fury of those denied nomination or re-nomination against the prime minister.

The first shot was fired by N.D. Tiwari who, in a late evening meeting with the prime minister, argued that a simultaneous poll would prove fatal for the Opposition because all its important leaders would be tied down to their states and not be available for national campaigning. He also argued that such a poll would bring out local issues thereby deflecting attention from issues such as Bofors. Tiwari flew back to Lucknow and summoned his cabinet to endorse his decision before the prime minister had a rethink. And he announced to the press that the state Government and not the Congress(I) party had chosen to call a simultaneous poll. He told INDIA TODAY: "We are all set to win but even if there was any chance of the Opposition winning, I would have still supported simultaneous elections. There could be nothing more democratic than this."

As uncertainty grew by the minute, the capital was deluged with ticket seekers and the followers of factional bosses. Delhi's state bhawans began to burst at their seams as Congressmen from all over the country arrived in their thousands demanding to see their state and Central leaders. For the first time in three years even the residence of Kamalapati Tripathi, which had worn a deserted look since his exclusion from active politics, wore a look of siege as crowds surged into the most private recesses of his home. Milling with the crowd was former Congress(I) general secretary N.C. Chaturvedi. "This is a very critical election for us," he whispered. "It's going to be a very tough fight."

In the west, like most others, Sharad

THE PRINT MEDIA CAMPAIGN

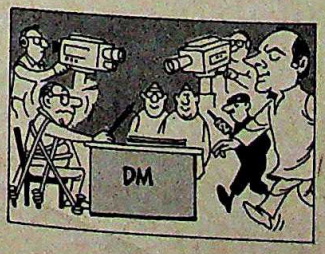


The sloganeering about Rajiv and his party being the saviours of the nation seems to have a tired appeal.

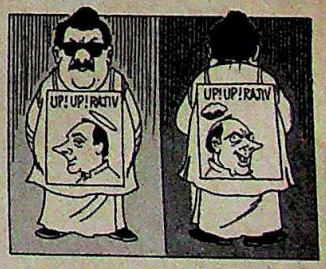
POLL TALK

STANDING ORDER

☐ When Rajiv went to file his nomination papers this year, the District Magistrate of Sultanpur, Subhash Kumar did not stand up to shake hands with the prime minister. Kumar was asked by Union Law Minister H.R. Bharadwaj not to repeat District Magistrate Pulok Chatterji's act of obeisance in 1984 when he stood up to receive Rajiv. Misuse of official machinery is the last allegation that the Congress(I) wants to hear.



LIP SLIP



☐ Once known as the loudest mouth south of the Vindhyas, Gundu Rao still has not lost his verbal flamboyance. Soon after his re-entry into the Congress(I), newsmen swooped on him with questions, designed to embarrass the man who had doubted Rajiv's credentials not so long ago. But Rao, hardly one to be caught napping, retorted immediately: "I was a supporter of Rajiv Gandhi when he had a clean image and I am a supporter when he does not have a clean image." Oops!

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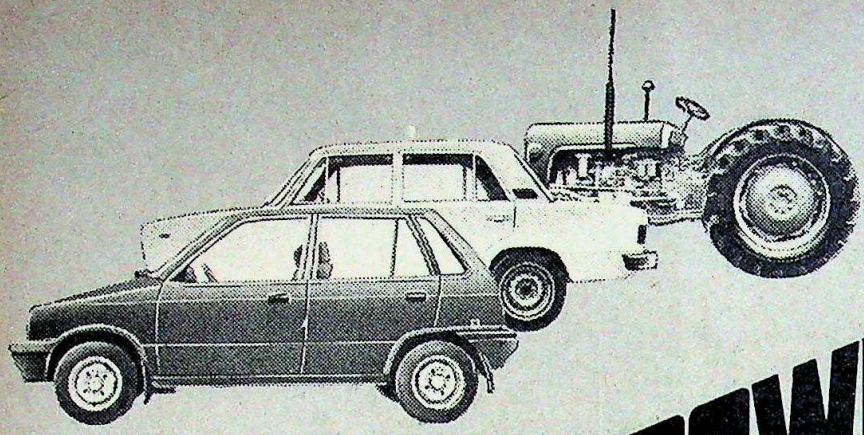

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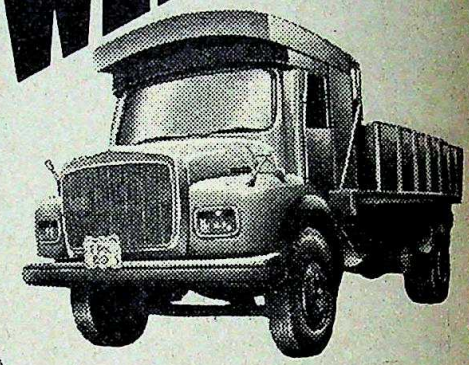

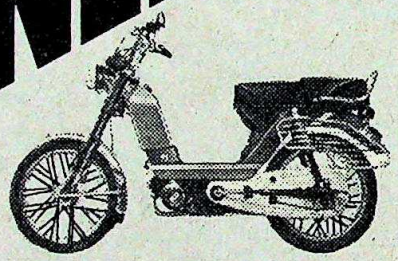

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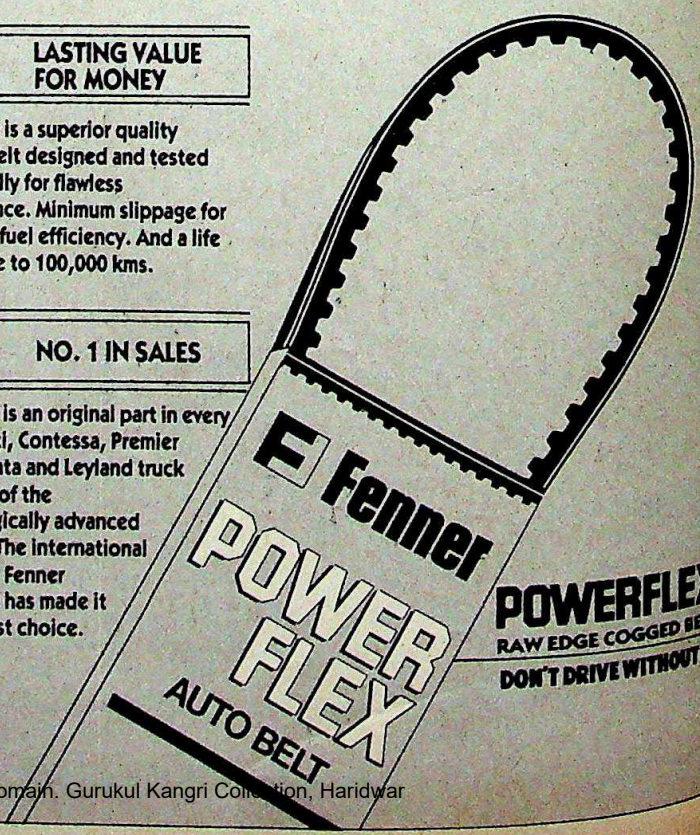

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DON'T DRIVE WITHOUT IT

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Pawar was taken aback even as he was attending an early assembly session in Nagpur. He immediately tried to rush to Delhi. A Maharashtra Congress(I) MLA said: "Even the opposition leaders forgot about the business at hand, as many of us began worrying about how to get to Delhi double fast." In Gujarat, Chief Minister, Amarsinh Chaudhary admitted: "We were caught napping by the poll announcement. But, we are prepared for it." Said a UPCC(I) office-bearer: "If there were only Lok Sabha elections, the Opposition would have gone all out and exhausted all its financial resources to clinch the issue. They would have had to start from scratch for the Vidhan Sabha elections which would have helped us. Now they can blindly go all out as there is no need to hold back anything now."

But most chief ministers, fearing an erosion of their support, were adamant. Pawar and Virbhadra Singh of Himachal Pradesh began publicly supporting simultaneous polling. A day later, Shiv Charan Mathur of Rajasthan joined them. Seeing the tide building up, senior party bosses like Arjun Singh in Madhya Pradesh, Madhavsinh Solanki in Gujarat and Jagannath Mishra in Bihar also began demanding a simultaneous poll. This was unprecedented: senior Congressmen were publicly making a demand on a sensitive political issue without consulting Rajiv.

FOR the next four days there was total confusion in the party with all the chief ministers waiting for a final signal from Race Course Road where the parliamentary boards were meeting in strict secrecy for every state. Attended by the prime minister, the relevant chief minister and PCC(I) chief along with five MPs, the boards continued with the motion of taking up various lists and discussing possible candidates. The time that this process took—for example it took eight hours to clear 50 seats from Bihar and Delhi—showed that the prime minister's initial strategy had got bogged down.

The upshot is a Mexican stand-off between Rajiv and the party bosses. Rajiv's strategy has simply come unstuck. He ruled out simultaneous polls except in Uttar Pradesh, but accepted the renomination of just about every sitting candidate. This satisfied the party bosses—for more than 100 sitting MPs renominated owe allegiance to Tiwari, Arjun Singh, Pawar, Mishra and Solanki—but did not give Rajiv the clean slate of candidates he had in mind. As one high command official quipped: "The prime minister has virtually signed on the dotted line."

So the main plank of Rajiv and his party during this election is that they are the keepers of the nation's unity and integrity. Says party General Secretary K.N. Singh: "This general election will be a referendum on the issues of power to the people, stability and secularism."

However hardhitting Rajiv sounds in blasting the Opposition for defeating the Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika bills, the Bofors pay-off charges are not going to disappear. Rajiv's think-tank has prepared a counter though it is far from convincing. Whenever there has been a prima facie case of corruption against any Congress(I) member, the party has never hesitated to take action, the prime minister is going to argue in about 300 public rallies. The instances of Antulay, Nilangekar and Arjun Singh will be cited. The press exposes on Bofors instead of pinning down any commission recipients have only made wild allegations, he is likely to say. This position, party strategists say, compares well with the fact that Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao has continued in office after having been indicted by the high court.

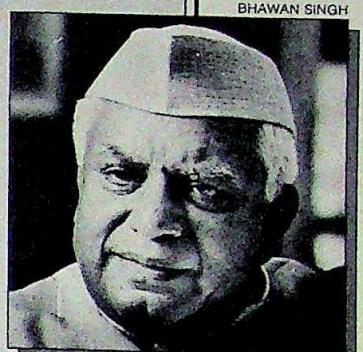
To a great extent the electoral battle this time will be fought on the video screen. When Delhi's Jain Studio refused to make films for the party (Dr J.K. Jain, owner of the studio is himself a likely BJP candidate) the party commissioned a couple of advertising agencies to make campaign films. The 10-odd films that the Congress(I) will use highlight the 'achievements' of Rajiv's five-year rule and "juxtapose the sense of enervation in the country at the time he took up the reins and the mood of confidence now", says a party general secretary. This general election is going to witness the most expensive campaign ever. Under a huge shamiana on the AICC(I) premises stand piled neatly packed multicoloured paper posters in different languages and banners. According to an informed source in the party, each Lok Sabha constituency will be given about one lakh posters and about 15,000 banners. The professional touch is evident in the language and rhyme in which the message is being conveyed. One banner reads: "*Sthayee sarkar, majboot hai desh/ Sabhi ki pragati hamara udesh.*" (Stable government, strong nation/ every-

THE SYNDICATE

NAMAS BHOJANI

SHARAD PAWAR

BHAWAN SINGH



N.D. TIWARI

BHAWAN SINGH

JAGANNATH MISHRA

BHAWAN SINGH

ARJUN SINGH

The regional party bosses, each with a political base, have demonstrated that they can be ignored only at the party's peril.

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body's prosperity, our mission.)

A pamphlet containing Congress(I) slogans in Amethi testifies to the talents of a small-time versifier. Now being circulated in Delhi, it puts on its cover this slogan: *"Rajiv Gandhi ka elan/ Sabko roti, sabko kapda, sabke liye makaan."* (Rajiv Gandhi has pledged food, clothing and housing for all.) The Delhi-based Graffic Arts has designed the posters for the party. Every candidate will get six to seven vehicles—one for every assembly segment. For sorting out logistics problems, the party headquarters has been connected with each PCC(I) headquarters by hotline.

Pant at the press conference: open disgruntlement

ULTIMATELY, for all the rhetoric and razzle-dazzle, the unfolding campaign promises little that is new. What is new is what's on the other side of the fence—a level of opposition unity that few believed would be achieved. The sloganeering about Rajiv and his party being the saviours of a nation about to fall apart now seem to have a tired appeal. The advertisement campaign running in the print media appears needlessly hysterical. Will India survive a coalition government—demands one. The visual has two fighting cocks tearing into each other. Asks another: How far can a coalition of dramatically opposed ideologies take India? The visual has a rocking horse being driven in four different directions by V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, Hegde, and N.T. Rama Rao. Carrying the canard to its lowest is the fact that Rama Rao is sketched to look like a virtual eunuch.

Notwithstanding the surging crowds of politicos in the capital, the mood in Congress(I) circles is far from upbeat. The crowds display anxiety and uncertainty, not the wild enthusiasm of 1984. A prominent Youth Congress(I) leader explains: "The prospect of facing one-on-one contests for the first time in their lives is admittedly frightening."

> One victim of the new assertiveness of state bosses was Pant, who was denied a ticket from Nainital as N.D. Tiwari opposed it.

According to the latest Intelligence Bureau estimates, the Congress(I) will win less than 180 seats in case of one-to-one contests. It was a bleak prospect and a senior civil servant was trying to ensure that the prime minister was not shown the latest estimate. AICC observers however predict the party will win over 350 seats. An advertising agency's estimate is about 300.

Whatever the final tally, for the present, the selection of candidates suggests that the party—notwithstanding the new slogans—has come full circle and decided to lean once more on its old-fashioned vote banks—the Brahmins, Harijans and Muslims. A situation similar to the one that prevailed before Mrs Gandhi's assassination, and doubly so because most of those renominated in 1989 are the ones selected in 1984 by party bosses like Arjun Singh, Gundu Rao, Jagannath Mishra, and N.D. Tiwari.

All this puts an onerous burden on Rajiv. Because of the continuing mutual distrust between him and the party bosses, he will have to campaign as never before if he is to carry his party with him. This time there are no special circumstances like the assassination of his mother. Rajiv is alone. On his own. He is the party's only national level campaigner and will be stretched beyond endurance to show that he is a winner. This is his last chance to emerge from the womb of the Congress(I) and break into a new world of Congress(R).

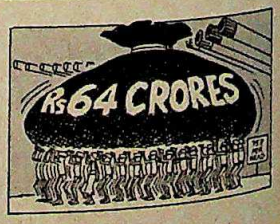
—PRABHU CHAWLA with BHASKAR ROY and bureau reports

POLL TALK

KRISHNA DARSHAN

☐ **While Rajiv looms large on Doordarshan's national network, Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Krishna Kumar is busy hogging time on Trivandrum Doordarshan. With every function that Kumar attends finding tele-focus, it is increasingly being labelled Krishna Darshan. No wonder that Kumar is being swamped with invitations.**

JEST IN DEFENCE



☐ **Among the ticket-seekers outside the AICC(I) offices, an innovative joke is doing the rounds these days. It all started when an especially creative sycophant came up with an unusual defence of the Bofors pay-offs in a bid to impress. He flattered to deceive: "Even if Rajiv took the Rs 64-crore, so what. It works out to less than 75 paise per Indian for five years service. Is that too much to ask?" If the mystery of the smoking gun is ever solved—what was said in jest may well become Rajiv's only face-saving defence.**

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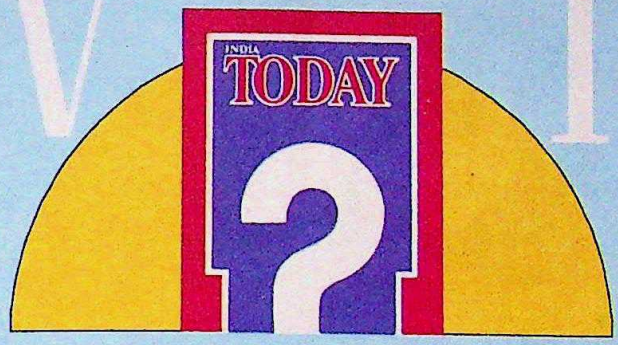
YOUR VERDICT



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3. Entries can only be sent on the official Entry Form contained in copies of INDIA TODAY English and Hindi dated Nov. 15, 1989. If you have any difficulty in obtaining the official Entry Form you may write in to Distribution Manager, Living Media India Ltd, 316, Competent House, F-14, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001 enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope.
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5. There is no Entry Fee. An individual can send in only one Entry Form.
6. Entries must be duly completed and mailed to YOUR VERDICT/आपका फ़ैसला, INDIA TODAY, PO BOX 29, NEW DELHI-110001 to reach on or before 20th Nov. 1989. Entries sent by Registered Post or hand delivered will not be accepted.
7. Entries shall be evaluated on a computer by means of a software package specially designed by Tata Consultancy Services. Evaluation of answers would be based on absolute percentage variance from the correct answer (which will be determined by the actual outcome of the Lok Sabha Elections) aggregated over all parts of all questions. All parts carry equal weight.
8. Incase two or more entries aggregate the same score the final winner shall be chosen on the basis of the tie-breaker which will be reviewed by a panel of judges whose decision will be final and binding.
9. Employees (and their relatives) of Living Media India Ltd; its Divisions, associate Companies, Ogilvy & Mather Pvt. Ltd, Milestones Advertising Consultants Pvt. Ltd; and Tata Consultancy Services are not eligible for participation in the contest.
10. Living Media India Ltd. is not responsible for postal delays, transit losses or mutilation of the Entry Form in transit. Living Media India Ltd. shall not entertain any correspondence except the official Entry Form in this regard.
11. The results of the contest will be published in INDIA TODAY by end December 1989/early January 1990. Winners will be informed separately by post.
12. All entries will be treated in confidence & will become the property of Living Media India Ltd. LMI & TCS shall endeavour to maintain the utmost confidentiality in regard to the Entry Forms & their processing on the computer. However LMI shall not be responsible for any claim of whatsoever nature in this regard.
13. Living Media India Ltd. reserves the right to terminate or extend the contest at any time, or to accept or reject any or all entries at their absolute discretion without assigning any reason.

Entry Form on the other side of this insert

36 B

that Kumar attends

Rajiv's only face-saving defence.

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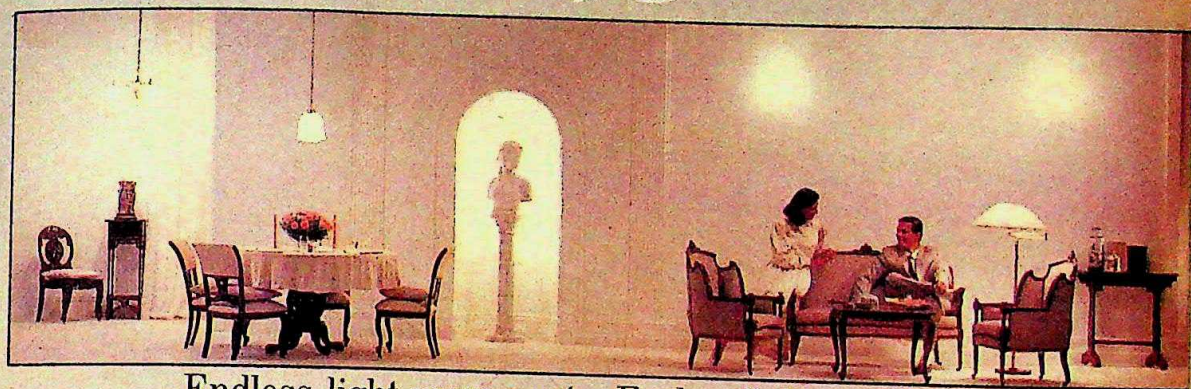
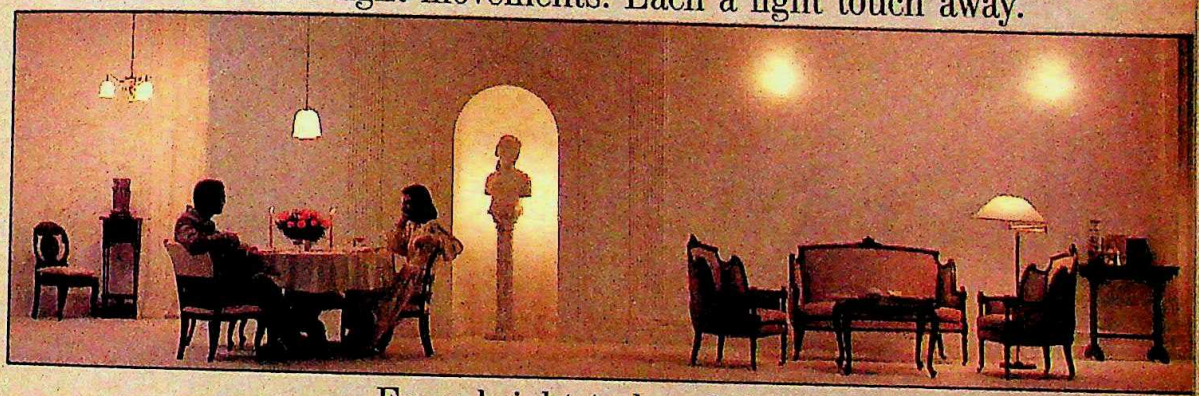
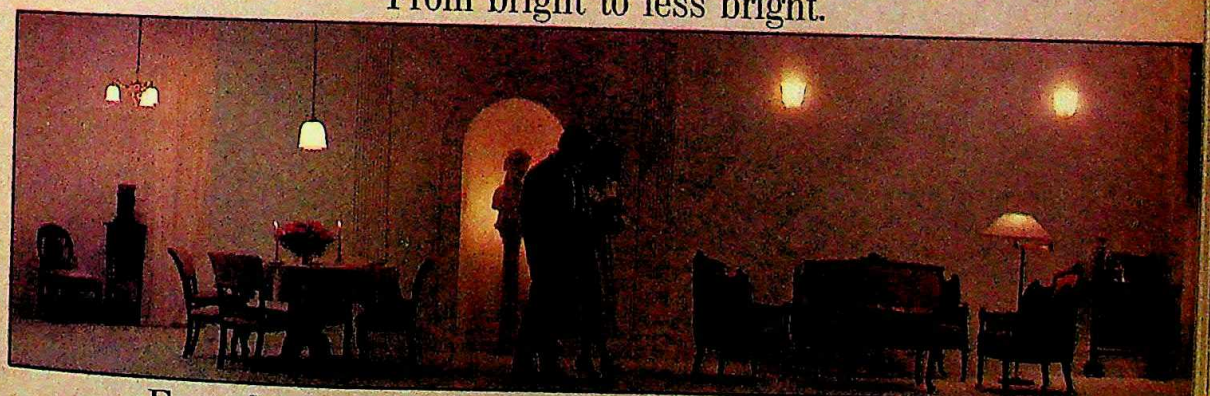
Mood Light Sonata by Dimmermatique



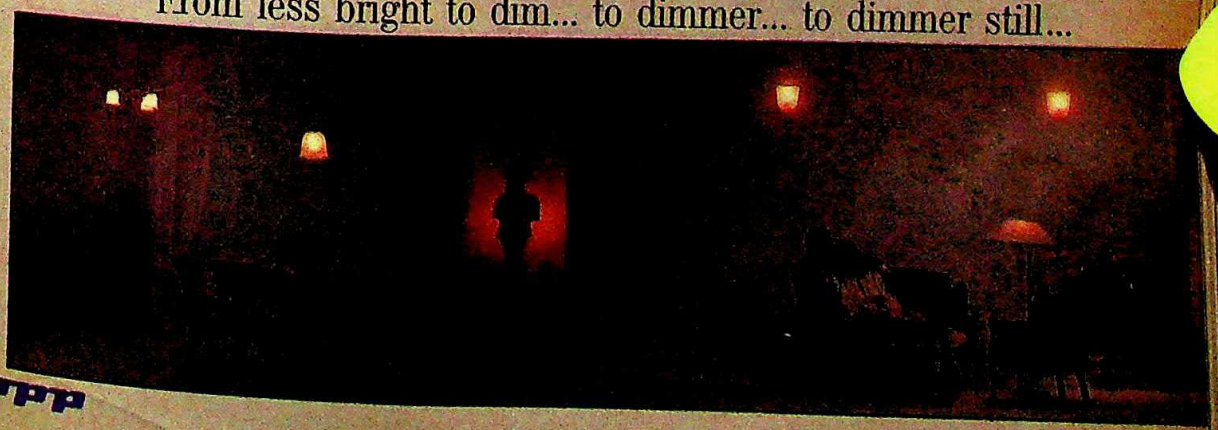
Endless light movements. Each a light touch away.

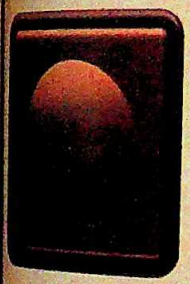


From bright to less bright.



From less bright to dim... to dimmer... to dimmer still...





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THE OPPOSITION COCKY CONFIDENCE

With one-to-one contests against the Congress(I) probable in most constituencies, the Opposition is in an upbeat mood.

THE atmosphere, the faces, the vibes, were all familiar. So was the challenge. There was V.P. Singh, his chin resting in his palm, Hamlet-like. There was Devi Lal, ebullient as ever, reading out the riot act to anyone who began to sound even a bit troublesome. There was N.T. Rama Rao, hastily pulled out of the friendlier environs of the *Brahmarishi Viswamitra* sets, in the thick of an electoral battle that would decide his own future in his state besides that of the National Front which he leads. There was also M. Karunanidhi, draped in a maroon shawl, dark glasses et al, barely speaking or betraying emotion. Assam's Prafulla Kumar Mahanta smiled occasionally. On many occasions in the past, the leaders of these disparate opposition groups had gathered in similar huddles when faced with an electoral challenge from the Congress(I), only to flounder in disunity.

This time there was a difference, a new compulsion and a new mood. Suddenly, the gladiators of the Opposition—who routinely spend as much time fighting one another as they do fighting the Congress(I)—had been propelled into purposeful action. Rising above the cacophony of familiar claims and ambitions was a voice of reason they would ignore at their peril: this election was the Opposition's best chance in more than two decades except for 1977 after the Emergency. On top of it all, there was a realisation that if the Opposition failed to get its act together, it would never be forgiven by the people. "This is a historic opportunity to throw off the yoke of a corrupt and insensitive government," thundered an upbeat V.P. Singh as he set off to file his nomination from the Fatehpur constituency in Uttar Pradesh defying a bomb scare that delayed his Vayudoot flight by five hours. Now there wasn't even the talk of reviving the 'spirit of 1977'. "We have left that part far, far behind us," said V.P. Singh.

Despite many hurdles, near fist-fights, rounds of abuses and walk-outs, opposition leaders finally managed to forge some kind of workable unity on a national level. Unmindful of the fact that the 1977 bonhomie was nowhere in evidence, they agreed to give Rajiv a straight fight in at least 80 per cent of the constituencies. In fact, late last fortnight, indications were that the number of straight contests would cross the 450-mark.

That was a far cry from the shell-shocked state the Opposition had been in just a few days earlier as the prime minister's sudden announcement of elections sent it scurrying to battle stations. There was a feeling of having been caught unawares. A Janata Dal general secretary likened the predicament to getting caught naked in a dark room. "Everyone is fumbling for his clothes," he said.

But the Opposition was swift to regain its bearings. As the Congress(I) took its first measured, well-rehearsed step towards the polls, the Opposition juggernaut too began to creak and roll, albeit slowly. Seat adjustment talks with the BJP and left parties got underway. V.P. Singh asked Arun Nehru to play a familiar role—handle internal security—though in this case his brief was to keep peace and extinguish bushfires which the leaders know might erupt at any time within the Opposition.

And as he went about his assigned task, the pieces began to rapidly fall into place in a manner that surprised even the most strident opposition supporters. The first moves were made as the Janata Dal and the BJP made overtures to each other, setting in motion the process of seat adjustments. The top leadership of the BJP had made up its mind early enough that going to the polls without such an understanding would be self-destructive. The motions that the party went through in the initial stages of adjustment talks were more in the nature of thrust-and-parry, hoping to squeeze as much out of the Janata Dal as possible till the inevitable settlement was reached. The BJP knew that a washout in this election would mean its end as an electoral entity.

V.P. Singh filing nomination pape

THE SPIRIT

The election announcement has inspired the Opposition to a rare display of unity.

THE same thrust-and-parry tactics characterised the manoeuvres of the different factional leaders within the Janata Dal who, smelling victory, were disinclined to rock the boat at least till the elections. Within the party a truce of sorts had been achieved with Devi Lal

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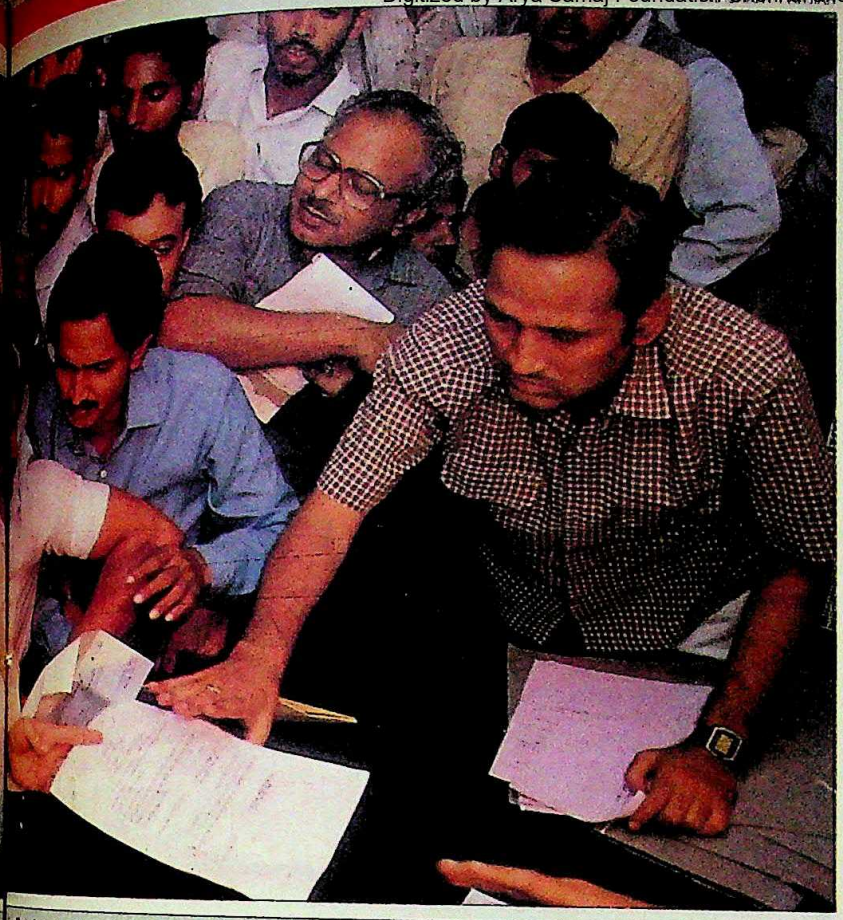

Fatehpur after delay drama: upbeat mood

Chandra Shekhar and Arun Nehru, the Opposition's Kautilya who functioned as proxy for V.P. Singh, emerging as the core group deciding on the division of seats and nominations. Nehru worked as a fixer as well as a buffer. Armed with reams of data on the candidates and previous elections he put his past experience in distributing tickets to good use. At the same time he subtly managed to balance the various groups, making sure that no one got too many seats and that V.P. Singh's interests were not compromised.

The very momentum of the changing political situation and the swift response needed forced the formation of some kind of a command structure. Singh and Nehru met each night to take stock of the day. State leaders like Devi Lal and Hegde were given virtually a free hand in their states. In addition Biju Patnaik was given charge of Orissa, Chimanbhai Patel of Gujarat and V.C. Shukla of Madhya Pradesh. Bihar was left to Devi Lal loyalists Lallu Prasad Yadav and Sharad Yadav. Nehru handled Uttar Pradesh directly along with Ajit Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav.

And while the attempts at accommodation within the party were kept up, the Janata Dal threesome continued to hold talks with the BJP's L.K. Advani and Atal Behari Vajpayee on the contentious but crucial question of seat adjustment. A workable truce with the BJP was of crucial importance as the party could take away 10-12 per cent of the opposition vote even if it was incapable of winning many seats on its own.

After the Janata Dal Minority Cell had torn apart the BJP's stand on the Ram Janmabhoomi, V.P. Singh had promised to take a tough line against the party. But once the bugle for the electoral battle was sounded, all such pious intentions were overtaken by compulsions of realpolitik.

The BJP, on its part, bent over backwards to accommodate the Janata Dal despite the annoyance of its workers among whom an incipient revolt was already evident. A bunch of angry BJP workers accosted Vajpayee at a party meeting and demanded a tough stand on Ayodhya, besides the restoration of the party's orthodox Hindu agenda. Retorted Vajpayee: "We have done it twice. Once in 1952, and we got two seats. Then in 1984 and again we got two seats. If you are so keen to get two seats this time as well, let's go ahead." Vajpayee's rebuff summed up the now-or-never mood among the top opposition leadership.

Once the BJP and the Janata Dal arrived at a settlement, the left too agreed to relent on the question of sharing seats with a party having truck with the BJP. And finally, wonder of wonders, Syed Shahabuddin, the *bete noire* of the BJP as well as large sections of the National Front leadership, agreed to contest on the Janata Dal symbol.

"The mood today," beamed the articulate Janata Dal parliamentarian and official spokesman, S. Jaipal Reddy, "is more upbeat than it was following the announcement of the elections in 1977."

A hiccup, however, came on the crucial question of the poll symbol which was yet to be sorted out. And it was here that the Janata Dal, the main component of the National Front, suffered a setback when the breakaway Janata Party—headed by Indubhai Patel and Subramanian Swamy—staked its claim to the original

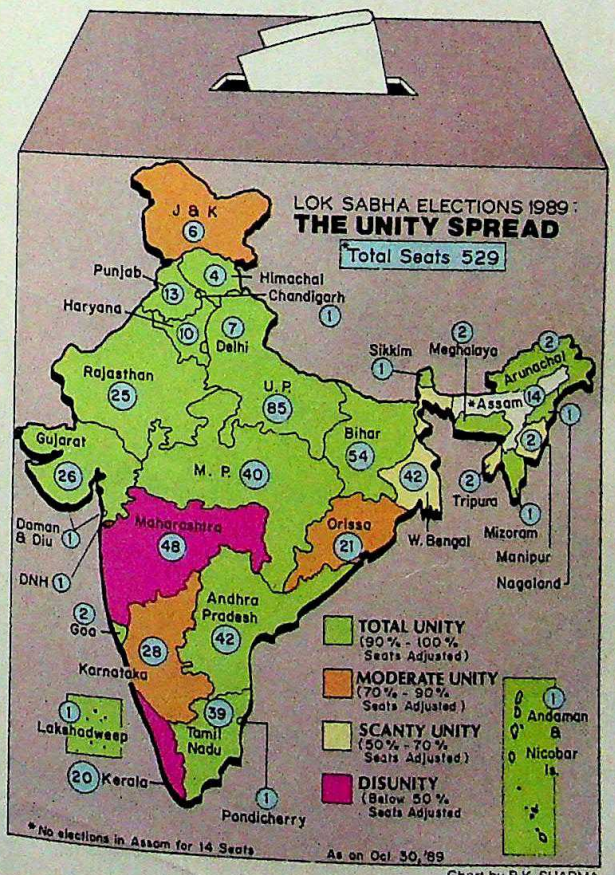

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

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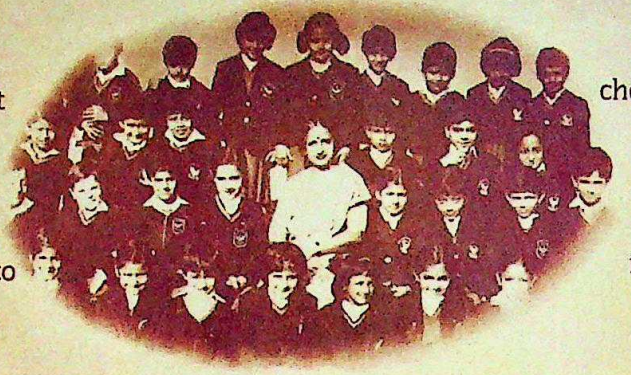

THE ORIGINAL DRESS CIRCLE!

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chakra-haldhar symbol. Chief Election Commissioner R.V.S. Peri Sastri froze the symbol much to the Janata Dal's discomfiture.

That was obviously Swamy's objective and he claimed jubilantly that he had won the case thanks to "my wife's legal brains and my gab". But Janata Dal leaders soon recovered from the disappointment. They even managed to find a silver lining in the adverse ruling. Their new symbol, the wheel, they said, symbolises change. Some even drew parallels with Lord Krishna's *sudarshan chakra*.

Once the symbol issue was sorted out to its satisfaction, the Janata Dal got down to brasstacks, deciding the list of candidates and working out a joint strategy with other parties to convert their main advantages into a victorious campaign. And as the count-down to the day of reckoning continued, the broad contours of the Opposition gameplan were visible.

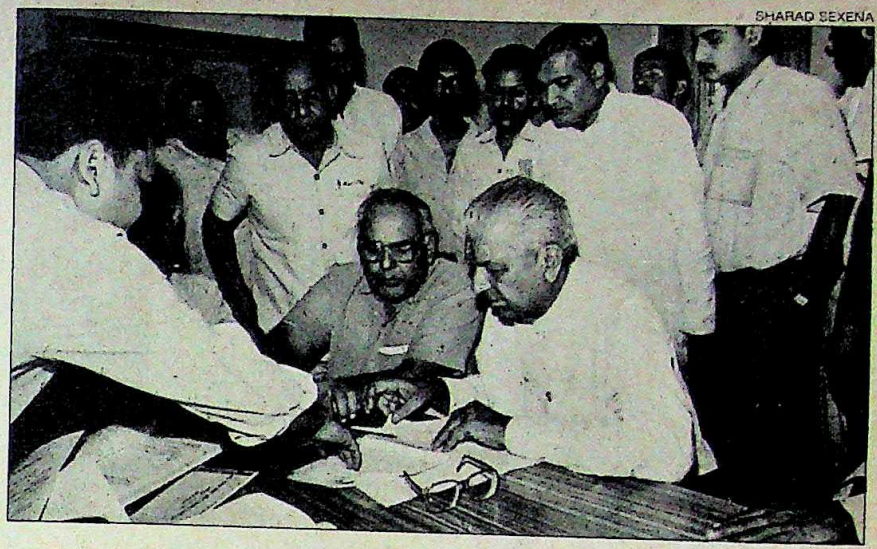
THE STRATEGY

Convince people that Rajiv personifies Congress(I)'s corruption and incompetence.

THE key point of the Opposition strategy was: Don't lose sight of your target, Rajiv Gandhi. The National Front plans to keep its campaign pointed at Rajiv as its leaders believe that with their diverse interests, they cannot afford to let the campaign derail on local issues or the esoterica of manifestos. Simultaneous polls in the assemblies increase the possibility of peripheral issues leading to internal discord.

The spearhead of the Opposition offensive is thus the campaign against Rajiv's 'record of corruption'. There is widespread anticipation in opposition circles that some more revelations on the Bofors deal will come out before the elections, strengthening their case. It is no surprise that the most catchy Opposition slogans deal with corruption and Bofors: *"Rajiv bhai, Rajiv bhai, tope dalalee kisne khayee"* (Brother Rajiv, please tell us who swallowed the commission in the gun deal). There is another, a particularly vicious one, already sweeping eastern Uttar Pradesh based on *mangal*

SHARAD SEXENA



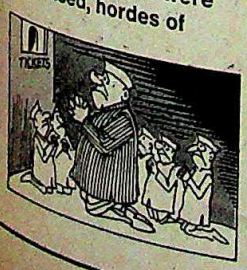
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Devi Lal; (below) BJP leaders at meeting: strategic alliance

POLL TALK

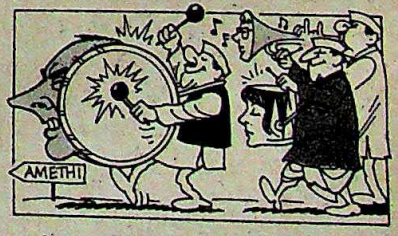
MINISTERS' FATE

☐ Soon after simultaneous polls were announced, hordes of ticket aspirants began chasing ministers. The seekers were in for a surprise when a harried Uttar Pradesh minister frankly admitted: "First, let me ensure that I will be getting a ticket then I will start working for your tickets." Most others continued to accept applications—embarrassed to say that their own political futures were also a question mark.



AMETHI MUSIC

☐ The slogan-seekers of Amethi began with: *"Amethi ka dankaa, bitia Priyanka."* And then they coined: *"Amethi ka bigul, beta Rahul."* Since *dankaa* means 'drum' and bigul translates to 'bandpipe', a journalist commented: "They are hell bent on turning the Rajiv family into a band." Added a political scribe: *"Ye Rajiv ka* band *bajaayenge"* (These guys are going to blow Rajiv's chances).



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bhawan amangalhari, the signature line of the popular teleserial *Ramayan*: "*Mangal bhawan amangalhari, desh ka maal gaya sasuraree.*" (The country's wealth has gone to the parents-in-law).

The other facet of the same strategy is the fielding of relatively clean candidates against Congress(I) stalwarts who face corruption charges. Examples: Rajmohan Gandhi against Rajiv and former bureaucrat Kirpa Ram Punia against Buta Singh.

Corruption, government incompetence, price rise, Punjab and Sri Lanka—the Opposition's electoral quiver is chock-a-block with venomous arrows to shoot at the Congress(I)'s sensitive underbelly—the prime minister. Even on communalism, the National Front will try to go on the offensive, accusing the Rajiv Gandhi Government of deliberately fomenting trouble to foul the atmosphere and then reap electoral benefits. The Janata Dal's surprise adjustment with Syed Shahabuddin is also expected to win it some Muslim votes.

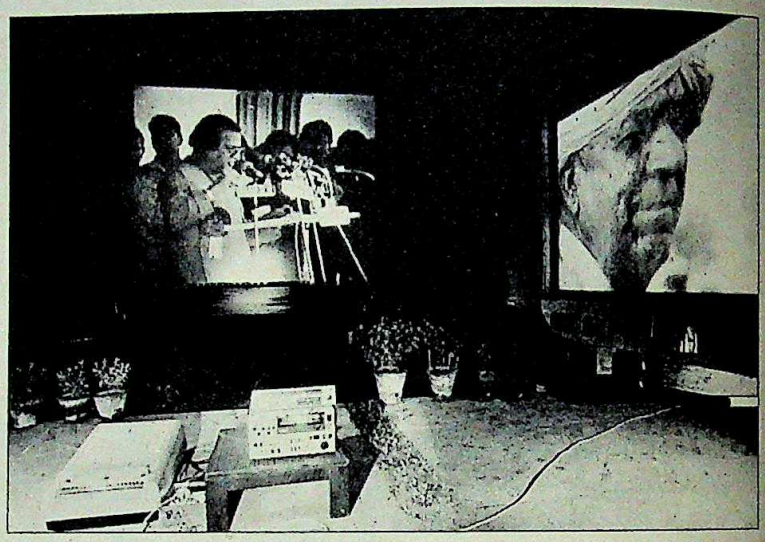
The National Front slogans will be based on three themes: *swadeshi* (native), *swabhimaan* (self-respect),

JAIN STUDIOS

Video Vision

THE bright yellow blossoms lend the landscape a romantic look. A song breaks out in the background, and suddenly the camera zooms in on a lonely figure strolling wistfully through the bed of flowers, plucking one, caressing a few.

No, it isn't Rekha wading through a sea of tulips. It is Haryana strongman Devi Lal, in a field of Haryanavi *sarson* (mustard). And the film is a political video film produced by Jain Studios in New Delhi. It's campaign time and Devi Lal is just one of the galaxy of opposition leaders flocking to the studio to shoot films with themselves in the lead role.



Films on opposition leaders: self-serving exercise

The list comprises at least a score of leaders—Ajit Singh, N.T. Rama Rao, Bal Thackeray to name a few. And the studio is working round the clock, with most staffers sleeping on the premises. Devi Lal, who says he owes much of his earlier success to electronic campaigning, has ordered 10 films, showing him as a farmer, administrator and politician.

The locales and the music vary with the hero. In the film on Devi Lal, the accompanying beat is Haryanavi: the rollicking *ragini*. The words change as he flits from the mustard field, to election meetings and his birthday rally. Sample:

Devi Lal aake jhat
kaadh dega saarey watt
gaad dega latth Haryana khushhal ho.

Roughly, it translates: "The moment Devi Lal comes in, he will straighten all problems, emphatically stick his lathi in the ground and ensure Haryana's prosperity." For the balladeers Devi Lal is a *yugpurush* (epochal leader).

If Devi Lal relishes being called *yugpurush*, his uneasy political partner Ajit Singh prefers the title of *lauhpurush* (iron man). All fancies are catered to by the studios—for a price its owners decline to discuss. Ajit Singh prefers a squat, bushy crop to Devi Lal's mustard. And unlike Devi Lal, he strikes up a vigorous pace, *a la* Mahatma Gandhi at Dandi, followed by a gaggle of supporters, their *gamchas* swaying in the breeze. The lyrics are meant to stir voters' hearts:

Krishakon ke neta Ajit Singh
Patjhad mein phool khilayenge
Toofanon ka ab kya kehna
Woh aayenge aur jayenge

(Ajit Singh, leader of the farmers will make the blossoms bloom in fall, who is daunted by the upheavals, they will come and they will go).

N.T. Rama Rao has no time for rustic folk. His tribute to himself begins with a waltz by young girls to the tune of the Carpenters' *Sing, Sing a Song*. For Shiv Sena's Bal Thackeray, the studio came up with a mosaical combination of a royal Bengal tiger stalking the jungle, a statue of Shivaji and Thackeray's rather benign visage. But the film's message is anything but benign. Canned footage of explosions, mushroom clouds and mutilated bodies recur, interspersed with shots of the Red Fort and flames reaching out menacingly for the tricolour.

Others are waiting in the queue. Last fortnight, Subramanian Swamy was overseeing the editing of the film on him and H.D. Deve Gowda. Chandra Shekhar left the Janata Dal's Parliamentary Board meeting for 40 minutes to face the cameras. But the studio is secretive about a bunch of films it is making for the BJP, to which its owner, Dr J.K. Jain, owes allegiance.

The studio, however, has never been partisan in its approach. Earlier this year, it organised the Congress(I)'s video campaign in Tamil Nadu to the chagrin of BJP diehards. But Jain, who lives the avatars of doctor, magazine (*Surya*) owner and a television studio entrepreneur with aplomb, says: "When I take out a patient's gall bladder I don't care whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim, from the Congress(I) or the BJP. Politics has nothing to do with business or profession." The politicians seem to feel the same. They're rushing to the studio, drawn perhaps by the claim in the studio's own commercial: "Our films attract more people than the Pied Piper of Hamlyn."

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

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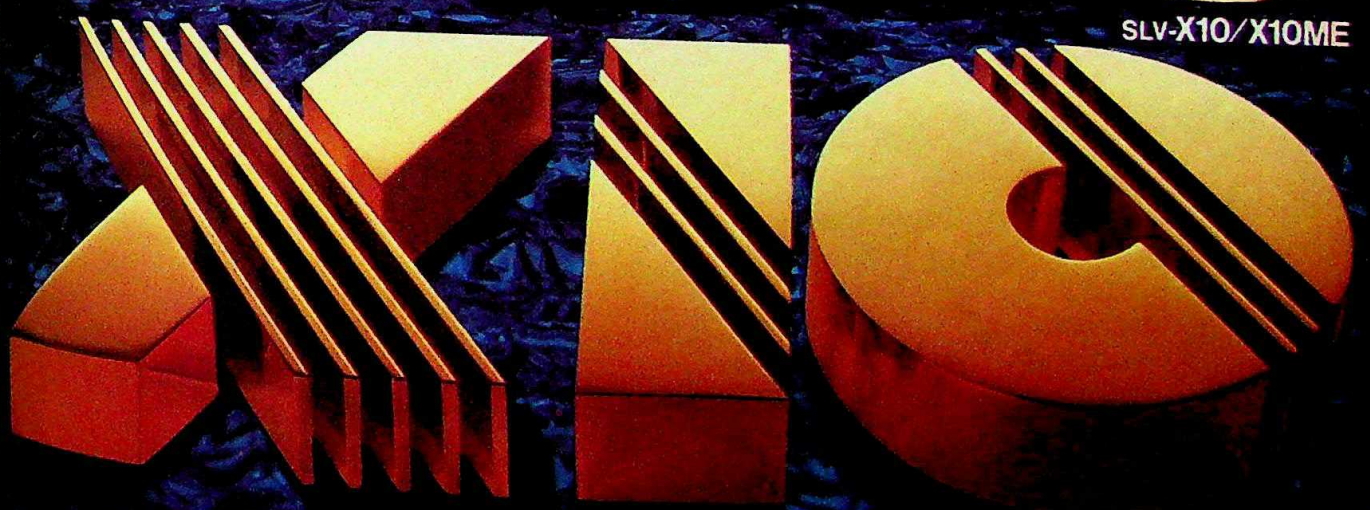

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There's so much to see! **Khajuraho,** with its exquisite temples— as if living, breathing beauty had magically been frozen into stone.

In **Gwalior** the massive fort and battle scarred ramparts brought visions of booming cannons and clashing swords vividly alive.

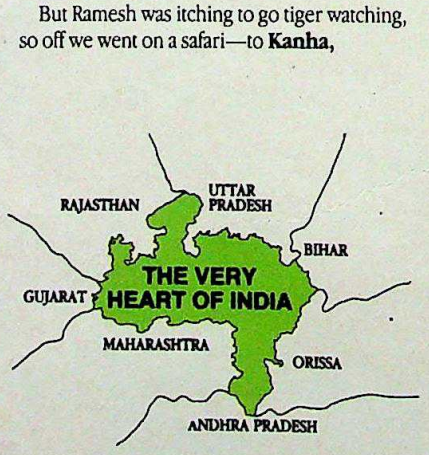
And you must go to **Mandu** — the 'City of Joy.' The beautiful mahals seem to echo with the love songs of Roopmati and Baz Bahadur. We also saw Hoshang Shah's tomb, said to be the inspiration for the Taj.

Oh, d'you remember those Jataka Tales we read as kids? Well, they're all depicted on the gates of the Stupa at **Sanchi,** and it is so quiet that you can almost hear the silence.

And of course, we went boating by moonlight at the **Marble Rocks,** near **Jabalpur.** Pearly cliffs and the gentle splash of oars — wish we'd gone there for our honeymoon!

The biggest surprise was finding a hill station in Madhya Pradesh. **Pachmarhi** is just the place for picnics and lazing.

But Ramesh was itching to go tiger watching, so off we went on a safari—to **Kanha,**



Bandhavgarh and **Shivpuri.** Funnily, our excitement hungry hero chickened out when it came to tiger tracking, so we watched chinkara, nilgai and chital instead.

While we were in **Bhopal** to see the Bharat Bhavan, Mum and Dad surprised us with a call—and promptly packed us off on a pilgrimage to **Ujjain, Omkareshwar** and **Maheshwar.**

What with all that to see and do our vacation just flew past! All too soon it was time to leave and so much we hadn't seen! The medieval city of **Orchha,** and the rock paintings at **Bhimbetka... Amarkantak,** and the legendary **Chitrakoot!**

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MILESTONE SNVP

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swachchta (cleanliness). The stress will be on personalities with a *desi* outlook and a clean public image. Besides, the National Front will attack the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and Panchayati Raj moves. Says Surendra Mohan, chairman of the Janata Dal's manifesto committee: "If a Panchayati Raj plan is accompanied by a 248-page book of instructions, it certainly is not power to the people. We will expose that." How vicious the campaign is going to be is evident from the list of eight slogans officially released by the BJP to its cadres. These include: "*Khoon kharaba vishwasghaat; Rajiv tumhari yeh saugaat*" (Bloodshed and betrayal, this is your gift to the nation, Rajiv).

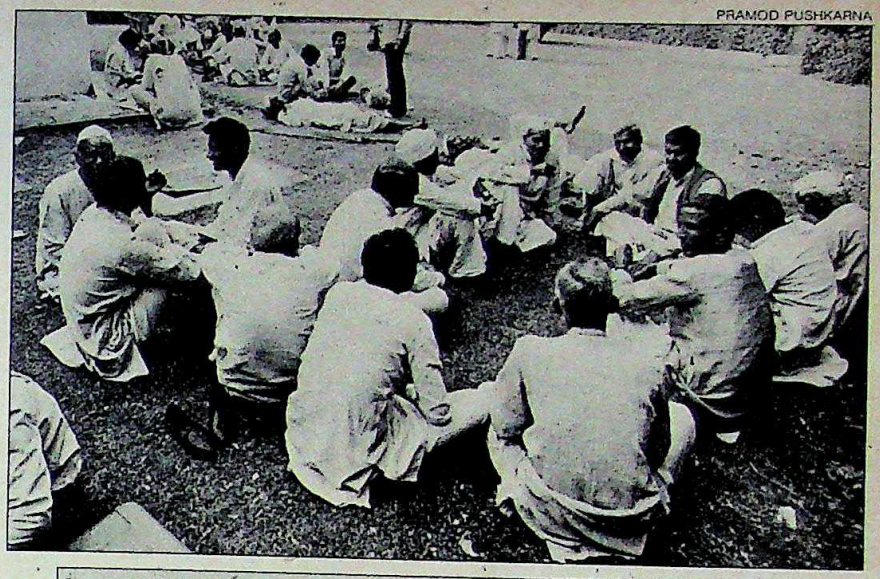
Opposition strategists are also only too aware of their greatest problem: the track record of disunity and confusion that made Mrs Gandhi label them with that immortal expression: *khichdi*. Now the leaders are trying desperately to grow out of that image. Says V.P. Singh: "Since 1984, only the Opposition has given stable state governments like Haryana, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka."

But the diversity of the leadership is also an advantage. Unlike the Congress(I), the Opposition is not dependent on a single star campaigner. It has, in fact, a star or two for each state or region. So while Devi Lal will lead the campaign in Haryana, Ajit Singh will be the spearhead in western Uttar Pradesh. Biju Patnaik is the obvious point-man for Orissa while in Rajasthan, the BJP's Bhairon Singh Shekhawat hardly needs any outside help. Similarly the regional groups and satraps, Karunanidhi, Rama Rao, the Akalis and the left will take care of their respective regions of influence. This will leave V.P. Singh with a relatively flexible campaign schedule.

Contrasted with the Congress(I)'s total dependence on Rajiv this actually gives the Opposition a healthy advantage. It is in this perspective that Rajiv's supposed stratagem in ordering simultaneous elections to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly actually came as a blessing to the Opposition. Rajiv had hoped that it would bog down the opposition campaigners. On the contrary, with seat adjustments working out quite well, it is Rajiv who will be tied down in Uttar Pradesh, a state his party cannot afford to lose. The Opposition would have been in some trouble if elections had been ordered, instead, in Rajasthan or Gujarat where seat adjustments would have been more difficult.

But the Opposition is still on the defensive on the question of its own leadership. There is obvious advantage in projecting a candidate for prime minister. In a loosely structured conglomeration of leaders with conflicting ambitions, however, doing this is well nigh impossible. So National Front Coordinator P. Upendra says: "Why should we project a personality? This is not a presidential election." Argues Ajit Singh somewhat hypocritically: "We are hitting out against dynastic rule."

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Ticket-seekers at Janata Dal office: smelling victory

THE PROBLEMS

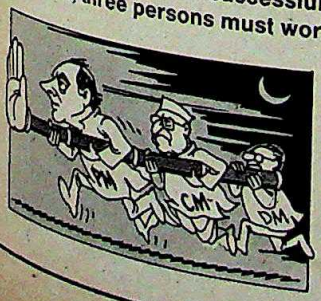
Infighting, mistrust, clash of ambitions and lack of money dog a determined pursuit.

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS apart, in the course of a fortnight of frenetic developments, there were many occasions when opposition leaders conformed to their tradition of behaving like crabs in a basket, each pulling the other down. The tone was set the morning following the poll announcement. At the National Front office, Arif Mohammad Khan lashed out at V.P. Singh for meeting Imam Abdullah Bukhari of Delhi's Jama Masjid and discussing seat adjustments with Shahabuddin. Khan

POLL TALK

WINNING FORMULA

A former Bihar Congress(I) chief minister has spelt out his gameplan: "For successfully fighting the general elections, three persons must work in tandem—the PM, CM and DM (the prime minister, chief minister and district magistrate)." And, he added happily: "All three are working just as they should for the Congress(I)."



TICKET TRAUMA

☐ For almost a week there were no ministers in Bhopal. Most assumed they had made a bee-line to Delhi for tickets. But the Madhya Pradesh ministers were in fact earnestly trying to convince the central leaders they would never win the parliamentary contests if they were nominated. The reason wasn't political eccentricity but the logic of privilege: they didn't want to lose their well-cushioned ministerial jobs in the state.

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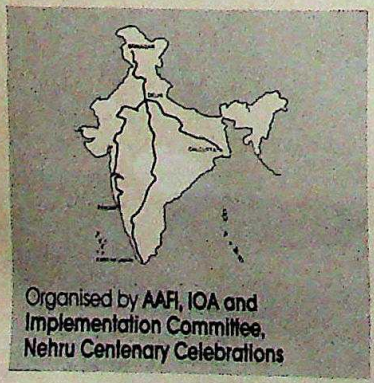
The Torch Relay consists of four torches which will start from four corners of India and pass through various cities and towns enroute to New Delhi. The Relay begins from Kanyakumari on October 2 (Gandhiji's Birth Anniversary), from Panjim on October 19, from Calcutta on October 22 and from Srinagar on October 29. The torches will be carried by eminent athletes.



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On the tracks of friendship: The AT&F Meet

The four torches will meet in New Delhi on November 14, Pandit Nehru's 100th Birth Anniversary, to light the flame of the Asian Track & Field Meet, being held for the first time in India. This is the biggest athletic event in Asia this year. For the sponsors, the ITC Group of Companies, this will be yet another opportunity for promoting sporting excellence.

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burst out: "How dare you run me down before someone who is not even a member of the party. If you want to field him (Bukhari) against me, go ahead and campaign for him as well. I am not in politics because of you." It took party elders some time and effort to calm Khan down, but the damage was done as the argument took place within earshot of several reporters.

Chandra Shekhar was playing his own games, and the alliance with the BJP gave him just the opportunity he needed. "The BJP has become god today and we are responsible for giving them such an aura. Today, we have to go to them with a begging bowl," he complained. And his man, the Janata Dal's Delhi chief, Viresh Pratap Choudhuri, released an unauthorised list of party candidates from city constituencies, including BJP strongholds. But Chandra Shekhar was outsmarted by Devi Lal. Even while indulging in slanging matches with BJP leaders, Devi Lal lobbied vigorously for the alliance. So did Arun Nehru.

Fights routinely broke out each time the Janata Dal Parliamentary Board met. There were arguments on ticket distribution in each state.

During the stormy session on Bihar, Ram Bilas Paswan ended up crying because he was being denied his Hazipur seat. Paswan has his name listed in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for winning an election with the largest margin in 1977. His tears finally carried the day for him. But that is certainly not the way the Janata Dal would have liked to send its men into electoral battle.

Later, when Orissa—one of the first states taken up—was discussed, Biju Patnaik and Chandra Shekhar had a slanging match over the nomination of Rabi Ray for the Kendrapara seat.

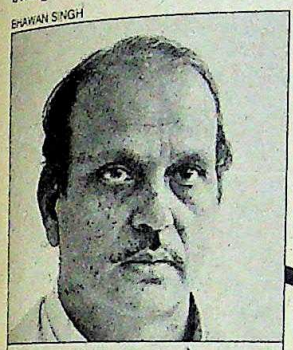
As sparks flew, Chandra Shekhar got angry enough to hold up his chappal and ask Patnaik to shut up or else.... Ray, a Chandra Shekhar loyalist, had staged a walk-out when Patnaik protested his nomination. He was finally brought back, red-faced, into the conference room by Devi Lal. The fights underline a vital fact: the pre-election compulsions may have forced the stalwarts to bury their differences outwardly, but the subterranean tensions remain and could rock the Opposition later.

Lack of resources was yet another problem, and between the tight election schedules and V.P. Singh's stubbornness, very little could be done to solve it. "We have no money. Not to buy air tickets. Not even to buy a typewriter for our office," says Jaipal Reddy. Party leaders said there was no dearth of industrialists wanting to come forward with money. But the least they expected was that V.P. Singh would receive them personally which he absolutely declined to do. "Tell me, which businessman will give us money if V.P. will not even let him come and *salaam* him," asked an exasperated Janata Dal man.

Even the resourceful party Treasurer, Kamal Morarka, threw up his hands. Commenting on the financial health of his party he said: "If you ask me about Gannon-Dunkerley (his company), its financial health is good. My party's political health is quite good." Centralised fund collection is out, he maintained. But he shared V.P. Singh's optimism that small, voluntary donations would bring in enough to finance the election campaign.

It is a curious paradox. While V.P.

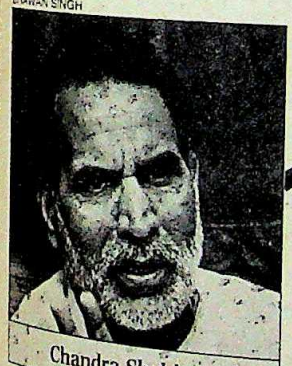
BHAWAN SINGH



V.P. Singh

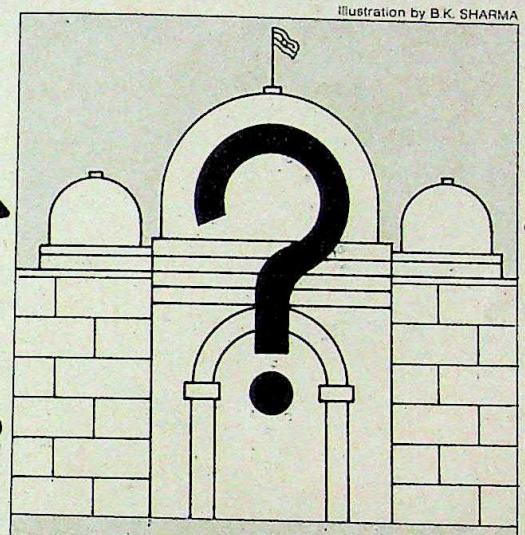
Namboodiripad

BHAWAN SINGH



Chandra Shekhar

Illustration by B.K. SHARMA



If the Opposition wins there could be an intense power struggle between four aspirants with the BJP and the left deciding from the sidelines whom to back.

BHAWAN SINGH

Devi Lal

Advani

N.T. Rama Rao

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Singh and his key men have no money, factional Janata Dal leaders like Devi Lal, Hegde, Chandra Shekhar, Ajit Singh and Arun Nehru hold sizeable kitties from which they dispense funds to their own loyalists.

THE END-GAME

Use V.P. Singh to win, and once home, fight to get a bigger share in the power pie.

MONEY is crucial to the end-game scenario that each one of the players is drawing. Currently their concern is to ensure the victory of as many personal loyalists as possible. The purpose of the bitter lobbying for nominations by Devi Lal, Ajit Singh and Chandra Shekhar was to collect sufficient factional strength to influence the final power struggle. And V.P. Singh knows this. His supporters say that if the faction leaders expect to turn the tables on him, they are misguided. "How many who were given tickets by Arun Nehru remained loyal to him?" they ask.

On present reckoning, V.P. Singh is sitting pretty, the most widely accepted national figure in the Opposition. Devi Lal is believed to have confided to some Janata Dal leaders that he does not want to be the king, but wouldn't mind being kingmaker. "I may not be so well-educated but I have the common sense of the farmer. If I became prime minister what will I go and say at the non-aligned nations' summit," he told a partyman.

As the fortnight ended to make way for one of the most bitterly fought elections ever, the Opposition's best case scenario was this: the Janata Dal contests about 260 seats, the BJP 140, the Telugu Desam 32, the DMK 30 and the left parties 90. With much of the BJP's presence in the left bastions of Kerala and West Bengal merely for form's sake this would mean one-to-one contests in nearly 450 constituencies. Of these, the National Front will contest around 325 leaving it no option finally other than choosing either the BJP or the left as a partner in power.

All these calculations, however, become irrelevant if the Opposition loses. But last fortnight, it was in a cockily confident mood. Madhu Dandavate summed it all up: "If seat adjustment is good, we will win. Even if it isn't, this election will change the character of the Parliament. The days of brute majorities are over. Either way we'll win."

—SHEKHAR GUPTA with PANKAJ PACHAURI and HARINDER BAWEJA

POLL TALK

Reading the Stars

INDIAN politicians have always patronised astrologers, particularly those making electoral predictions. INDIA TODAY *talked to some prominent ones in New Delhi, Madras and Bombay.*

J.N. Sharma, 48, Delhi: He has a big following in the US—where he often appears on TV—and Europe. Has made several correct predictions: downfall of the Shah of Iran, Watergate scandal, the assassination bid on Ronald Reagan, Mrs Gandhi's killing. Many Delhi politicians are his clients. He is the only astrologer in the Cambridge University Press' 1982 list of men of achievement.

"Rajiv's Jupiter is very strong during the election period. He will return but with 275-280 seats. Many prominent Congressmen will lose. Communalism is here to stay. There will be no widespread violence during these elections."

Jagjit Uppal, 44, Bombay: The suave Air Force officer-turned-resident astrologer at Bombay's Taj Mahal Hotel writes several astrology columns. In 1979, he predicted that Mrs Gandhi would not be succeeded by Sanjay but by someone young and new to politics. He also predicted G.M. Shah's short reign in Jammu and Kashmir, and Farooq Abdullah's succession as chief minister.

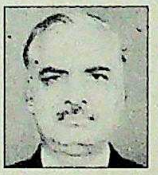
"Rajiv will win, and the Congress(I) will return to power at the Centre and in Maharashtra. N.T. Rama Rao will win in his state, but I have doubts about the Telugu Desam's success. V.P. Singh will win from his constituency."

Vishwanath Sharma, 32, New Delhi: From a family of astrologers, he is a Sanskrit newsreader at AIR. This is the first time he's making political predictions though politicians are his clients.

"According to the natal chart of the Congress(I), the sun and Saturn are in Sagittarius—a disastrous combination. The aspect of Saturn on the 10th house is also not good. Therefore the Congress(I) will not win. A coalition government is likely but tensions will remain."

R. Narayanan, 58, Madras: An employee of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute. His clients include big Madras business houses and Sri Lankan President R. Premadasa. He'd predicted Mrs Gandhi's return to power, MGR's death, Karunanidhi's victory and the US earthquake.

"Congress will win 276 to 310 seats. In Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK-Congress(I) alliance will bag 26 to 28 of the 39 seats. Rajiv will have a big win in Amethi."



Lachhman Das Madan, 67, Delhi: An ex-government servant from a family of astrologers. In 1969, he wrote a book which predicted Emergency and Morarji Desai's becoming prime minister. He writes columns in *The Times of India*, *Navbharat Times* and London's *Indian Mail*.

"It is the destiny of V.P. Singh to become prime minister and nobody can change that. Rajiv will suffer a set-back in his 46th year and lose the prime ministership. Despite several advantages and the time being propitious for the Congress Party, Singh's destiny is larger. NTR will back Singh and they will work together like Ram and Lakshman."

R. Santhanam, 45, New Delhi: He operates from Delhi's Maurya Sheraton Hotel and has accurately predicted the return of R.K. Dhawan, V.P. Singh's resignation from the Congress(I), the breaking of the Bofors scandal. Editor of the *Times of Astrology*, he has written many books on the subject.

"Rajiv will get 315-320 seats. No new scandal will surface till the polls. The period between July to November '90 is not good for Rajiv. V.P. Singh will win from wherever he stands. Ramakrishna Hegde will find it tough going in Karnataka. NTR's stars are bright."

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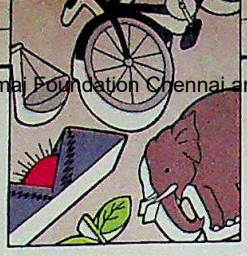


REGIONAL PARTIES GROWING CLOUT

The Telugu Desam, DMK and Akali Dal can tilt the balance in a close election

THE three are vastly different political parties—their agendas vary, their concerns are often worlds apart, and their leaders' styles are a study in contrast. Yet the Telugu Desam, the DMK and the Akali Dal have an overriding similarity: the appeal of all three parties is regional. This is both their biggest weakness and strength. While it restricts their sphere of influence to the regions of their origin, it also makes for the three being formidable powers in their home states—Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Punjab. As the three states together send 94 representatives to the Lok Sabha—nearly a fifth of the 529 seats being contested—these parties can tilt the scales in a tightly contested election.

With 42 Lok Sabha seats in Andhra Pradesh, Telugu Desam supremo N.T. Rama Rao will play a major role in post-election manoeuvrings. But during the pre-election battle, Rama Rao—who has never disguised his desire to play a more prominent role in the national political arena—is being forced to restrict himself to the regional stage. This is because along with the Lok Sabha polls, he has to prepare for assembly elections for the 294-seat Vidhan Sabha.

Though the flamboyant chief minister had himself asked for simultaneous polls in the state, the sudden announcement of the election took him by surprise and forced him to suspend shooting of his bilingual epic film, *Brahmarishi Viswamitra*—planned as a major campaign weapon against the Congress(I). Now, Rama Rao who had promised to "end Congress rule in Delhi", is busy containing the Congress(I) in Andhra Pradesh. Still, always the adept actor, he hid his disappointment and said: "I do not want to let down my own people. I want to remain as their man. I am not after power in the Delhi durbar."

> The sphere of influence of regional parties is restricted to their home states, but that weakness also happens to be their biggest strength.

Once the initial shock had subsided, Rama Rao was again in command of the situation. After suspending shooting of the film, he proceeded to unleash a series of missiles of a different sort—pre-poll concessions to various groups, and new projects. These include a Rs 359-crore lift irrigation project in Mahbubnagar and the Telugu Grameena Vidya Peetham Rural University, with an initial budget of Rs 5 crore.

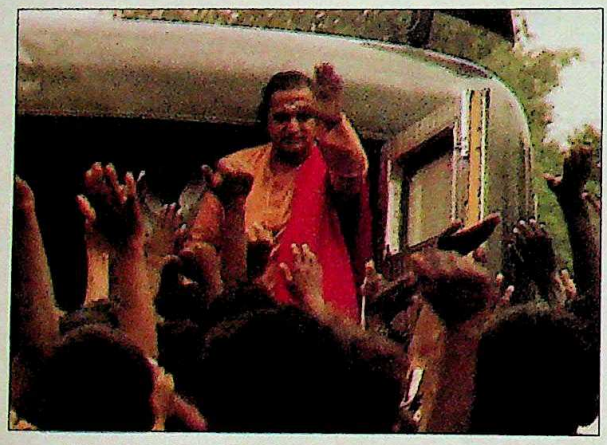
He dangled other carrots: allotment of Rs 64 crore to implement revised UGC scales for college teachers. The money is to be paid before the elections. And to woo Muslims, the Government announced that 1,100 vacant posts for Urdu teachers would be filled and that grants would be given to 227 Muslim-run schools and colleges.

To cap it all, Rama Rao met leaders of the 1 lakh government employees—whom he had once called "bandicoots to be skinned alive"—and agreed to pay their salaries for the 53 days they had gone on strike in 1986.

Still, there are several factors working against the Telugu Desam—dissension within the party, the alienation of the Kappu community, and the corruption charges against Rama Rao.

But what could swing the elections the Telugu Desam's way is the alliance that Rama Rao has forged with other opposition parties—the Janata Dal, the BJP, the CPI(M). And he recently pulled off

SHYAM TEKWANI



Rama Rao in his Chaitanya Ratham (left); and Karunanidhi with supporters: gearing for battle

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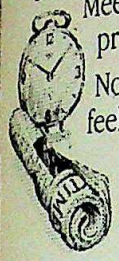

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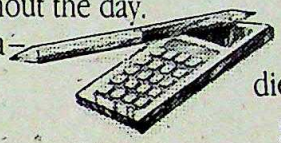

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a spectacular coup when he managed to rope in the CPI, a fierce critic for three years. With the entire opposition fighting together, the Congress(I) is in for a tough time in Andhra Pradesh.

While the Telugu Desam is riding the crest of Rama Rao's charisma, in neighbouring Tamil Nadu, the ruling DMK is depending on its efficient cadres. Though Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi was thrown off balance by the forward-ing of the polls, he is in a better position than other opposition parties. The nine months since he took charge have seen a steady consolidation of the DMK's already formidable grassroots base.

The canny chief minister has taken care to appease all sections. Taking a leaf out of his predecessor MGR's book, he has kept up a flood of populist measures: the free rice scheme, free saris and dhotis, marriage grants for young women, the noon meal scheme. And he has also cultivated the press by flooding publications with government advertisements regardless of their political leanings. Even *Namadhu MGR*, the AIADMK paper, receives a lot of state government advertisements.

Rival politicians are also being spared by the shrewd chief minister. The DMK regime has, in fact, ensured speedy construction of MGR's samadhi in Madras, and Karunanidhi never fails to mention that he was close to the late chief minister for 40 years. Similarly, he has started an award for schoolchildren on Kamaraj's birthday, and he recently offered financial aid to the late Congressman's sister. Said Congress(I) Propaganda Secretary Nellai Kannan: "It is difficult to come up with criticism about the DMK. Karunanidhi has been extremely careful."

HAVING returned to power after 13 years, he has been particularly careful in his dealings with the Congress(I)—knowing that a hostile Centre could seize any pretext to dismiss an opposition regime. So while consorting with the National Front, the DMK has all along kept a door open to the Congress(I) and partymen have been instructed to never attack Rajiv Gandhi personally.

The Congress(I), however, has not responded to these overtures. Vazhappadi Ramamurthy, TNCC(I) president, has expectedly gone in for an alliance with the AIADMK led by Jayalalitha, who has proved much more accommodating than the DMK would have been. The Congress(I) will contest in 30 of the state's 39 Lok Sabha seats—the largest share the party has ever got in an electoral alliance with Dravidian parties—while the AIADMK will put up candidates in just 10 seats.

Despite the DMK's unmatched organisational strength, the Congress(I)-AIADMK alliance could provide stiff competition. While backing a regional party in the state, during Lok Sabha elections the Tamil Nadu electorate has traditionally voted for the Congress(I)—and may do so again. The DMK will also be disadvantaged by a severe paucity of funds—particularly as the Congress(I)'s coffers seem bottomless.

In January, while campaigning for the assembly polls, Karunanidhi had said that he has to fight three things—the Congress(I)'s *panam* (money), Jayalalitha's *pagattu* (glamour) and MGR's widow, Janaki's *paridhabam* (pity). While Janaki has been totally eclipsed, the money-glamour combination could

SHYAM TEKWANI

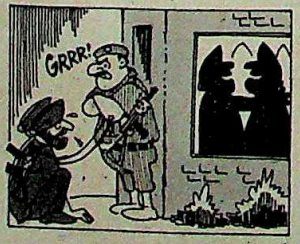
BHAWAN SINGH

Jayalalitha at a public rally (left); and Barnala at a Sarbat Khalsa: marginal importance

POLL TALK

UNGUARDED MEETINGS

☐ AKALI Dal factions, suspicious that their gun-toting bodyguards were always snooping on them, discovered an excellent meeting point—the waiting room in the Election Commission office. Their gun-toting bodyguards had not been allowed in by securitymen at the office. So while waiting to meet the Election Commission officials, the politicians made the most of the opportunity to discuss seat adjustments.



ELECTION THREATS

☐ TILL a year ago, Chief Election Commissioner R.V.S. Peri Sastri was derided by the Opposition as the Centre's handmaiden. But faced with two new election commissioners, S.S. Dhanoa and V.S. Seigell, known to be close to Home Minister Buta Singh, it is singing a different tune. When Janata Dal parliamentary board members recently visited Sastri's office to lodge a protest, they refused to talk to Dhanoa. Snapped the bearded Chandra Shekhar: "We do not recognise your authority." He went on to declare that the new incumbents would be removed as soon as the Opposition came to power.

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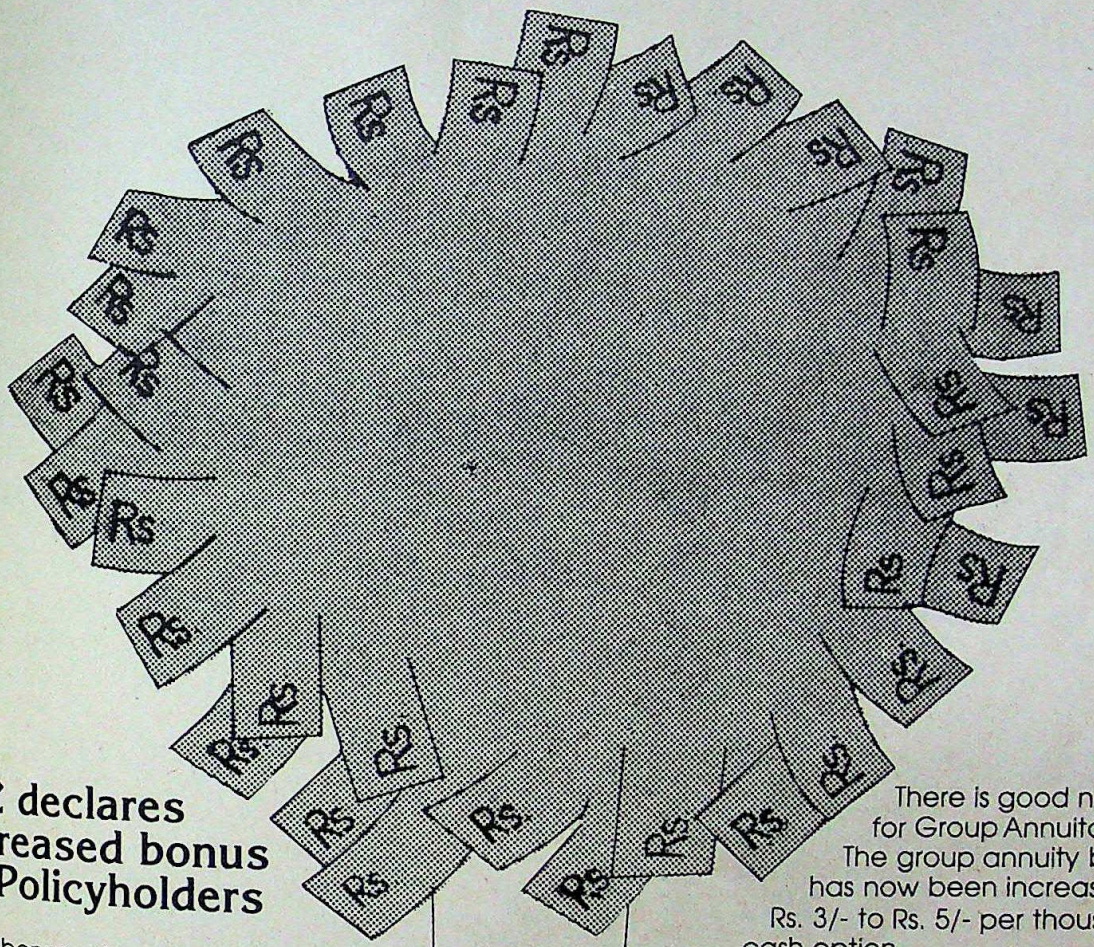


LIC declares increased bonus to Policyholders

New bonus rates are:

Whole Life Plans: Rs. 80/-*
Endowment Plans: Rs. 64/-*

Bonus to policyholders has gone up year after year. The cumulative increase in the last 8 years is 128%.

Substantial increase in the final additional bonus, too. Now it ranges from Rs. 50/- to Rs. 350/-*

*per thousand sum assured

There is good news for Group Annuitants also. The group annuity bonus has now been increased from Rs. 3/- to Rs. 5/- per thousand of cash option.

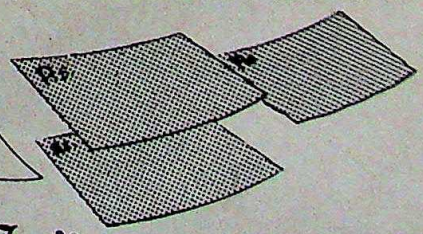
Now an LIC policy is more attractive than ever before.

Buy a life insurance policy today and ensure a happy tomorrow.

Contact your agent or the nearest branch office for details.

Whole Life Policies Rs.	80*
Endowment Policies Rs.	64*

*per thousand sum assured



योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम्

There is no substitute for life insurance.

Life Insurance Corporation of India

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still prove a threat to the DMK.

While electoral alliances have been clearly established in Tamil Nadu, in Punjab the picture is still hazy. The warring factions of the Akali Dal—the Longowal group led by S.S. Barnala, the Simranjit Singh Mann group, the J.S. Talwandi group and the Baba Joginder Singh group—were still bickering days after announcement of polls.

The Mann group set a condition for putting up a one-to-one fight against the Congress(I): that Mann be accepted as president. The Talwandi group wanted the Barnala group to wind up. The Barnala group offered a solution: that all the top Akali leaders of all factions contest the elections. Others disagreed. The only point that all agree on is that Rajiv Gandhi must be opposed and that Mann (currently in prison) must be put up as a candidate from Tarn Taran.

The Congress(I)—which has always won an impressive number of the 13 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab—is in an upbeat mood. "How I wish the elections to the Vidhan Sabha too had been announced simultaneously," said a senior Congress(I) leader. The reason for the confidence: the disarray in Akali ranks.

Still, these elections are of great significance as they signal the revival of the political process in Punjab and could be a prelude to assembly polls. Eventually, as Basant Singh Khalsa, a supporter of the detained SGPC President Gurcharan Singh Tohra, put it: "Perhaps the voter will decipher the great puzzle of Sikh leadership."

He well might. And as he joins his brethren in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to contribute his own tiny piece to the election jigsaw, he could also determine the future of regional parties in the national scheme of things.

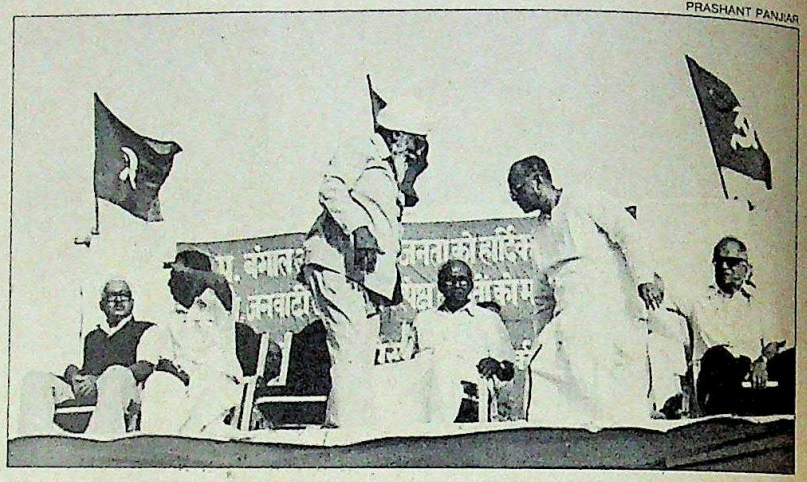
—AMARNATH K. MENON in Hyderabad with KAVITHA SHETTY in Madras and KANWAR SANDHU in Chandigarh

LEFT PARTIES

RIGHT ON CUE

The communists emerge as an important factor

PRASHANT PANJIAR

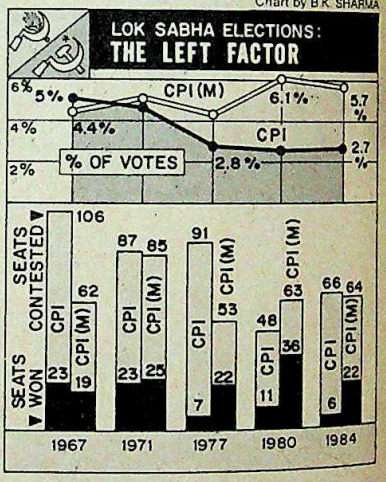


CPI(M) top brass: high aims

IT is a destiny they never dreamt they would meet with so early in their history. The ninth general elections present to the left parties, the possibility of sharing power at the national level. And that too just three decades after first tasting the heady effervescence of power in Kerala—when the world's first democratically elected communist ministry came to power there in 1957.

That ministry was dismissed after only two years in power. But the architect of that short-lived historic revolution survived. And with him, his near-maniacal fervour and irrepressible flaunting of the communist dream. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, CPI(M) general secretary, is largely responsible for helping his party edge closer to the national political arc lights.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



What Namboodiripad has in mind at the national level is the same type of coalition that he successfully forged in

POLL TALK

STAR ATTRACTION

☐ MANY party workers thronged around Raj Babbar when he came to Haryana Bhawan in Delhi to meet Devi Lal. Amused by those who scrambled to close in on Babbar and get his autograph, Devi Lal remarked, "He is going to campaign for us. See that your vote justifies his struggle."

THE WAR OF THE VEHICLES

☐ ANDHRA Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao has frequently been accused of harbouring medieval notions. When it comes to electioneering, however, he sure can be a trendsetter. Following the introduction of his Chaitanya Ratham to the election scene, the saffron-clad chief minister set off a veritable 'car war'. In Karnataka, R.K. Hegde followed Rama Rao's style by travelling in his Jaya Vahini during the 1985 assembly election. Now it is Deve Gowda who is dressing up a Swaraj Mazda, calling it Janata Vahini. The vehicle, incidentally, has been purchased from the contributions by coconut farmers in the state.

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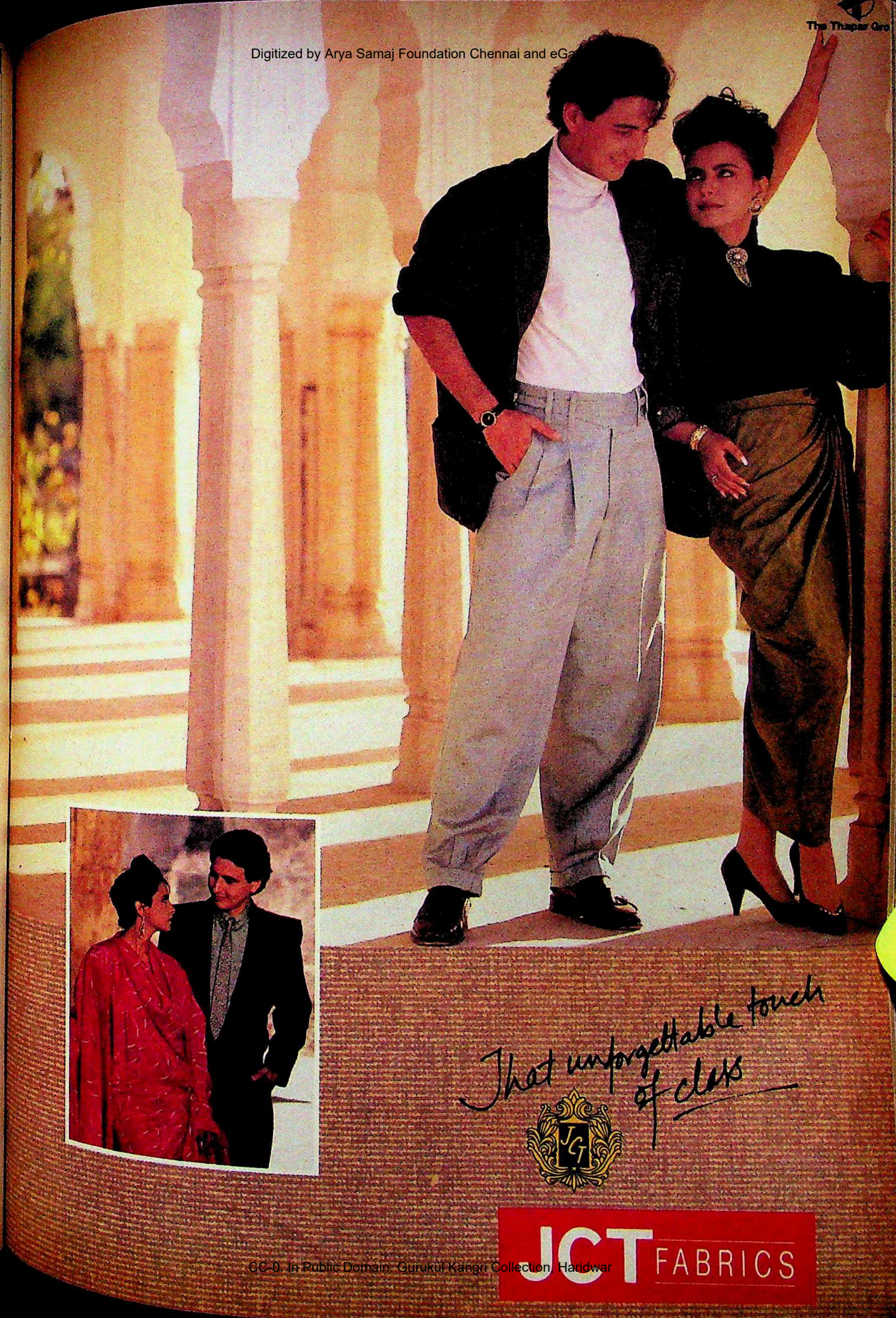
The Thapar Gro



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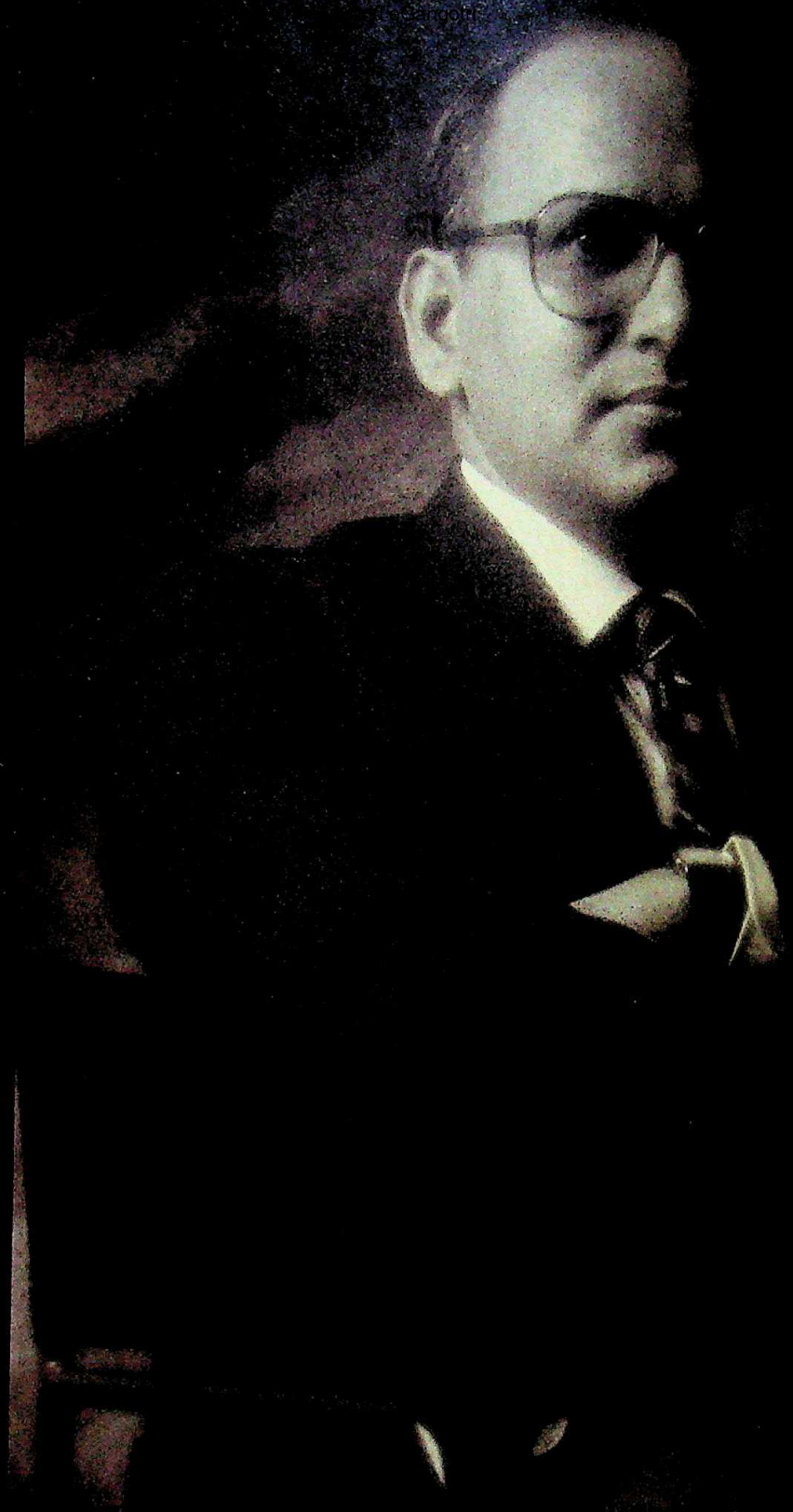
"I thought our computing needs were too diverse and sophisticated for PCL."

Santosh Pande
General Manager, The Triveni Group.



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1987 in Kerala. "The National Front and left parties form the biggest and most powerful combination at present," he says.

It is perhaps an indication of the emerging importance of the Indian left that just a few days before he sprung the surprise election call, Rajiv Gandhi spent a day first going to West Bengal—laying the foundation-stone of the much-delayed Haldia petro-chemical project—and later addressing a Youth Congress(I) rally in Trivandrum. This time it was not to lambast the wrongs of the left but to present a friendly face. The reason was obvious: Rajiv was simply making a last-ditch attempt to keep the CPI(M) away from the Janata Dal and thus hang the communal tag on the Opposition. But the CPI(M) did not accept Rajiv's hand of friendship. Senior party leaders like Harkishen Singh Surjeet parleyed with the Janata Dal to cajole it into issuing an anti-VHP statement, and the CPI(M) manifesto declared the Congress(I) "totally unworthy of the people's trust".

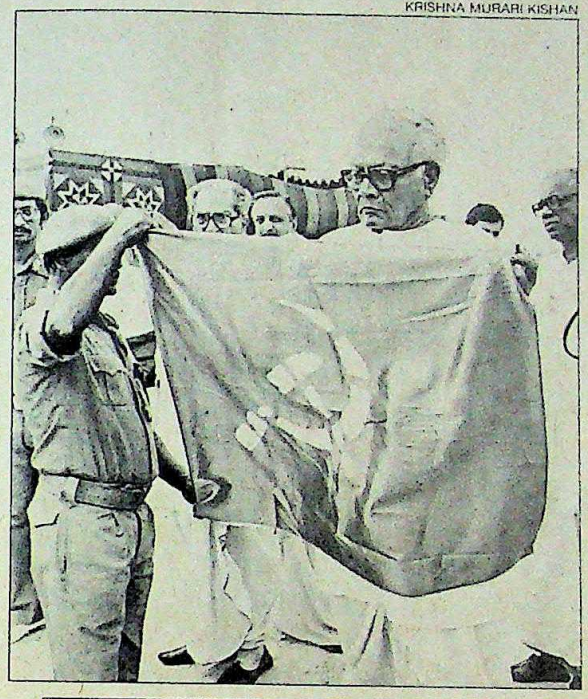
The Left Front in West Bengal took no time getting off the blocks. "We need only 24 hours' notice to face the polls," said CPI(M) strongman Biman Bose. Left Front Chairman Saroj Mukherjee oozed arrogance: "We'll win all the 42 seats."

But it was not all sweet talk among the Left Front partners. The CPI(M) arm-twisted the Forward Bloc into giving up its north-west Calcutta seat in favour of Asoke Sen, former Union law minister contesting on a Janata Dal ticket, and ordered the CPI not to nominate Narayan Choubey from Midnapur as his wife had joined the Congress(I).

But CPI(M) leaders know such petty squabbles will be forgotten. The CPI(M) has put up 13 new faces including three MLAs and noted economist Dr Biplab Dasgupta.

Statistics favour the CPI(M). Its share of votes in the Lok Sabha polls has been increasing since 1967. From 15.7 per cent in 1967, it rose to 26.2 per cent in 1977, 39.9 per cent in 1980 before dropping to 35.9 per cent in 1984 when the Congress(I) got 16 seats.

KRISHNA MURARI KISHAN



CPI's Rajeswara Rao: pockets of influence

The CPI which had just six seats in the last Lok Sabha has pockets of influence in Bihar—where they intend to contest 15 seats—and in Andhra Pradesh where along with the CPI(M) they have aligned with the Telugu Desam and so might enhance their base.

In Kerala too the Left which won just three seats in 1984 has gone in for many fresh candidates including poet and lyricist O.N.V.Kurup and SFI president Vijayaraghavan. The Front has retained Suresh Kurup the lone CPI(M) winner from Kerala in 1984 and opposition stalwart K.P.Unnikrishnan.

What is of concern to the CPI(M) in Kerala is how the 16-lakh voters between 18 to 21 will vote. Campus polls show a disturbing trend. The student community seems to have rapped the Marxists for their stand against the pro-democracy students in China. The Congress(I) student wing, KSU, scored convincingly over the SFI.

Unlike in West Bengal, the CPI(M)'s share of votes for Lok Sabha elections over the years in Kerala has not risen perceptibly. In 1957, the united Communist Party of India got 37.5 per cent votes. In 1967 the CPI(M) got 24.6 per cent votes, 26.2 in 1971, 20.3 per cent in 1977, 19.1 per cent in 1980 and 22.3 per cent in 1984.

Today the left is on the threshold of a new chapter in its chequered history. Namboodiripad himself has been vague about the prospect of sharing power: "I do not want to commit myself about the inside or outside support to the National Front."

If by some strange quirk of electoral arithmetic and a heady ideological cocktail, the CPI(M) does manage to have a say in a National Front government minus the BJP, it will be yet another example of how the left has blended—and often compromised—Marxist ideology with the demands of the Indian polity. For Namboodiripad personally, it will be the incredible culmination of a journey on which he had embarked more than five decades ago, the ballot-box as his gun, screaming about the great communist hope.

—FARZAND AHMED and RAMESH MENON

POLL TALK

ELECTRIFYING ELECTIONS

☐ ELECTIONS it appears are potent revivers. At least Janata Dal Vice-President Ramakrishna Hegde's case makes it seem so. The week prior to the announcement of polls, he was bed-ridden with viral fever. The moment the news came, he was up and about. He even attended an Indian Institute of Science seminar, where he told his audience how elections 'electrified' him.

TICKET TAMASHA

☐ THE crowd of hopeful ticket-seekers outside the teeming office of the Uttar Pradesh Congress(I) Committee was growing restless. The meeting of the party election committee was getting prolonged. But there was comic relief. A worldly-wise aspirant who had been waiting for long said: *"Na source se, na force se; ticket milega Bofors se* (neither source will work, nor force; for a ticket you need Bofors)."

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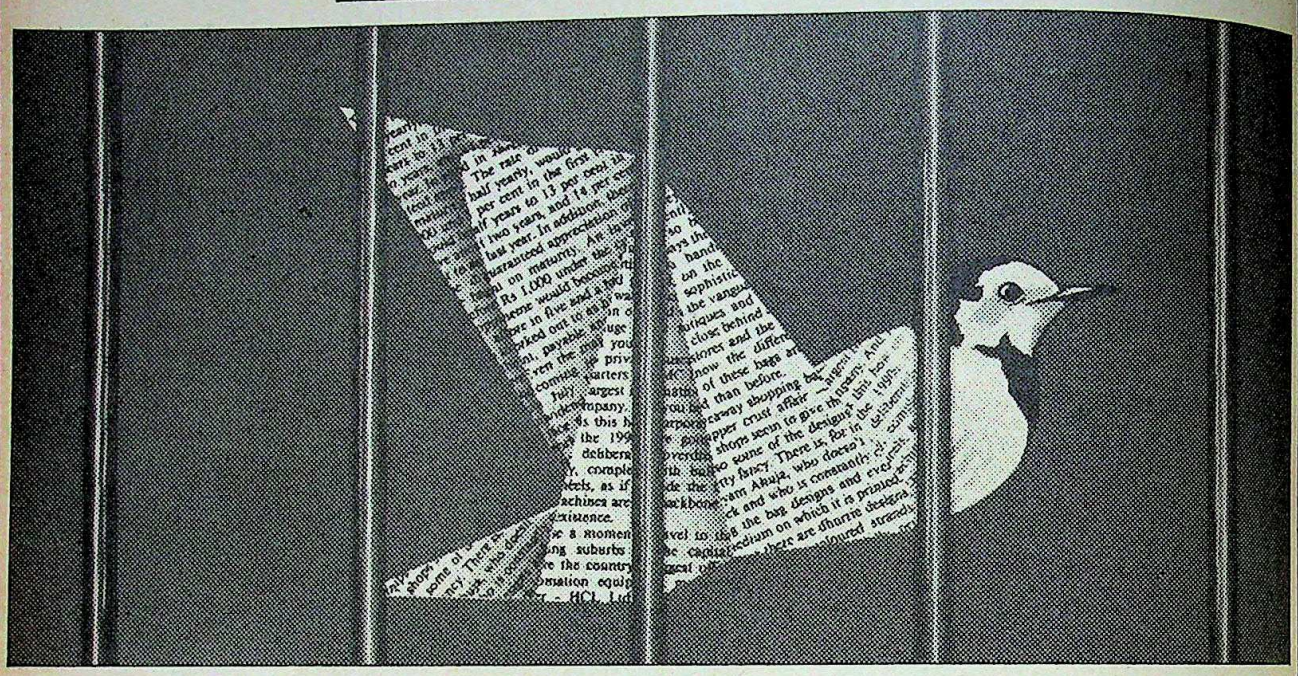
WHEN THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IS THREATENED –



IT MUST MEAN A VIOLATION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS.

It is "an imposition on knowledge and would virtually amount to a burden imposed on a man for being literate and for being conscious of his duty as a citizen to inform himself about the world around."

That is what the Supreme Court said in 1984 as it reduced a Rs. 850 per tonne duty levied on the import of newsprint by the Government to Rs. 550 per tonne.

Now the Government newsprint mills have hiked newsprint prices by as much as 40 per cent, and the duty on glazed newsprint has been increased by 7-fold.

While some welcome concessions have been granted to small and medium newspapers, the rest who account for more than 80% of newsprint consumption still bear the crippling burden.

The implications spell themselves out : increased cost, increased prices of publications, increased advertising tariffs, mounting financial pressure on the newspaper industry. A pressure that retards growth, curtailing coverage and reach. Doubtless, the burden for being literate is becoming heavier.

Every citizen has the right to 'free' knowledge, information, stimulation and entertainment. The press is their only independent and affordable source. It is the heart of a democracy, the life-blood of political and social intercourse. In a country like India, with its multifarious cultures, religions and languages, it is the press which reflects the diversity. It is the symbol of freedom, the voice of the people, the safety valve for bottled-up emotions. As long as it is neither state-controlled, nor muzzled.

Now the Government has put it under severe financial strain, even as it has unleashed resources to expand the official media.

All this will extract a heavy cost. And it is not the newspaper industry that will suffer the final cut. It is the democratic spirit of the country that will fray; the tenets of our founding fathers that will flounder. That price will be paid by the people.

THE NATION'S LOSS CANNOT BE THE GOVERNMENT'S GAIN.

Issued in the interest of the Nation by the Indian Newspaper Society

MILESTONES/INS/34

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ELECTION COMMISSION

TORTUOUS TASK

Severe handicaps hamper efficient functioning

A mere block away from the stately Sansad Bhawan—seat of the world's largest democracy in New Delhi—stands Nirvachan Sadan, headquarters of the Election Commission of India. And in its dimly-lit office, surrounded by mounds of discoloured files, the commission is at work overtime, organising the biggest exercise of the secret ballot—the forthcoming elections.

S.S. Dhanoa, R.V.S. Peri Sastri and V.S. Seigell

An Indian election may pale in comparison with the extravagant festivity of the US presidential polls or the sophisticated media campaigns of the British polls. But when India votes, the event is awesome: more people cast their votes than in the US, Indonesia, Brazil, Japan, Nigeria and Bangladesh combined. Expectedly, poll preparations are a nightmare, as commission employees admit. Says an official: "It's as messy as our democracy."

The statistics are mindboggling. Over 49.86 crore people will choose 529 members to the Lok Sabha. Of these, more than 15.11 crore people will elect 1,547 legislators to the Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Goa and Sikkim Vidhan Sabhas simultaneously. Just to compile these figures, the commission took six months, aided by 9.97 lakh enumerators conducting a door-to-door survey costing Rs 5 crore.

The electorate will cast its vote at 5.98 lakh polling stations throughout the country, to be manned by over 30 lakh government employees. One lakh magistrates will be deputed to ensure peaceful polling. About 50 items—ranging from ballot papers to shellac, used to seal ballot boxes—have been identified by the commission for supply to the polling booths. The Government has already ordered 4.5 lakh litres of indelible ink—enough to top up the fuel tanks of about 12,800 Maruti cars—to mark the nails of those who cast their votes.

> The commission's biggest problem is that many of its powers to curb electoral malpractices exist only on paper.

The mammoth task is nearly an impossible one, thanks to the severe handicaps the commission works under. The understaffed commission—only 225 employees—has not even the benefit of the most basic computers. And with the new constitutional requirement for registration of political parties plus the consequent compilation of data, their burden has increased tremendously.

The Government will spend more than Rs 150 crore on the elections—almost 10 times more than in 1971. In addition, political parties will spend huge sums. A commission study revealed that parties, at a conservative estimate, spent about Rs 30 crore in 1977. But since then, the ante has been upped many times over.

With the entry of moneybags, invariably followed by musclemen, the commission is face to face with its bane: booth-capturing. In 1980, a repoll had to be ordered at 39 polling stations in 12 constituencies. The problem multiplied manifold in 1984, when fresh polling took place in 264 polling booths in 53 parliamentary constituencies. This time the elections threaten to be the bloodiest and bitterest ever.

What worries Chief Election Commissioner R.V.S. Peri Sastri the most is the large-scale induction of people with criminal backgrounds into established political parties. Peri Sastri says the commission is taking pre-emptive measures: "We have asked the Government for as many companies of Central police forces as they can provide." But in 1987 when the commission sought 60 companies of Central forces for the by-elections to the West Bengal Assembly, the Centre granted only 16.

And this time with barely a dozen paramilitary companies at the Home Ministry's disposal for deployment in sensitive areas, the situation is bound to be much worse. Most of the forces are stuck in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and the North-east. The 25 new battalions of Central forces planned for the elections are still under training. Caught unawares by the sudden election announcement, the Home Ministry, however, has managed to put together 150 companies of trainee recruits. Says a worried official: "We have to perform intricate jugglery."

The problems of rigging and booth-capturing might have been somewhat contained if the commission had been able to introduce electronic voting

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machines. The machines, found suitable after a seven-year-long experiment conducted by the commission, offer a system which would allow the presiding officer to block any possible tampering of votes or casting of unauthorised ones. In fact, the commission ordered 1.5 lakh machines from the government-owned Bharat Electronic Ltd of Bangalore and Electronics Corporation of India Ltd of Hyderabad. The strategy was to use these machines in 150 constituencies notorious for rigging. But with the preponing of the elections, the plan has been scuttled. Now, the machines will be used in only 50 constituencies.

Even this limited use has been bogged down by political controversy. The Janata Dal—spurred by distorted information—has challenged their dependability. When reports about computer bugging in the US elections surfaced, Arun Mehta, an independent computer expert, demonstrated—at the instance of some Janata Dal leaders—how the computers could be programmed to rig. But they ignored an important fact: the US voting machines are different from the Indian ones.

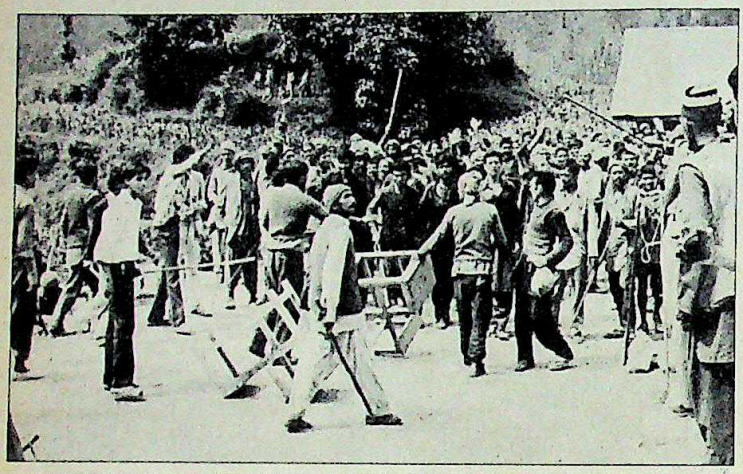
K. Ganesan, former secretary to the commission, says the Opposition's scepticism is not based on facts. Explains he: "Our machines are non-programmable." But both Ganesan and Peri Sastri agree that political parties should be taken into confidence before the machines are introduced. Clearly, the commission's tight-lipped stand on the issue has jeopardised a well-meaning step.

Significantly, along with the commission's machines, serious doubts are being raised about its integrity. The biggest eye-brow raiser was the Government's decision to revive the concept of a multi-member commission just before the poll announcement, even though the last three chief election commissioners had opposed it. Both the new election commissioners, S.S. Dhanoa and V.S. Seigell, began making sensitive decisions from day one. Sastri, who feels he had already prepared the ground for the elections, was so upset with the appointments that he even considered resigning, but changed his mind. Seigell's background as an intelligence man and his proximity to Home Minister Buta Singh have fuelled the Opposition's suspicions.

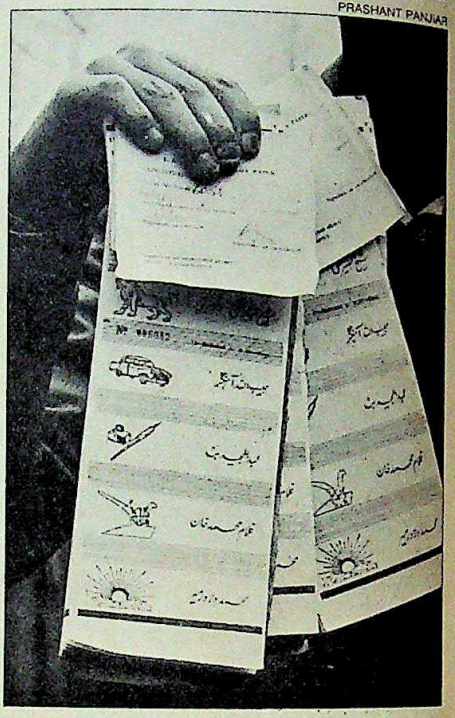
But the commission's biggest handicap is that many of its actual powers to curb electoral malpractices exist only on paper. Effective power and adequate resources are urgently required if the elections are to be managed with efficiency and credibility. Specifically, the commission needs to be given status on par with the Comptroller and Auditor General's office by an act of Parliament.

Clearly, in the absence of basic electoral reforms to strengthen the commission's autonomy, the Indian democracy can never become as towering in character as it is in numbers.

—PANKAJ PACHAURI



PRASHANT PANJIAR



Mob rioting during 1984 polls; and ballot paper

POLL TALK

SURREAL SYCOPHANT

☐ **Ram Sevak, a Congress(I) MLA, turned *seva* into an absurdity when as one of Rajiv's proposers, he ceremoniously did a *namaste* to the pen he signed with. He then turned to the nomination papers and repeated the ritual of respect. Remarked an official: "Sycophancy is touching new heights." With innovative practitioners like Sevak, it is bound to scale further pinnacles.**

NARCISSISTS ALL

☐ **Journalists recently visiting Uttar Pradesh Janata Dal chief, Mulayam Singh Yadav found him exhorting them to listen to an election song. *"Arey, ye suniye* (please listen to this)," he urged. The irritated audience soon found out why—the song celebrated Yadav as a great politician who could easily demolish any opposition. That's one passion that consumes both the Oppositon and the Congress(I): that of self-praise.**

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Mr. G.V. Krishna Reddy, Chairman, Novopan India Ltd. and GVK America, Inc. seen with Mr. S.B. Chavan, Hon'ble Union Finance Minister, Govt. of India and His Excellency Mr. James G. Martin, Governor, State of North Carolina, U.S.A. after the ceremony performed on 29th Sept., '89.

NOVOPAN GOES INTERNATIONAL

Novopan India Limited, the market leaders in manufacturing and marketing particle boards which have been used for creating life styles and decorating homes and offices for over a decade have set up a Rs. 100 crore integrated project, **GVK America, Inc.** in the State of North Carolina, USA for the manufacture of prelaminated particle boards and furniture components. **GVK America, Inc.** will now draw the benefits of in- house technological know-how from the parent company.

The implementation of phase I of the project is estimated to cost around Rs. 20 crores. For the first time, State authorities have extended infrastructure facilities like 200 acres of land, high pressure water, sewerage treatment facility, etc. all free of cost to an Indian subsidiary company.

Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony and Ground Breaking Ceremony were performed on September 29, 1989 by:

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Mr. S.B. Chavan	State of North Carolina
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FIVE YEARS OF RAJIV GANDHI

THE PROMISE THAT FAILED

On October 31 Rajiv Gandhi completed a tumultuous five years as prime minister of the world's largest democracy.

They have their exits and their entrances.
And one man in his time plays many parts.
—As You Like It.

THE final scene in *Rajiv's India*, a 1985 documentary produced by American syndicated journalist Jack Anderson, features press baron Ramnath Goenka. At once avuncular and patriarchal, Goenka echoes a theme that threads its way through the film. "Now I can die in peace," he says, "knowing that the country is in good hands."

Four years on, the metamorphosis is complete. Goenka today is Rajiv's most implacable foe, consumed by the belief that the man who leads India is a Hitlerian disaster. His is undoubtedly an extreme view, coloured by his personal battle with the Government in power. But in the end, that dramatic turnaround says more about Rajiv Gandhi than it does about Ramnath Goenka.

Last week, Rajiv completed five roller-coaster years in office, a tenure that has traversed giddy highs and gut-wrenching lows. Five years ago, he seemed to have stepped straight out from the stars, the Peter Pan of Indian politics. If ever contemporary politics had a fairy tale to relate, this was it. The youth, the looks, the idealism, the dynamism. And above all, the mandate: the largest in Indian electoral history.

For a nation in need of a 20th century messiah, Rajiv Gandhi appeared like the answer to a congregational prayer. For one fifth of humanity, suddenly there was a dream to be shared.

It was a dream he enunciated with such eloquence before the US Congress in June of 1985. "I too have a dream. I dream of an India—strong, independent, self-reliant, and in the front ranks of the nations of the world in the service of mankind." For 'one brief, shining moment', Rajiv gave India something unique and priceless—pride in itself.

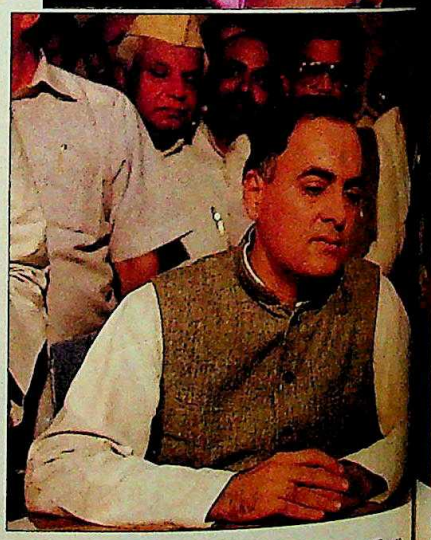
Pride, and then the fall. The first 18 months of Rajiv Gandhi's rule now seem like a surreal memory. In the totality of his five-year reign, the dazzle of his initial promise only serves to spotlight his subsequent failures and capitulation. In the balance sheet of history, Rajiv has clearly slipped into the red. For that, he has only himself to blame. The man who occupies the prime minister's chair today bears not the remotest resemblance to the Rajiv Gandhi who was elected to paramount power five years ago.

Then, he was the quintessential Mr Clean, determined to rid Indian politics of its corrupt configuration. Today, he stands indelibly tainted by the Bofors scandal, the first among others that have eroded his mandate and tarnished his government's image like nothing else has.

Then, he was Mr Accord, buying peace with honour and national interest intact. Sri Lanka, Punjab, Mizoram, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, all followed in dizzying succession. Today, they stand as signposts to failure and lack of foresight, troubling reminders of what could have been.

In Punjab, even after Sant Longowal's assassination, Rajiv could have brokered peace by implementing some of the clauses like the transfer of Chandigarh. Instead, the Centre toppled the government of S.S. Barnala and derailed the peace process.

In Sri Lanka, over 1,100 Indian troops have died and the peace keeping force is now being pulled out, a tragic testimony to the lack of diplomatic foresight. Even the Kashmir accord remains a pact between Rajiv and Farooq Abdullah, neither of whom has been able to implement even its basic premises like accelerated development in the state. The result: a worrying rise in extremist discontent. That process also dovetailed with the dramatic change in Rajiv's political style, from one of conciliation to one of confrontation.



The transformation in Rajiv Gandhi is, in fact, so vivid and so drastic that five

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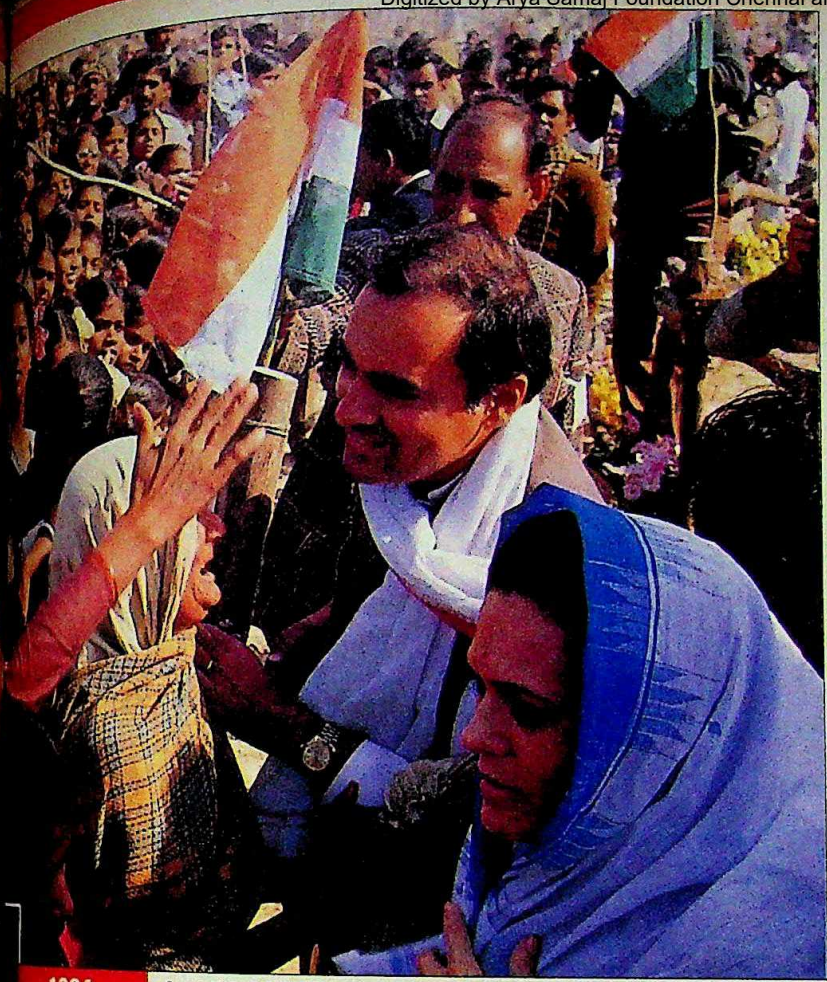

1984 Amethi. Rajiv receives the largest mandate in Indian history

For a nation in need of a 20th century messiah, Rajiv Gandhi appeared like the answer to a congregational prayer. Suddenly, there was a dream to be shared.

1989 Amethi. A sombre prime minister files his nomination

The reluctant Prince Charming of 1984 has turned into a brooding King Lear, a prisoner of the many cabals that swamp him with conflicting advice.

years now seems like a lifetime. Nothing symbolises that change more than the change in his closest aides—from Arun Singh and V.P. Singh to Satish Sharma and R.K. Dhawan. From a well-knit team that ably projected his initial energy and idealism, Rajiv has fallen back on conflicting groups of advisers; bureaucrats whose commitment is coloured by their personal stake in his political fortunes, politicians of the old guard like Buta Singh and H.K.L. Bhagat who operate by conventional rules and are uncomfortable with change, and cronies like Satish Sharma, Lalit Suri and Amitabh Bachchan whose political advice is suspect.

The change was thus, inescapable. The man who governs India today is not the same leader who, in December 1985, at the Congress Centenary in Bombay, fired the imagination with these words: "Millions of ordinary workers throughout the country are full of enthusiasm for the Congress policies. But they are handicapped, for on their backs ride the brokers of power and influence, who dispense patronage to convert a mass movement into a feudal oligarchy." Today, the same power brokers submerge Rajiv with the weight of their omnipotence.

In the bargain, the reluctant Prince Charming of 1984 has turned into a brooding King Lear, a prisoner of his own paranoia. The Rajiv Gandhi of 1985 would certainly not have said, as Rajiv did in public, that: "Conspiracies are being hatched and they have their godfathers abroad. We will teach them such a lesson that they will remember their grandmothers."

THE power that once lifted him to the heights of inspiration now finds expression in imagined threats and the succour of sycophancy. The boldness of vision that led him to sign the Punjab accord with Sant Longowal today manifests itself in the politics of confrontation. The warmth and innate charm that endeared him to millions is now replaced with a certain ruthlessness of purpose.

It is not that his government has been inefficient. It is just that it has been indifferent. Indifferent to the tidal wave of corruption charges when coming clean would have done him more good than harm. Indifferent to the erosion of institutions at a time when his credibility was lowest. Indifferent to the promises made and never fulfilled. And above all, indifferent to the fact that a mandate was being recklessly squandered away.

In retrospect, that may have been inevitable. Indian politics had never seen anything like him, certainly not in a position of absolute authority. Clearly, in 1984-85, the ruling party was as uncomfortable with him as he was with them. The immovable force and the irresistible object. On one side, a sophisticated young man with a modern mind and no ideological handcuffs, intent on political and social reform, on computers and high technology, on decontrol and liberalisation, on shaking up the bureaucracy.

Ranged against him, a creaking party machinery ruled by syndicates and power brokers for whom everything that Rajiv represented posed a threat to survival. One had to give in. That it was Rajiv who succumbed was a disappointment made sharper by the promise of change he initially personified.

Four months ago, in a speech at Vigyan Bhavan, Rajiv stated: "I found when I tried to change the system, to push the system to deliver, I came up against blocks, vested interests which just wouldn't let go. Every time I thought I had identified a solution, I couldn't convince those at higher levels...."

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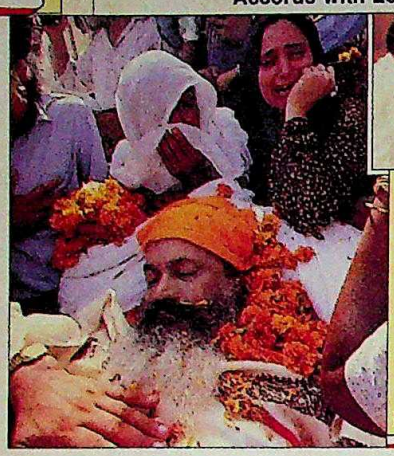
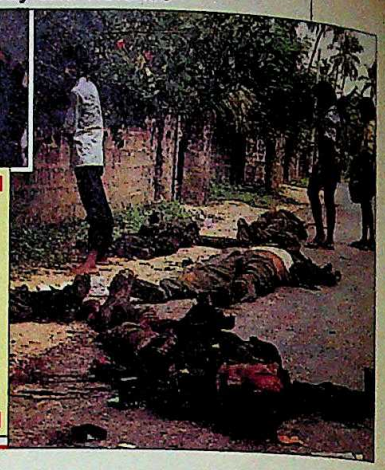
Accords with Longowal and Jayewardene ended in disarray and violence





Rajiv's initial politics of conciliation promised stability. Soon confrontation became the slogan and stability its main victim.

That is an astonishing admission to make for a prime minister. But not for Rajiv Gandhi. Today, the many masks he has donned over the last five years have turned him, at least in the public eye, into an irritating enigma.

More than anything else, what Rajiv faces is a serious image problem. From the open, disarming family man who could afford to take exotic holidays with his friends without facing undue criticism, to the somewhat desperate and dishevelled politician of today, Rajiv has passed through many stages of political evolution, each more complex than the previous one.

There is the Rajiv Gandhi who broke through seemingly unsurmountable diplomatic barriers in the case of China and Pakistan. There is also the Rajiv Gandhi who, by his government's actions—and somewhat misplaced ambitions—has earned India the distasteful title of regional bully boy.

There is the Rajiv Gandhi who speaks with such conviction about the preservation of democracy. There is also the Rajiv Gandhi who attempts to ram through such retrogative measures as the defamation bill.

But there is now, with his political career hanging in the balance, a clearer definition of the real Rajiv: a hard-headed politician in the mould of his late mother, opportunistic, uncaring of public opinion, disdainful of political propriety and trapped between conflicting cabals.

AT moments, the real Rajiv breaks through. In an interview with INDIA TODAY in mid-1986, Rajiv was totally sincere and candid when he said: "Oddly, I still don't feel as if I'm prime minister. I just feel that I am me, like I was. Perhaps the day I feel that I'm prime minister, something's gone wrong."

However, such moments are now increasingly rare. Rajiv has gradually allowed himself to become a creature of the cabals that surround and buffet him, with conflicting advice. The result is that despite his outward air of confidence, it is Rajiv's insecurity that brings out the darker side of him; the personalised abuse against his opponents, the wild conspiracy theories, the mistrust and suspicion that has distanced him somewhat from reality—and perhaps from the people.

He is now the symbol of insecurity. The grim-faced Black Cats, firmly wedged between him and the people, are symbols of one kind of insecurity—the terrorist threat that he has inherited and which two assassination attempts have brought dangerously alive.

But it is now the other kind of insecurity, reflected in the conflict of advice from his political satellites, that perhaps pose the greater danger.

The fact that he has orchestrated no less than 27 cabinet reshuffles and replaced over a dozen chief ministers in the last four years is symbolic of that insecurity. The result: the Congress(I) has been emasculated, a party with one voice (his) and only one leader (him).

Surrounded by the detritus of disappointment, Rajiv's successes have been inevitably overshadowed. One obvious example: the economy. In the first two years of his rule, Rajiv initiated sweeping changes to liberalise the economy, a process that, ironically enough, slowed down with the departure of Rajiv's *bete noire*, V.P. Singh, his former finance minister.

The Government's handling of drought relief in 1987 was exemplary

VOICES

MEMORABLE

■ **People's expectations are scary.** *—In January 1985*

■ **Millions of ordinary workers throughout the country are full of enthusiasm for the Congress policies and programmes. But they are handicapped, for on their backs ride the brokers of power and influence, who dispense patronage to convert a mass movement into a feudal oligarchy.** *—at the Congress centenary celebrations in Bombay, in December 1985*

■ **Inside the soft glove, there is an iron hand and if the grip is not proper with the glove it has to be removed.** *—In May 1987*

■ **I categorically declare...that neither I nor any member of my family has received any consideration in these (Bofors) transactions.** *—In August 1987*

■ **Everyone grieves when his mother dies. But I gained courage for there grew a feeling in the country that every citizen had lost his mother.** *—at a rally in October 1988*

■ **I found when I tried to change the system, to push the system to deliver, I came up against blocks, vested interests which just wouldn't let go. Every time I thought I had identified a solution, I couldn't convince those at higher levels who had lost contact with the grassroots.** *—in August 1989*

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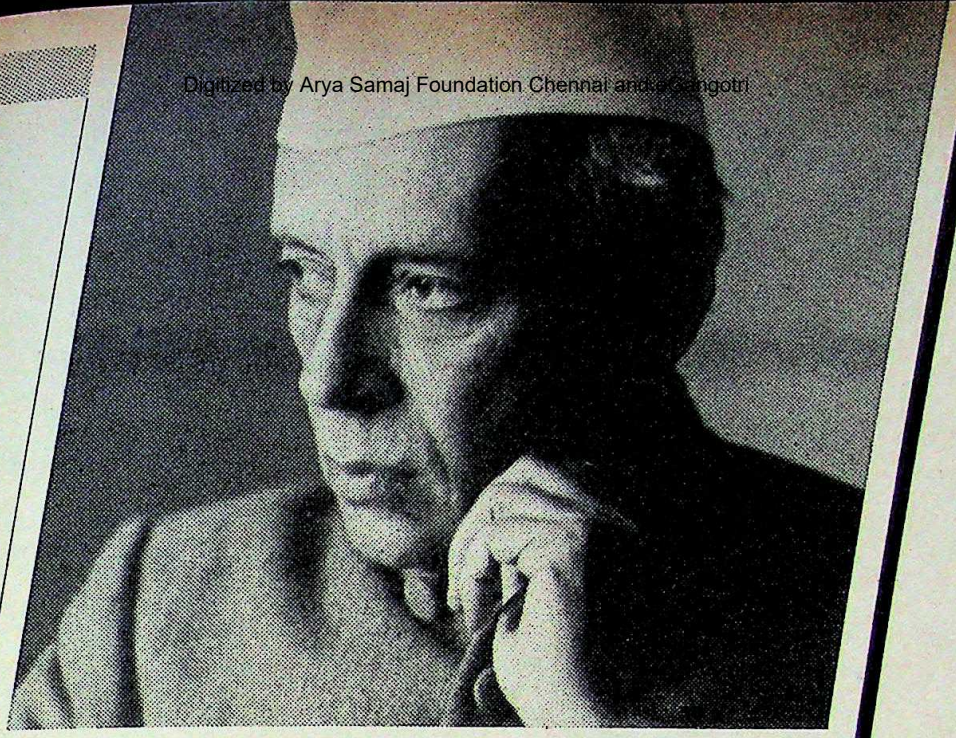

'The world has made astonishing progress in technology and material advancement. That is all to the good and we must take full advantage of it'. Jawaharlal Nehru

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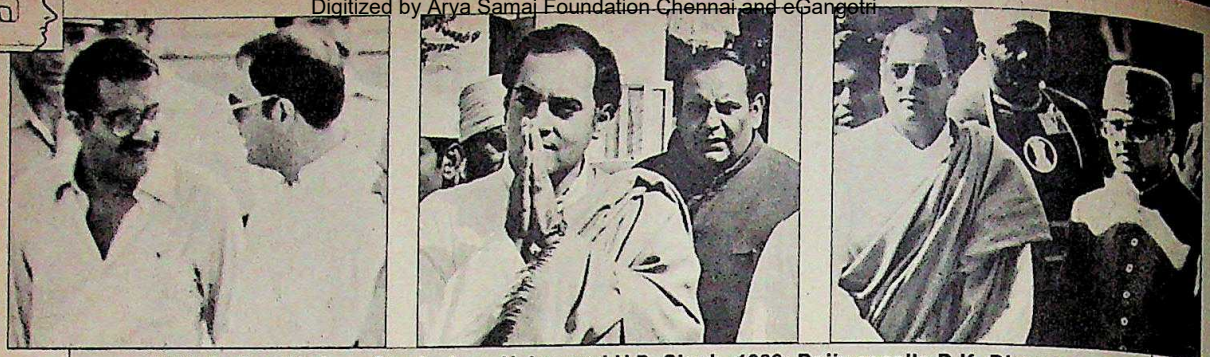

1984: Rajiv with Arun Singh; Arun Nehru and V.P. Singh. 1989: Rajiv recalls R.K. Dhawan

He was the quintessential Mr Clean, determined to rid Indian politics of its corrupt configuration and bring in a team that symbolised change. The return of Dhawan signalled that Rajiv had come full circle.

and since then the weather gods have compensated with two good harvests, giving the economy an added buoyancy. The real annual rate of growth of the economy is expected to be around 5.4 per cent compared to the 3.5 per cent 'Hindu rate of growth' witnessed in the past 25 years. The industrial growth rate, at over 9 per cent, is another indicator of better economic management.

But there is also a dark side to the harvest moon. Much of the economic growth has been fuelled by easy access to imports and deficit financing. Despite the positive signals in the economic landscape, the downside has led to tight foreign exchange reserves, inflation and a sharp rise in prices of essential commodities, now looming ever larger as a major election issue.

Even on the industrial front, his government's preferential treatment in the case of favoured business houses—the Ambanis, the Thapars—has become a controversial issue. More important, it has ensured that Rajiv's pro-rich image has stuck and no amount of populism on his part has been able to obliterate that entirely.

EVEN Rajiv's other projected success, foreign policy, is an ambiguous one. Certainly, India's voice is heard in world forums. Rajiv has also established a personal rapport with leaders like Mikhail Gorbachev and George Bush. Rajiv's supporters also point to his original ideas like the Africa Fund, Save The Planet fund and his push for disarmament, which have been adopted by various international forums.

But in its broader sweep, India's foreign policy has been hamstrung by ad-hocism. Under Rajiv, the bureaucrats in the Prime Minister's Office have had more say in matters of international diplomacy than the mandarins in the Ministry of External Affairs. Again, this is a reflection of Rajiv's later style, listening to and trusting just a few selected advisers. The result: people like Finance Secretary Gopi Arora are given sensitive diplomatic assignments, undercutting the ministry responsible in terms of its morale and effectiveness.

The last five years have seen as many as six foreign ministers, six ministers of state and six foreign secretaries—one of whom was sacked in public—leading to unnecessary upheavals in an area where continuity and coordination are of paramount importance.

However, success and failure is also relative. In the current electoral context, with an opposition that is still to project an aura of stability, Rajiv's performance will be weighed on a different set of scales. Ultimately, the verdict on Rajiv's reign will be given by the electorate which may not judge him as harshly as history might.

DILIP BOBB

VOICES

ABUSIVE

■ **Am I expected to reply to every dog that barks?**
—Responding to Ram Jethmalani's charges, in June 1987

■ **You (the CPI-M) always talk of Karl Marx, but you talk like Groucho Marx.**
—to CPI(M) MP Amal Datta, in March 1988

■ **It is a national affront not a National Front.**
—In December 1988

■ **These traitors (a reference to Ram Jethmalani) are roaming about freely and have even managed to enter Parliament.**
—August 1989

GAFFES

■ **When a giant tree falls, the earth shakes.**
—in November 1984 after the anti-Sikh riots

■ **If it (the Emergency) had finished off in a few months, it would have been okay.**
—In October 1985

■ **Conspiracies are being hatched and they have their godfathers abroad. *Hum unko naani yaad dila denge* (We will teach them such a lesson that they will remember their grandmothers.)**
—In May 1987

■ **They (Indian Airlines pilots) have them....A pool in itself is not all that expensive.**
—in November 1989

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Remember how we felt when the thunder of molten steel first resounded in an Indian steel plant...

When Satyajit Ray won the award at Cannes...

When our first oil well was spudded at Bombay High...

When India won the World Cup...

Now once again, its the same kind of feeling...

मारुति
MARUTI

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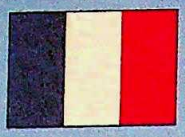
For India it is a dream realised. Exporting cars to France, one of the



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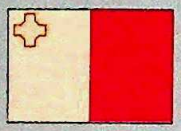

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Q U A L I T Y I S T H E B E S T

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What did the Skypak Man say to the "Little Boy" at Brussels?

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BIHAR

Mounting Mayhem

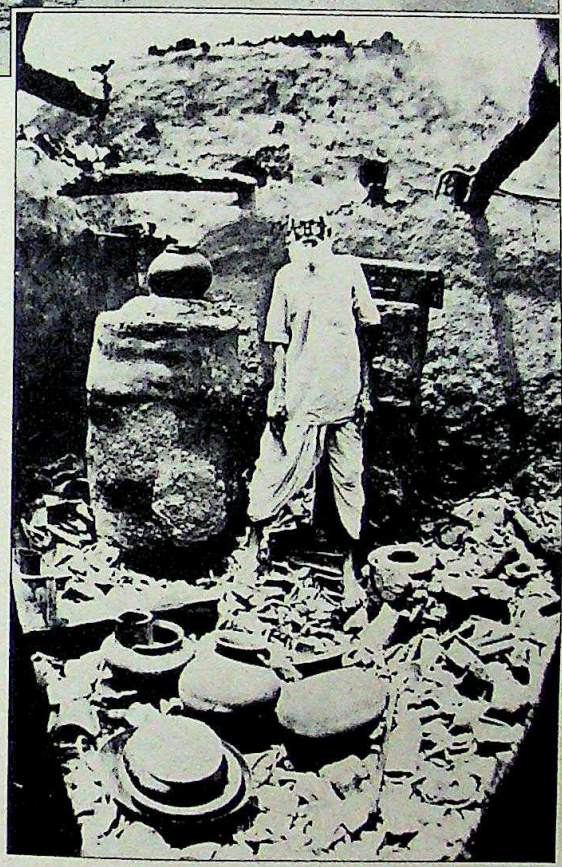
"Communal forces are again creating trouble, but we will check them."

S.N. SINHA
Chief Minister, Bihar

COMMUNAL riots piled on extremist killings. October proved a bloodsoaked month for Bihar. First came the massacre by Naxalites after a lull in their activities. Then the communal conflagration spread to Bihar after having wreaked havoc in other parts of the country. Even by the state's dismal standards, excessive blood was spilled in Bihar last month.

Communal rioting claimed the maximum number of lives. Violence first broke out in Jharia town of Dhanbad district on October 16 when a Ramshila procession was attacked. Though property worth lakhs was destroyed, mercifully, only one person died in the subsequent police firing. From Jharia in south Bihar, the communal virus soon spread to Sitamarhi, Bhagalpur and Madhubani districts—among others—in the north. Between October 23 and 25, bloody street battles between Hindus and Muslims were witnessed. The toll of human lives was considerable: 35, according to the Government's conservative estimates.

At Bhagalpur it was again the Ramshila procession that caused the trouble on October 24. Violence broke out when a Ramshila procession of about 10,000 to 15,000 persons tried forcing its way into Nathnagar, a Muslim area, despite being denied permission by the administration. As the police tried stopping the processionists, a large number of Muslims gathered. Someone fired a shot and soon a riot was on. The police resorted to firing, resulting in the loss of three lives. Chief Minister Satyendra Narain Sinha air-dashed to Bhagalpur the same night. Yet, the situation deteriorated even further the next day. Troops were called out and shoot-at-sight orders issued as stepped up violence claimed at least 13 lives.



Police patrol affected areas; and a victim amid the ruins of his home

In Sitamarhi too it was the Ramshila procession that led to the orgy of violence in which about 12 persons lost their lives on October 23. In an unforgiveable lapse, the administration allowed Hindus to take the procession through a Muslim-dominated area—a route they had not taken since 1954. Though Muslims had threatened violence if the procession passed through the route, their warning was not heeded. Equally shocking, the police outpost in the communally-sensitive village of Fathehpur was removed.

Similar events took place in Madhubani district: an unruly Ramshila procession, provocative slogans, stone pelting by Muslims, Hindus hitting back, the police opening fire.

In each instance the administration resorted to fire-fighting instead of preventive measures. Ignoring the consequences, it allowed the Ramshila processionists to raise provocative slogans. One sample: *Hamen dar nahin Babar ki santaan kaa* (We are not afraid of Babar's descendants). Villagers, in fact, complained of police inaction to the Central team comprising Minister of State for Home Santosh Mohan Dev, Finance Minister S.B. Chavan and AICC(I) General Secretary A.R. Mallu, who airdashed to Sitamarhi on October 24. And while demanding an immediate ban on Ramshila processions, CPI MP and AITUC President Chaturanan Mishra pointed out that only Congress(I)-ruled states were witnessing unbridled communal violence.

The chief minister, on his part, explained that it was not possible for

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Ramshila processions to be banned in Bihar when they were allowed elsewhere in the country. Said he: "How can we ban a procession when we were assured that it would be peaceful." For good measure he added: "Communal forces have again created trouble, but we will keep them in check."

Still, the state Government was undoubtedly embarrassed as the communal conflagration came on the heels of renewed extremist violence. On October 14, the chief minister proudly informed Delhi pressmen that the Naxalite threat had been contained in Bihar. As evidence, he pointed to the fact that there had been no extremist killings in the state for the last several months.

The very next day Sinha's complacence was shown to be ill-founded. On the afternoon of October 15, Naxalites struck in Sikaria village of Jehanabad district. As many as four armed squads—each made up of 15 men—of the Party Unity, a CPI(M-L) group, descended on the village. While three of the squads formed a ring around the village, keeping a lookout for the police, one made its way to a hut belonging to a woman named Kunti Devi. The armed extremists surrounded the hut and asked the inmates to come out and surrender. Four persons came out and their hands were promptly tied behind their backs. But the fifth occupant, Sahajanand, opened fire. The intruders set fire to the hut and as the man came running out, he was shot dead. Of the four hostages, two managed to escape while the other two were shot dead.

This time the police was literally caught napping: members of the Bihar Military Police manning the police post in Sikaria village were taking an afternoon nap while the extremists were murdering villagers.

All the victims belonged to the Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti (MKSS), a Naxalite group, whose rivalry with the Party Unity has already claimed many lives in Bihar. The Jehanabad killings therefore portend further bloodletting between the two groups. MKSS President Dr Vinayan even charged at a press conference in Patna that the Party Unity squads were eliminating those who had deserted them and joined the MKSS.

Much of the stepped up violence is linked to the general elections. Politicians are shamelessly playing communal politics in the hope of polarising communities and gaining votes. And in the cacophony and confusion of the electoral battle, old scores are being settled. November is unlikely to bring respite to Bihar. —UTTAM SENGUPTA

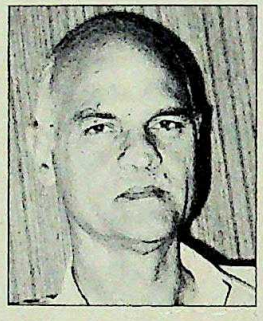
Posting Posers

Appointments create ripples

MADHYA Pradesh Chief Minister Motilal Vora is not known for springing surprises. But last fortnight, he created ripples among the state's IAS and IPS officers when he announced the names of the new chief secretary and the director-general of police (DGP).

Ram Singh Khanna's appointment as the chief secretary wasn't totally unexpected even though he was due to retire in two months, since he is the senior-most IAS officer in the state. It was Prem Dhar Malaviya's selection as the DGP that shocked the state's police community. Said a senior officer: "He was a dark horse."

Photographs by R.C. SAHU



S.V. Singh (left); and Malaviya: conflicting interests

Malaviya's appointment as director-general of police has caused more than normal resentment as he superseded six director-generals.

It does seem that the chief minister has applied double standards in making selections for the two critical posts. The chief secretary was chosen strictly on the basis of seniority. But now Khanna, who took over as chief secretary on September 30, has been granted six months' extension due to the elections.

In contrast, Malaviya, an officer of the 1957 batch, has been made DGP over the heads of eight officers including three of the 1956 batch and one of the 1957 group. Surendra Vikram Singh (1955 batch)—chairman, Madhya Pradesh Police Housing Corporation—has lodged a protest with the Government. Clearly, in the DGP's selection there seems to have been considerations other than what is normal.

The chief minister's prerogative to appoint a man of his choice is generally conceded. Yet, it is widely felt that Malaviya's case is unique. Till now, the Government used to select officers only from the director-general (DG) rank—even when it wanted to play the game of administrative musical chairs. For instance, during his last tenure, Vora had removed his predecessor's nominee, B.K. Mukherjee, and replaced him with M. Natarajan, an officer of equivalent rank. When Arjun Singh returned to power last year, he brought back Mukherjee as DGP and shunted out Natarajan. This year, Vora replaced Mukherjee with Natarajan once again.

Malaviya's appointment has caused more than normal resentment because the Government has broken convention to promote a relatively junior officer to the post. Till his appointment as the head of the department, the present DGP was just an inspector-general, while there were as many as six officers holding the rank of DG.

This is all the more surprising since many of the officers superseded enjoy reputations of competence. They include Dharm Narayan Ahuja (1955 batch) and Satish Chandra Vidyarthi (1957 batch). Vora also ignored the claim of the extremely competent Mohammed Qureshi (1956 batch) who has been recently appointed as special secretary in the Union Home Ministry—an important post in the IPS hierarchy.

The reasons for Malaviya's elevation are not clear. Some of the IPS officers whose claims have been ignored allege that Vora has repeatedly favoured his own community, and almost all the key posts in the state are manned by Brahmin officers. Others feel that though Malaviya has a reputation for honesty, he may have been seen as a more pliable officer as compared to most of the other contenders. Whatever the truth, it is clear that a well-tested administrative convention has once again been broken—and for no convincing reason. —N.K. SINGH

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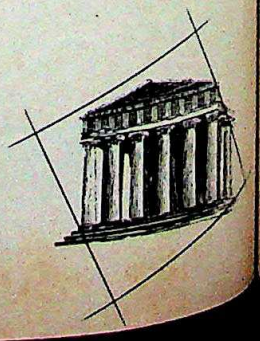

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VAYUDOOT

Rough Ride

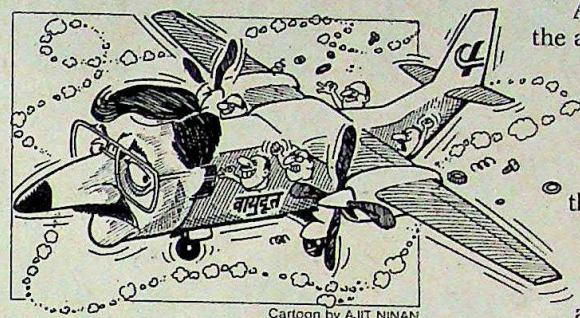
Airline in a bad shape

PARALYSIS seemed to have gripped India's tertiary airline, Vayudoot, last fortnight. Not only were operations haywire as most of its fleet was grounded with corroded wings and cracks, the staff was in disarray, ranged for and against Managing Director Harsh Vardhan.

It all began with the September 23 crash of a Dornier aircraft (toll: 11). Manufacturers and pilots having repeatedly warned of such a disaster in light of Vayudoot's poor maintenance, it opened a Pandora's box of resentment. Chief Commercial Manager M.P. Singh had already emerged in recent weeks at the head of a strong coterie of dissidents.

Vardhan acted fast. Three days after the crash, he sent in his resignation to Minister of State for Civil Aviation Shivraj Patil. Two days later, he promoted 48 staffers at various levels—including a number of Singh's supporters and made connections. Hundreds of staffers arrived in company transport, a few days later, at the Civil Aviation Ministry, asking that Vardhan's resignation not be accepted.

Along with the unprecedented promotions, Vardhan deftly sidelined Singh, designating him officer on special duty. Singh alleged he was eased out



Cartoon by AJIT NINAN

after he refused to waive the dues of some Vayudoot agents (about Rs 14 lakh in one case), and refused to continue giving advertisements worth tens of lakhs of rupees to unheard-of magazines.

Meanwhile, the director-general of civil aviation (DGCA) had ordered a 'one-time check' of Vayudoot's eight Dorniers. Wings of five were found corroded, two of them seriously enough for them to be grounded. As if that was not enough, a crack was discovered on one of Vayudoot's Avros. So all the Avros were also grounded for checks. For three days, then, there was not a single plane available for operations out of three of Vayudoot's six regional bases.

Amid this bleak scenario, the announcement of elections provided Vardhan a breather. The board of directors met routinely on October 23, ignoring his resignation entirely, and the ministry postponed a decision pending the crash inquiry. Ministry sources said they cannot think of anyone who'd be willing to take on a company in such bad shape. Losses continue to spiral, reportedly totalling Rs 4 crore in the three months from June to August. "His successor would come a cropper in six months," says a senior official. So, for the moment, Vardhan continues to hold the baby.

—DAVID DEVADAS

BOMBAY

Sordid Drama

THE roll-call of its past students reads like a directory of giants from India's freedom struggle. But times have changed for Bombay's Elphinstone College. Last fortnight, the 130-year-old government-run institution was rocked by scandal following the gang-rape of a student.

The outrage occurred while a group of students was having a party after college hours, to celebrate the nomination of Avinash Patil, a B.A. student and NSUI member, as representative to the Bombay University students' body.

According to reports, the party turned out to be an all-male Bacchanalia. But one unfortunate girl who stayed behind, was allegedly dragged by Avinash and five others into a room and gang-raped. Her skirt stained with blood, she took shelter in the quarters belonging to the watchman, who informed Principal S.V. Gholkar. The principal telephoned the girl's father, an IAS officer, who took away the girl.

No official notice was taken of the incident for over 10 days since both the principal and the girl's father were reluctant to acknowledge it. The traumatised girl was reportedly sedated and sent out of Bombay. Avinash, however, was seen at the hostel till a few days after the story broke in the press. In fact, he gave an interview, declaring: "Once again, I am stating that we did not commit any rape." He was not traceable subsequently, but his father, while refusing to comment on the incident, said: "Wait and see what happens."

FAWZAN H.

As news of the atrocity became public, a delegation of past students, led by jurist H.N. Seervai and political commentator Minoo Masani, met Gholkar, demanding an inquiry. Gholkar's role in the drama came in for criticism. He had denied the gang-rape to newsmen, and worse, defended Avinash against charges of drunken and violent behaviour in the past. Said Masani: "I was not happy with the principal's attitude."

Students of the college took to the streets with banners reading: 'Gholkar is a liar, Avinash is a rapist.' They met Joint Police Commissioner Arvind Inamdar, who ordered an inquiry. Women's groups took up the issue,

Photographs by SHAILENDRA YASHWANT

Gholkar (top), Avinash; and protesting students: public outcry

and, as morchas began to be held daily, the examinations were postponed.

Gholkar has now been transferred, but it is obvious that the reputation of the once premier institution has suffered irreparable damage.

—M. RAHMAN

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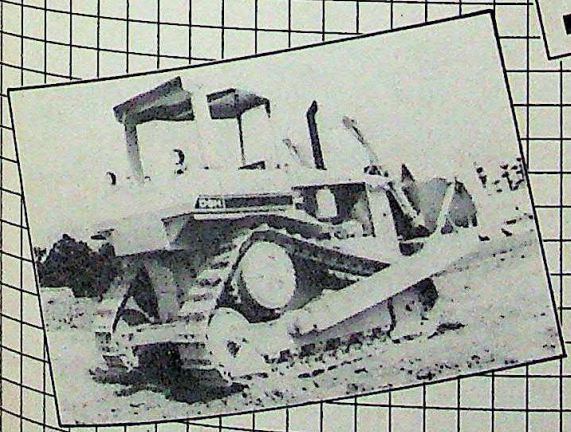

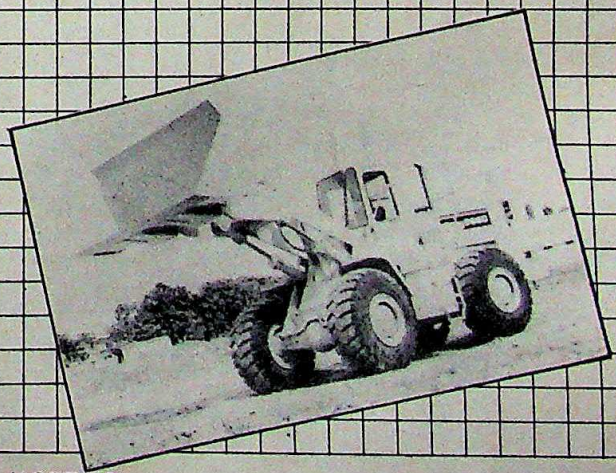

Source : Business Standard Survey of top 300 companies (1987-88)

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PRESSMAN

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UTTAR PRADESH

Private Army

Allahabad varsity in turmoil

BOOKS seem to have joined bullets in Allahabad University, where Vice-Chancellor Wahiduddin Malik has set up a unique private army, respectfully called the Allahabad University Security Force (AUSF). Recently, students and teachers began an indefinite strike—the first in 10 years—to protest against the controversial force, which has been accused of using strong-arm methods to silence the opponents of the vice-chancellor. Ostensibly, the AUSF had been set up to protect some of the top administrators of the university.

Malik put together the security force comprising 30 students and former students in February 1988. Five of its members are designated as senior security persons, and are paid Rs 1,000 while the rest are simply junior security persons earning Rs 750 per month. Malik's rationale for setting up the force is: "They would not let me function and the police never came to my help." But this convinces few on the campus. Most see the AUSF as a veritable agent of criminalisation in the university. U.S. Srivastava, formerly head of the zoology department and now member of the university's executive council, says: "Today we are afraid to attend executive council meetings because of these commandos of the vice-chancellor. It was never like this before."

In fact, the controversial security force has been involved in a number of incidents during the past year. The protests began when P.N. Pandey, superintendent of the Sunder Lal Hostel was assaulted on March 16, 1988. Two of the assailants identified were AUSF members. Then, less than a month later, on April 3, an AUSF member was killed in an encounter with the police in Ghazipur. On May 16, K.M. Sharma, superintendent of the G.N. Jha Hostel was beaten up by a group comprising some members of the force. A few days later, the daughter of Manish Dev, a university teacher, was allegedly molested by some AUSF men. Prabhakar Batt, former general secretary of the students union, who had tried to save her, said: "I had instantly recognised them as members of the AUSF. When I told them to leave the girl, they shot at me." Radhey Shyam, a university professor wrote to the state home minister, demanding a CID inquiry into the incident; he was soon abused and threatened by some persons. Later, when Bir Bahadur Singh, then chief minister, visited Allahabad, a delegation went to lodge a protest with him—but they were publicly attacked by AUSF members in the very presence of Allahabad's district magistrate and superintendent of police.

S.K. YADAV

Protests have followed wide-scale accusations that the AUSF uses strong-arm methods to silence the opponents of the vice-chancellor.

Protest against vice-chancellor's security force; (below) Malik

VIJAY AGGARWAL

Though the alarm bells have been ringing in the campus community for a while, the immediate provocation for the recent strike was a meeting of the executive council on September 9, where AUSF members armed with illegal weapons reportedly abused and threatened some council members who dared to oppose Malik. Allegedly, its members attempted to enter the council chamber to assault Ashok Bajpai—a former MLA and son of Union minister Rajendra Kumari Bajpai—who was demanding that Malik spell out the details of the expenses incurred to maintain the security force. Some teachers intervened to block their entry. After the meeting ended, Bajpai and one of his supporters, Shyam Pandey, managed to escape amid abuses and threats by the AUSF members. Says Bajpai: "Both of us were expecting to be assaulted any moment."

Next day, when the meeting resumed, B.K. Tripathi, a teacher-member of the council, aggressively asked the vice-chancellor to reply to a representation. Soon, he was bodily dragged, kicked and thrown out of the chamber by AUSF members while others watched helplessly. Just then, Bajpai and Pandey entered escorted by gun-wielding supporters and began verbally sparring with Malik. The vice-chancellor had to declare the meeting postponed.

Students, teachers and employees have lodged their protest with both Chief Minister N.D. Tiwari and Governor Mohammed Usman Arif, who is the chancellor of the university. In response, the Government has instituted an inquiry into the university's affairs and directed it to disband the security force. Meanwhile, Malik, who seems determined to oppose the Government, says: "If the Government can offer me protection I am ready to disband the force. But I am not going to listen to the Government unless it assures action against those who disrupted the executive council meeting by bringing in armed gunmen."

Despite Malik's self-righteous defence, most teachers are against the security force. Ranjana Kakkar, senior lecturer, says: "The commando force has to go. But at the same time the outsiders who are attempting to criminalise the campus must also be stopped." All the unions—of the teachers, students and employees—have formed a

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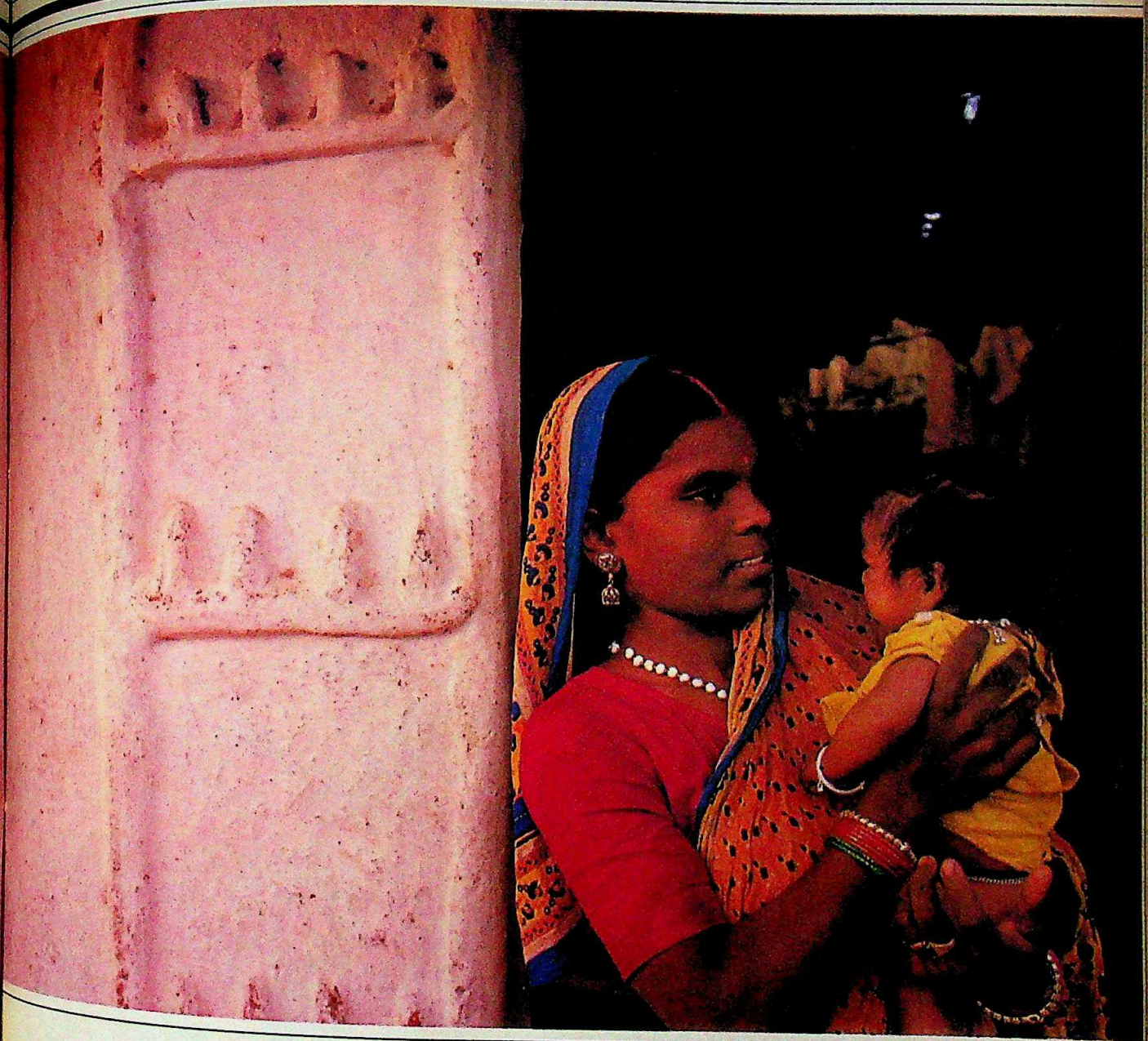

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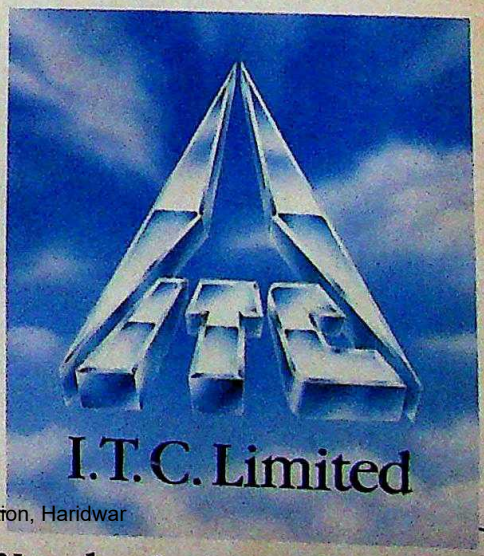

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joint council which, on September 16, called for an indefinite strike. D.N. Srivastava, general secretary of the council, says: "There would hardly be any teacher, student or employee leader including myself who hasn't been roughed up by these commandos."

Though most of the campus community opposes the AUSF, some teachers see merit in it. Says S.C. Srivastava, head of the Sanskrit department: "Many vested interests were against Malik when he joined." The vice-chancellor's supporters say that after he took over in April 1987, he was assaulted by students and employees on at least four occasions. The police never turned up and even refused to act on an FIR which named the offending students. Says Vijay Kumar Sinha, an executive council member: "Malik will not be able to function for five minutes without this security force."

If the force is disbanded, Malik would join the list of vice-chancellors in Indian universities who don't dare enter their own offices. In contrast, if the AUSF stays, it sets a dangerous precedent which recognises the criminalisation in Indian universities—but also propels it forward. The issue of disbanding the force and the ensuing strike has thrown Allahabad University into academic anarchy. The controversy needs to be settled fast if the university, which was once known as the Oxford of the East, is to be saved.

—DILIP AWASTHI

BOTTOMLINE BY D. BUNKER

Poll Pundits

RAJIV Gandhi's election announcement has caught everybody with their dhotis down and exposed the shortcomings in the Opposition camp. It also caught quite a few Congressmen nodding off. But in general, political pundits have hailed the elections as a masterstroke. While the political parties grapple their way into the electoral akhara, *the surprise move has sparked off intense debate among the pundits on what exactly prompted Rajiv to push the poll button. Here's how their conversation went:*

A Political Pundit: Gentlemen, since I happen to have the inside story, I will disclose why Rajiv chose November 22 as the right date. Actually, it's all in the dates. By November 2, Pakistan will have won the Nehru Cup. Rajiv can then project his party as the only one capable of blunting future threats from across the border. October 31 is Mrs Gandhi's death anniversary which will resurrect the sympathy wave. And November 14, all the hoopla over Nehru will rub off on his grandson.

Apolitical Pundit: You mean he performed this masterstroke just by looking at his desk calendar? I refuse to believe that. Remember how he confused August 15 with January 26? Dates is just not his thing. It must be something else.

A More Political Pundit: Take it from someone who knows the real inside story. It was all due to Mani Shankar Aiyar. His resignation prompted Rajiv to call the elections early. You know the saying, mani makes the mare go.

Apolitical Pundit: But why should that matter?

The More Political Pundit: Only us insiders know that Mani's quitting would have led to a deluge. If he stands for elections, Partha is certain to demand a ticket to contest against him. Gopi Arora will then demand a ticket, so will Suman Dubey if he can find a safe constituency. I even heard Ronen Sen asking for a ticket but that may have been for Kuala Lumpur. But can you imagine the PM without the PMO? It's like Macbeth without the ghost. Rajiv had no choice.

Apolitical Pundit: It all sounds very bizarre to me. Surely there must be something more to it?

Another Political Pundit: Of course, there is. I have it straight from the mare's mouth. It was all because of the President.

Apolitical Pundit: You mean another Zail Singh? That sounds more like it. But frankly, I didn't think he'd go so far.

Another Political Pundit: He didn't. That's the problem. Rajiv wanted him to take an African safari. Apparently there are several invitations pending for years from that part of the world. But the President refused to go till Rajiv announced the election dates. He said he thinks the Indian elections will be more interesting than an African safari.

Apolitical Pundit: That's a wild theory if you ask me.

Yet Another Political Pundit: Ask me and I'll tell you the inside of the inside story. He wanted to catch his own partymen off balance.

Apolitical Pundit: That he did. But what for?

Yet Another Political Pundit: You have to be a political pundit to read Between The Lines and figure out what is really happening. Let me explain. By catching them off balance, he gets them to agree to let him finalise the list of candidates. That way, he is sure he will include all the people he trusts. Simple isn't it?

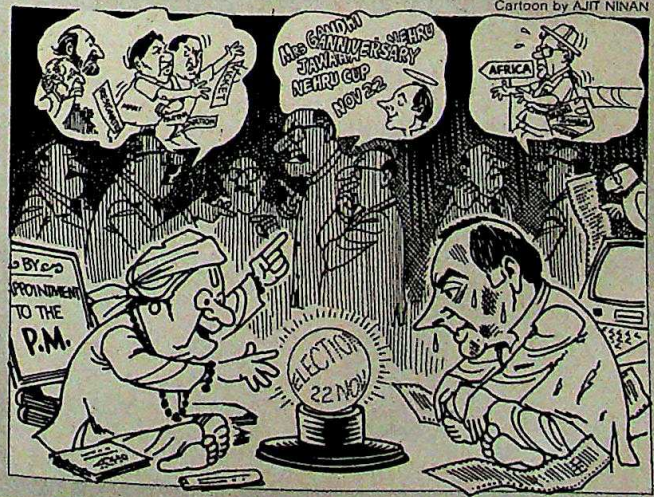
Apolitical Pundit: A bit too simple. How many trusted candidates are his?

Yet Another Political Pundit: Five. But that doesn't matter. It's the message not the number that is important.

Apolitical Pundit: That's terrible election arithmetic. I'm still convinced there's more to it than meets the eye.

A Plain Pundit: Of course there is.

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



Apolitical Pundit: Who are you? Not another political pundit I hope.

A Plain Pundit: I'm just a plain pundit. But I also happen to be Rajiv's PA. Private Astrologer, that is. Actually it's very simple. He asked for the most auspicious dates and November 22 came up.

Apolitical Pundit: You mean this so-called masterstroke was because you picked a date from a hat?

A Plain Pundit: I didn't. My parrot did.

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KARNATAKA

Secular Stand

● IT'S one of the country's most powerful religious seats. And it recently acquired a new incumbent. Last fortnight, Siva Rama Anjaneya, 38, better known as Bharati Theertha Swami, was installed as the 36th Shankaracharya of the Sringeri Sharada Peetham following the death of Sri Abhinava Vidya Teertha Swamiji last month. The coronation of the Swami had a touch of glamour. As he

MUSHTAQ AHMAD

The 36th Shankaracharya

ascended the silver throne, a 6.5-kg diamond-and-pearl studded gold crown was placed on his head.

Also, the regular quota of political luminaries was present at the coronation on the banks of the Tungabhadra in Karnataka: pre-eminently Governor P. Venkatasubbaiah and Union Steel Minister M.L. Fotedar. Conspicuously absent was former chief minister R.K. Hegde, busy with poll preparations.

Mercifully, the Swami appeared to be eschewing communal politics. On the Ayodhya dispute, he said: "All parties concerned should accept the court decision as final." Clearly, a blow to the fundamentalists.

ASSAM

Hostility at Home

SAIBALDAS

Mahanta: flood of troubles

● WHILE the Bodo stir continues to simmer, the All Assam Students Union (AASU) is threatening to add to the Assam Government's woes by launching its own agitation.

Last fortnight, AASU, which brought the AGP and Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta to power, called for a peaceful bandh in the state, meeting with success. It also launched an indefinite non-cooperation stir and threatened to sever all links with the AGP. Its complaints: the Government's failure to revise the electoral rolls to identify foreigners, rehabilitation of the "martyrs" of the Assam movement and, most importantly, withdrawal of the Congress(I)-instituted criminal cases against AASU activists during the movement.

The chief minister has managed to defuse the crisis by promising to hold talks on the issues. But this is likely to provide him only a temporary respite.

PUNJAB

Warring Women

● Amarjit Kaur and Rajinder Kaur Bhathal, both senior Congress(I) members, were close friends. And so, after Bhathal was appointed chairman of the Punjab State Social Welfare Board in August 1988, Amarjit was made the head of the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) at Delhi.

But within two days the friends crossed swords with Amarjit complaining against Bhathal's "arbitrary functioning".

From then on it has been a litany of complaints. Bhathal complained that Amarjit—who had unsuccessfully contested the Patiala parliamentary seat in 1985—was partial to that district in the implementation of socio-economic projects. Amarjit denied the charge saying that projects for other districts like Sangrur—Bhathal's constituency lies in this district—were not cleared due to lack of relevant data. The denouement in this irrational scuffle came when the CSWB froze funds of the state board. But the battle continues.

Amarjit Kaur (left) and Rajinder Kaur Bhathal: bitter rivalry

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

BHAWAN SINGH

MAHARASHTRA

Question of Survival

● THE trade in human organs took a macabre twist in Bombay last fortnight when a patient suffering from renal failure narrowly escaped receiving a kidney from an AIDS-infected donor. The patient, a 35-year-old woman from Kashmir, was offered the kidney for Rs 25,000 through an agent. As tests were being conducted on the donor before removing his kidney, Dr I.S. Gilada, secretary-general of the Indian Health Organisation, who has been campaigning relentlessly on the AIDS issue, was tipped off about the dubious organ transfer. The prospective kidney donor, an unemployed graduate, was a professional blood donor notorious for his stated resolve to continue selling blood in spite of being an AIDS-carrier. He has escaped detention by using false names at different blood banks.

According to Gilada, he was informed by another regular blood donor that an AIDS-infected blood donor was about to sell his kidney. Gilada traced the man to an expensive downtown hospital and the kidney transfer was abruptly called off.

Dr Gilada: saving grace

The sensational case once again highlights the need both for compulsory AIDS tests for blood donors and for rehabilitating professional AIDS-infected donors who continue to sell their blood to survive.

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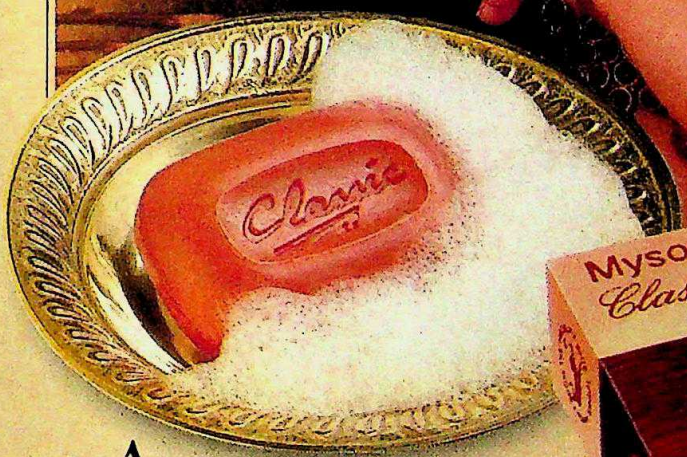
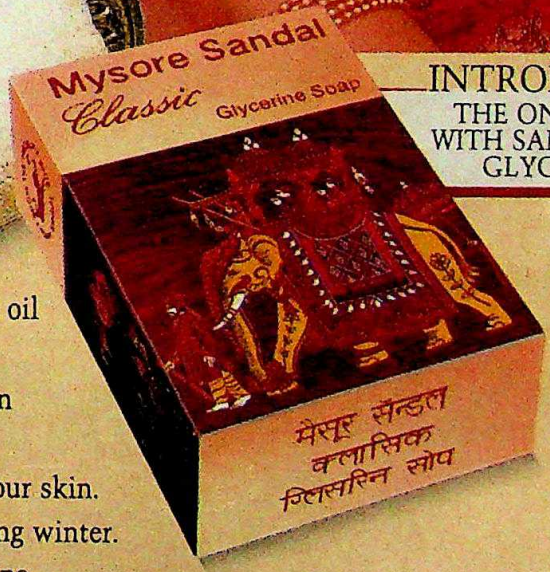
THE NEW INDIAN CLASSIC





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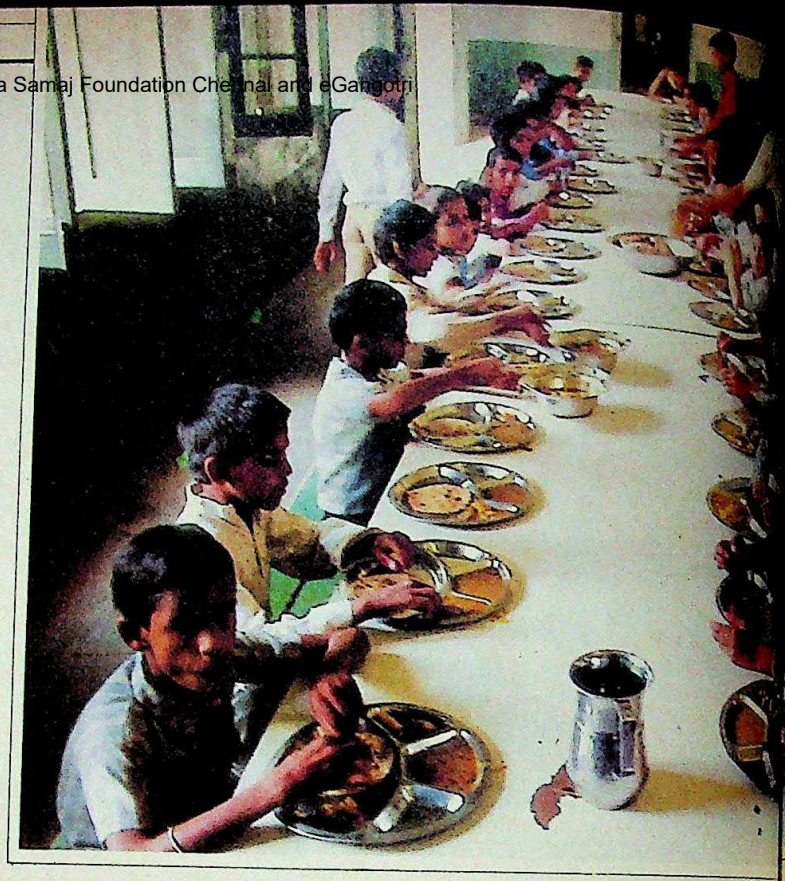
In the apathetic absence of state policy, Prakash Chand Joshi, an RSS activist, launched a humanitarian crusade in 1986 to provide a future for Punjab's 8,000 children orphaned by terrorist bullets. Joshi died last fortnight, but his message is being picked up by others: do not build walls of communal tension, instead build a child's future.



PUNJAB

Rescuing An Orphaned Future

Q. *What happened to your father?*
A. *Uggarvadis* (terrorists) came to the shop and killed him.
Q. *Who is a terrorist?*
A. They are *dakus* (dacoits).
Q. *Why did they kill your father?*
A. I don't know.

AS Rajiv Kumar, 5, says these words, his eyes transmit confusion, pain and fear, symptomatic of the trauma faced by the 8,000-odd children in Punjab orphaned by the terrorist gun. Left fatherless, economically vulnerable, these children—together with their widowed mothers—present the most tragic face of terrorism. In the apathetic absence of state policy, many of these orphans are left with nothing but the memories that haunt their everyday existence.

On the fateful day, Rajiv's brother, Sanjeev Kumar, 8, remembers sitting with his father in their Amritsar ration shop, readying to pull the shutters down. In the enveloping darkness, a group of masked men entered the shop and shot his father dead at point-blank range. Sanjeev still wonders why his father was killed. He says: "I feel scared at night and often dream of daddy."

Traumatic memories also haunt Deepak Kumar, 4, who began to cry when he saw someone resembling his father. These are few of the many traumatised orphans in today's Punjab who live in shattered households, their mothers forced to become breadwinners. But bread is scarce.

Amid this darkness, one man's courageous crusade has lit an inspiring flame of hope. He is Prakash Chand Joshi, convener of the Peedit Prakalp Sewa Samiti, an organisation he conceived and almost single-handedly oversaw to help the innocent victims of Punjab's human tragedy. Deeply moved by the plight of children orphaned by terrorist violence, Joshi, an RSS member, started a unique 'adopt an orphan' scheme by convincing the more affluent people in the state to 'adopt' a child by paying Rs 1,000 annually towards his upbringing. The money is used for paying school fees, buying uniforms and books. The idea is to provide an economic pillar to help build a child's future.

The scheme took root when Joshi toured villages to visit families struck by terrorists and noticed little children clinging to their mothers. Or just sitting alone in a corner, looking lost, their toys lying abandoned. Fear, not grief, gripped them. Touched by their innocent suffering and concerned about their future, Joshi decided to develop the scheme in earnest.

Armed with photographs of the children, Joshi canvassed potential adopters in homes and factories. Some apprehended terrorist reprisal. But, in general, the response has been gratifying. Says Baldev Chawla, the samiti president: "The scheme has met with an overwhelming response." Till now, 1,200 children have been adopted, including one by former chief minister Surjit Singh Barnala.

For Joshi and his colleagues in the samiti, the continuing terrorist violence keeps them occupied. Whenever news of a terrorist attack reaches them, the samiti's workers rush to the affected village and identify the bereaved children. Comforting the widows, they record the names of the children, advising the relatives to visit their Amritsar office for adoption.

In several cases, all the male members of a family have been killed. The women can't even bear the funeral costs. In such cases, the samiti provides the family with Rs 3,000 to Rs 5,000 for immediate expenses. Chawla says: "It's not the funeral alone, but questions like, how will I

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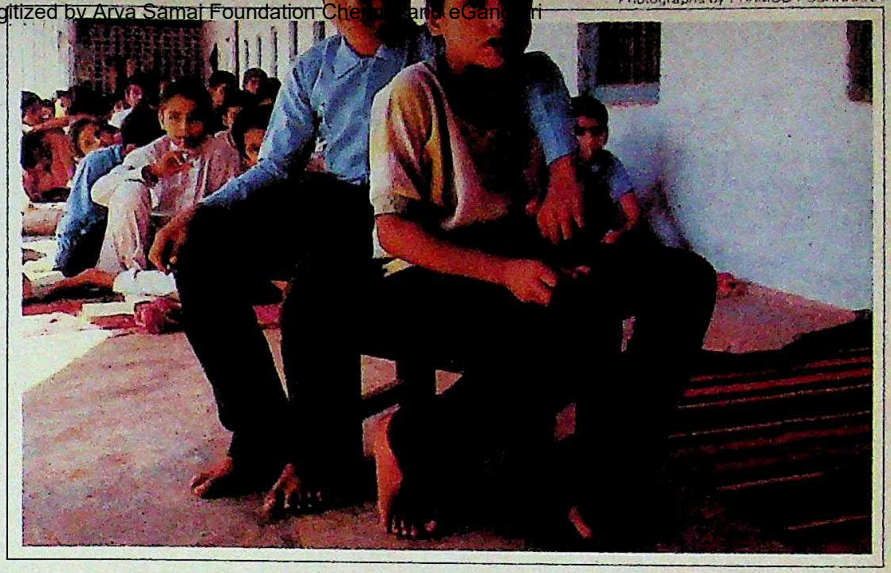


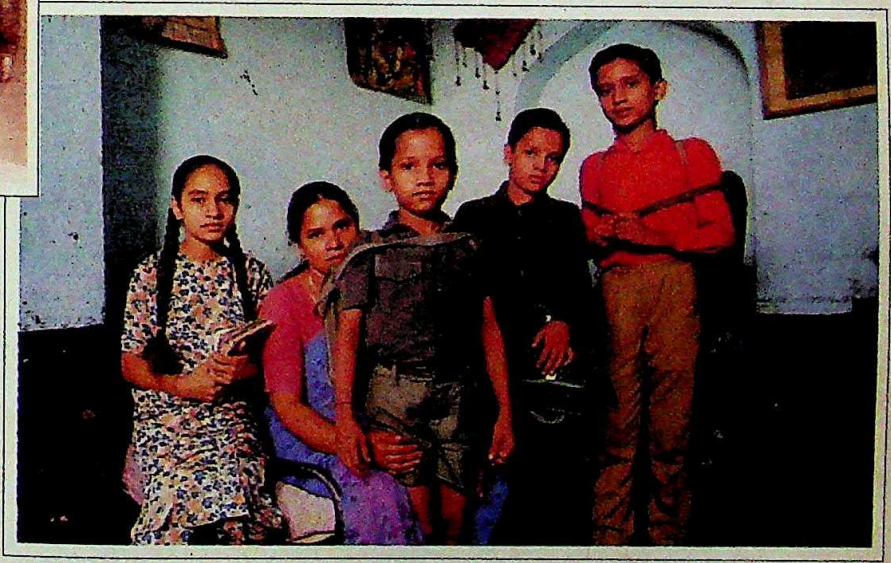
Adopted by the Jainendra Gurukul High School and housed in its hostel, Rajiv and Sanjeev Kumar are once again beginning to find the security which had been completely shattered by terrorist bullets.

Children at the gurukul; (inset) late Prakash Chand Joshi: pioneering work

be able to feed and educate my children, which seem to be weighing on the mothers' minds."

Sampati Devi, a mother of four is prototypical. Disaster struck when her husband, Madan Lal Sharma, a shopkeeper, was killed with 21 others on May 21, 1986, in Amritsar's Krishna Nagar. The samiti has found foster parents for the Sharma children, Rajni, Deepak, Vijay and Ajay. Although Sampati Devi has been appointed as a peon at the Chief Agriculture Office, her salary of Rs 1,075 a month is not enough to support four children. The adoption scheme has come as welcome relief, allowing the children to continue with their education. More importantly, it gives them a chance to go out, to be away from a surcharged atmosphere at home. To play and mix with children of their own age. To once again, feel normal.

By highlighting the seriousness of the problem, the samiti is attracting an increasing number of people wanting to 'adopt' orphans. Last month, the Amritsar association of the heads of public schools announced that they would adopt five children each. Thirty principals have already started enrolling orphaned children. Arun Arora, the association's general secretary, says: "There are 400 public schools in Amritsar and they are all willing to co-operate."



The Peedit Prakalp Sewa Samiti's unique 'adopt an orphan' scheme has made it possible for widowed Sampati Devi's four children Rajni, Vijay, Ajay and Deepak to continue their education.

The Jainendra Gurukul High School in Panchkula recently adopted 50 children, housing them in its hostel. Ved Prakash Jain, the gurukul president, explained: "They need a total change of scene." Recalling the inmates who arrived two years ago, he says: "Most of them behave normally but the memories are yet to fade."

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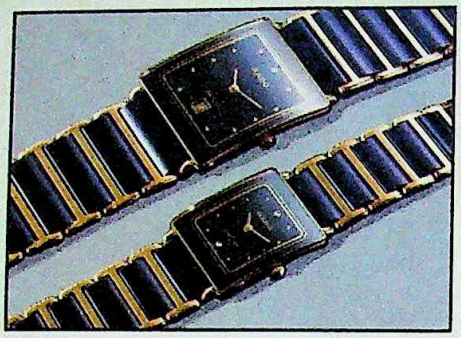
The future on your wrist.



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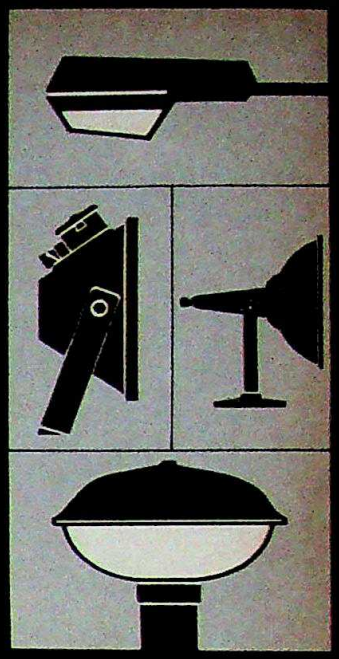

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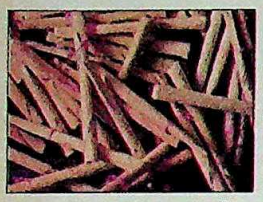
BEEDI BARONS

Rolling in Money



The Rs 3,000-crore labour-intensive beedi industry is dominated by a few families which came up the hard way. Bound by traditional values, many of them reject modern management techniques. But winds of change have started blowing and a few are diversifying and also installing computers.

SCENE: an austere, dusty, decrepit building in Mysore. Inside: a vast, dimly lit, cavernous hall. Dozens of clerks sit in stolid silence, heads buried in jumbo-sized ledger books. The highest paid employee is the general manager. Take home pay: Rs 2,500. A few accountants are paid a measly Rs 500. Often the boss spends as much as 90 minutes poring over accounts and signing cheques, some of them for as little as Rs 25.

No, this is not the headquarters of a sick industry, making a last-ditch attempt to keep its head above water. This is Mangalore Ganesh Beedi Works, the country's largest manufacturer of beedis. Daily production: 13 crore beedis. Placed end to end, that would stretch all the way from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. The company disburses around Rs 20 lakh daily to a lakh of workers engaged in collection, production and marketing. In 1988, the annual turnover was Rs 150 crore.

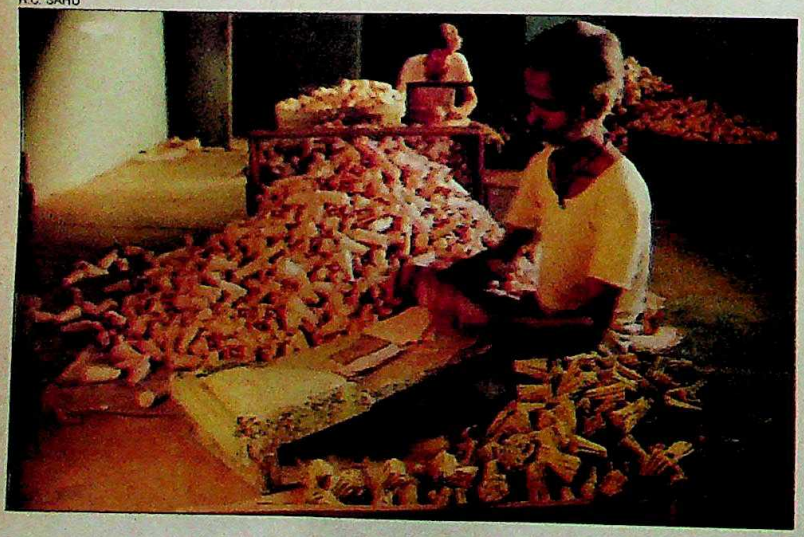
And profits? Since the company is a closely-held private company, figures are not easy to come by. But what is known is that seven members of the family which runs Mangalore Ganesh together paid Rs 5 crore as income tax and find a place among the top 10 income tax payers in the country.

But despite such phenomenal wealth, the owners of Mangalore Ganesh are merely the first among equals amidst India's beedi kings—spread across Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Prominent among them: the Ahmedabad-based Prabhudas Kishoredas Tobacco Products Ltd and allied firms (annual turnover: Rs 91 crore) the Jabalpur-based Mohanlal Hargovinddas (Rs 65 crore) or the Sagar-based Chottabhai Jethabhai (Rs 60 crore) and Bhagwandas Shobhalal (Rs 20 crore).

It is not just beedis that are their concern. Many of them dabble in politics. The Mangalaore Ganesh beedi family back the RSS and BJP and

Making beedis: traditional methods

R.C. SAHU



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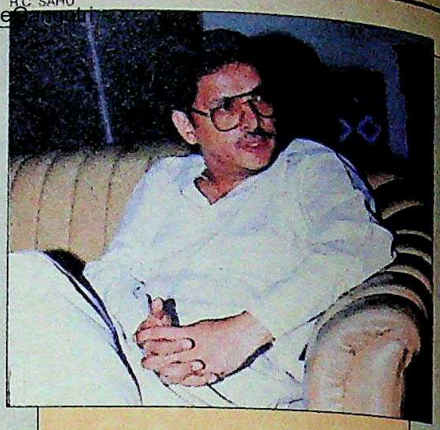
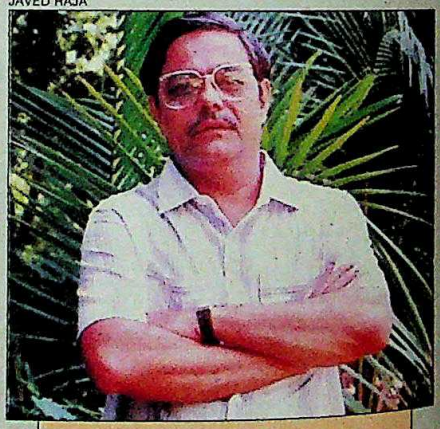


SHRAVAN KUMAR PATEL
Partner, Mohanlal Hargovinddas
Annual turnover: Rs 65 crore

The group has 6,000 regular employees, pays nearly Rs 10 crore in excise duty and owns "more vehicles than the Mafatlals".

JAVED RAJA



RAJNIKANT BHAI PATEL
Partner, Prabhudas Kishordas
Annual turnover: Rs 91 crore

The company has installed computers and has promoted a soyabean extraction plant with a turnover of Rs 1.5 crore.

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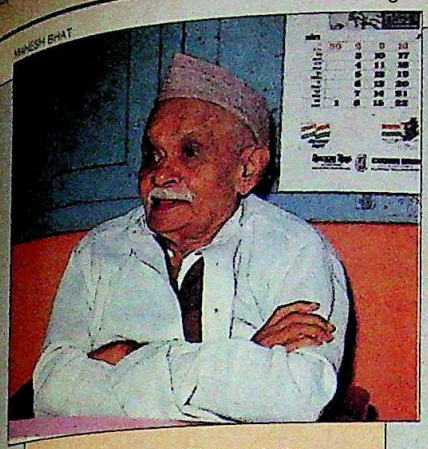
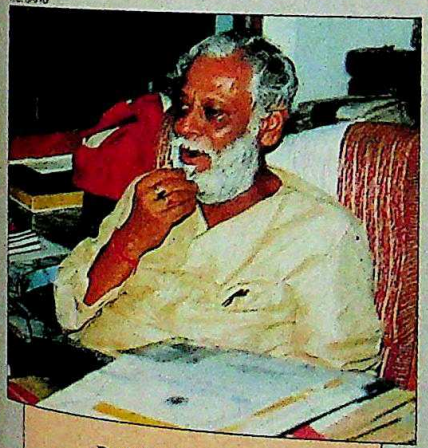
MAHESH BHAT



RAGHURAM PRABHU
Founder, Mangalore Ganesh Beedis
Annual turnover: Rs 150 crore

Prabhu, who was a beedi roller, went into business in 1932. Now seven family members are among the top ten tax-payers.

P.C. SAHU



DALCHAND JAIN
Partner, Bhagwandas Shobhalal
Annual turnover: Rs 20 crore

Dalchand's father used to hawk clothes and then started rolling beedis. Today the company makes 2 crore beedis everyday.

one of the partners, Ananda Rao, was jailed during the Emergency. In Madhya Pradesh, which produces 65 per cent of the country's tendu leaves and one-fourth of its beedis, the beedi kings are potent political players. Beedi baron Vithal Bhai Patel is a member of the Motilal Vora Cabinet. And a dozen MLAs, are either beedi manufacturers or their nominees.

All this pelf and power is founded on a simple product—bits of tobacco leaf wrapped up in a leaf of the tendu tree which is found in the forests of central India. The two met about a century ago, and the poor man's smoke was born. Small and easy to carry, it soon edged out the *hookah* and the *chillum*. And so was born a flourishing industry.

Today, the beedi industry employs 50 lakh labourers in a dozen states. Everyday, they turn out about 150 crore beedis. In some states, it is the second largest employer—after agriculture. Last year, the industry's total turnover was estimated to be between Rs 2,500 crore and Rs 3,000 crore. Annual wage bill: Rs 700 crore. Excise revenue paid to the Central Government: about Rs 200 crore. This year, with beedi prices nearly doubling, turnover is expected to reach a staggering Rs 5,000 crore.

It's a phenomenal achievement for an industry that operates without giant factories, power or machinery. A decade short of the 21st century, beedis are still laboriously rolled by hand in dingy surroundings in the homes of workers. *Sattedars* distribute the tendu leaf, tobacco and thread to the workers. They also pay wages at government rates.

But the labourers are not exactly overjoyed by the meagre wages they are paid. K. Radhakrishna Rao, general secretary of the Mangalore Ganesh Beedi Workers' Association, says about his employers: "They may be the country's highest tax payers, but they cough up the money by hitting workers in the stomach." Retorts Janardhan Rao, son-in-law of the patriarch: "We pay what we think they deserve. We do not earn easy money to throw it about."

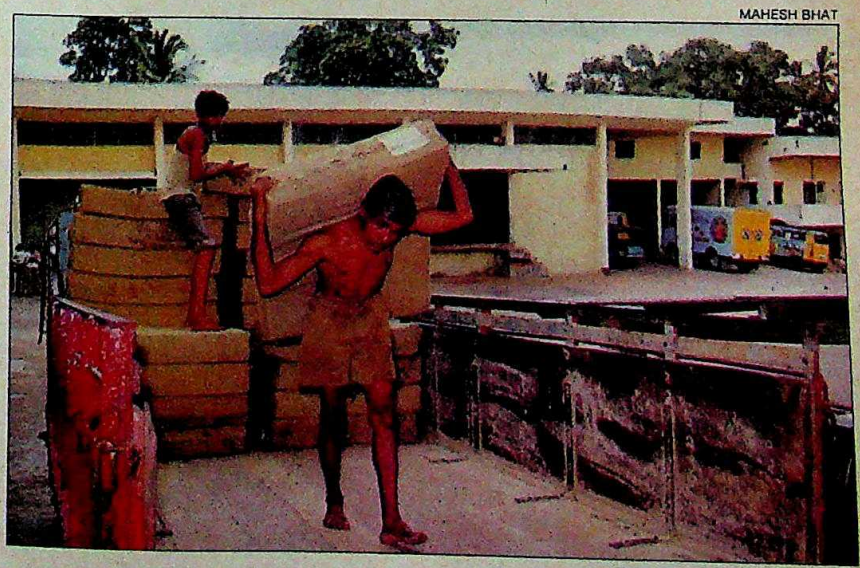
HIS statement is questionable. Estimates of the industry's profit margins vary, depending on who's quoting them. Laxmi Narayan Silakari, who has been working among the beedi workers of Madhya Pradesh since 1950, says: "There is a 40-per cent profit on turnover." Industrialists put the figure at a modest 1 to 3 per cent. But there are not many takers for that figure. Tendu traders, for instance, often used to complain that they could hardly make ends meet. Last year, the Madhya Pradesh Government handed over the tendu trade to cooperatives. In the very first year, they earned a huge profit of Rs 200 crore on a turnover of Rs 400 crore.

This thriftiness is probably born of the beedi kings' humble beginnings. Mangalore Ganesh's patriarch, Raghuram Prabhu, was himself a beedi roller. In 1932, he borrowed a few hundred rupees and went into business. When the business grew, he roped in his brother-in-law, B. Madhava Shenoy, a clerk in the Mysore Palace office. The two would travel on bicycles distributing beedis. It was a hard road but they persevered. By the time they handed over charge to their heirs in the '70s, the empire was worth a few crores.

In Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat too,

Beedis being transported

MAHESH BHAT



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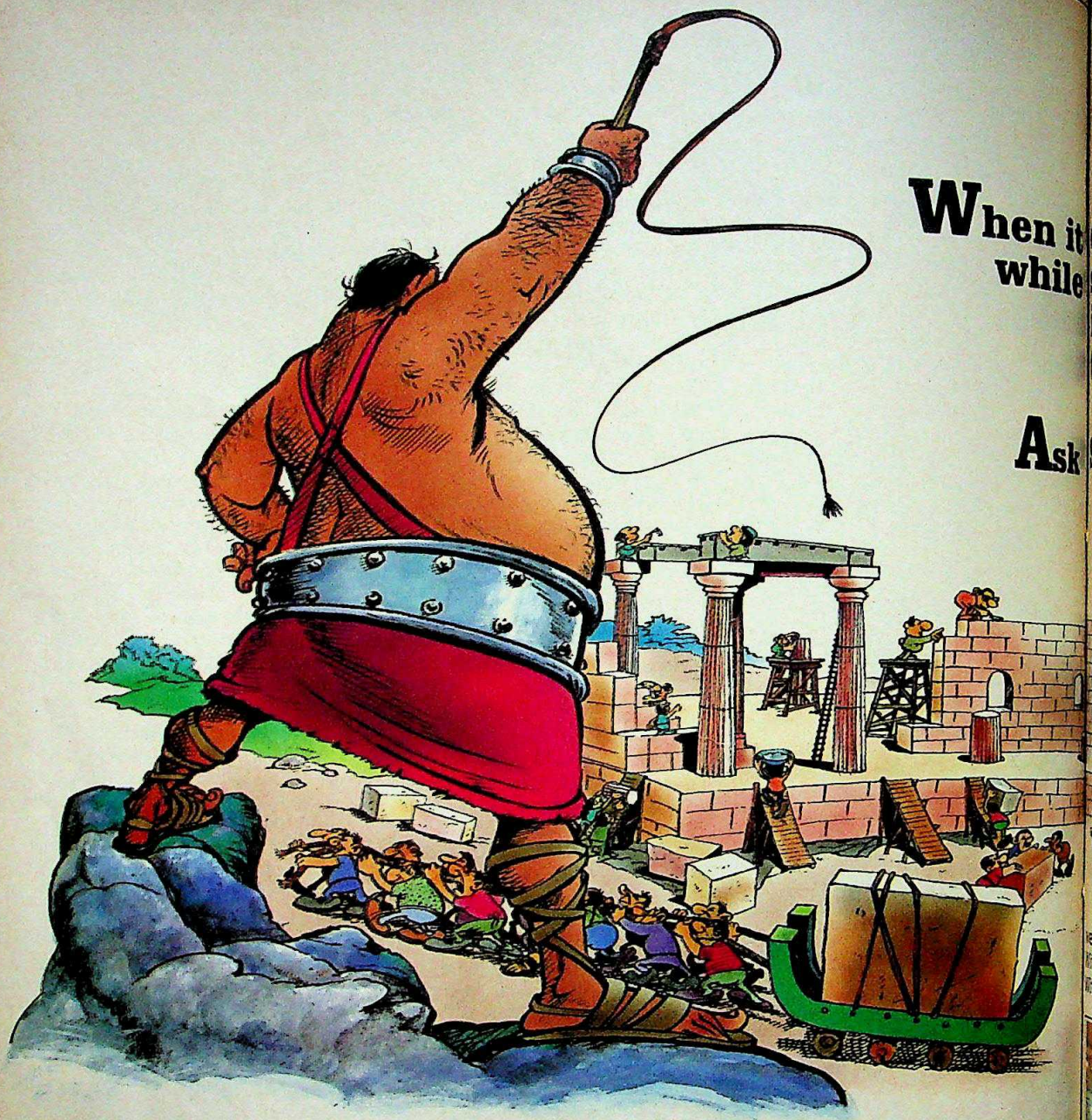

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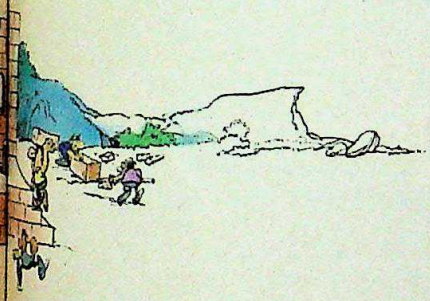

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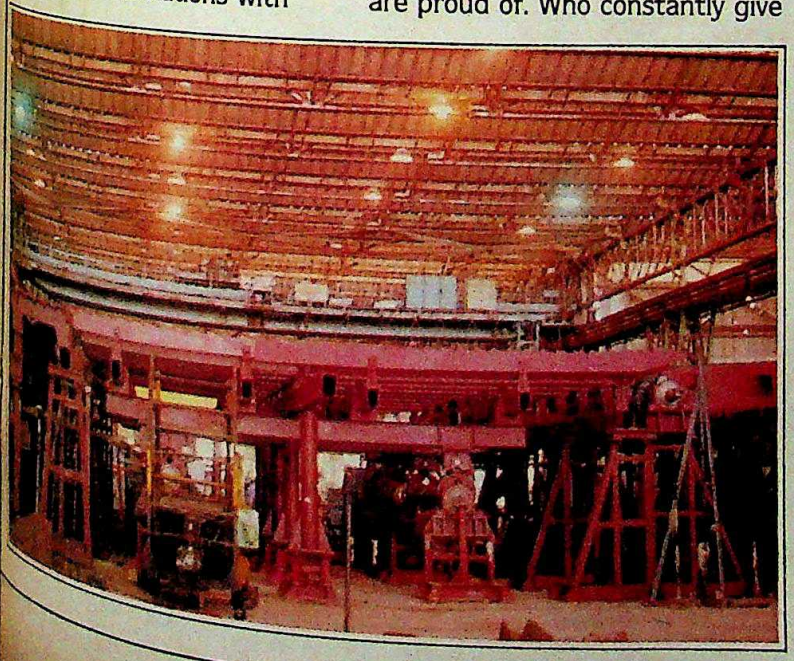

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it's the same rags-to-riches story at every beedi company. Sixty years ago, the Prabhudas Kishoredas family began its journey to prosperity when Prabhudas Bhai quit his job as *munim* in a beedi firm in Jabalpur to launch a unit of his own in Ahmedabad. Soon, his two sons, Jaswantlal and Prahlad, joined him and set up another unit in Damoh, Madhya Pradesh. Today, the group—with its flagship Telephone brand—is controlled by 11 brothers and cousins but the reins are held by Rajnikant Bhai Patel and Ashok Bhai Patel. It makes 8.60 crore beedis and pays Rs 3.60 lakh in excise duty every day. The family's Beediwal Park in Ahmedabad has six swank bungalows.

It's the same story at Mohanlal Hargovinddas. Mohanlal used to roll beedis by the roadside at Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh until he started marketing them under the Sher (Lion) brand name in 1902. The company grew to be the country's largest, until it was overtaken by Mangalore Ganesh. Mohanlal handed over control to his adopted son, Parmanand Bhai, 68, who has since retired.

Everyday, the company and its five allied firms which have 6,000 regular employees, pays Rs 10 crore as excise duty and owns "more vehicles than the Mafatlals". The company turns out 6 crore beedis at a dozen centres and hawks them all across north India. And it exports beedis with filters.

Parmanand Bhai and his sons—elder son Shravan Kumar Patel is a Congress(I) MLA—are non-smokers and even advocate a ban on smoking. But such sentiments haven't slowed down the Patels. They live in style in a double-storeyed mansion fitted with Italian marble, huge chandeliers and period furniture.

ARVINDBHAI PATEL
Partner, Chhotabhai Jethabhai
Annual turnover: Rs 60 crore

The winds of change are blowing. Computers have been installed and Arvindbhai's only son is studying in London.

With a turnover of Rs 60 crore, Chhotabhai Jethabhai is just a step behind Mohanlal Hargovinddas. But the company has seen far more glorious days. At one time, it was the country's second-largest beedi manufacturer. Leading brand: 27 No. Then, due to a family feud and a long legal battle, business was suspended for over one year in 1974. Now 40 production centres make 4.25 crore beedis a day.

The group was set up by the brothers Javer Bhai and Jetha Bhai in 1919 in Gondia, Maharashtra. Twenty years, later, the Sagar branch was opened which later became the headquarters. During the Second World War, the group established its presence in the North-east when supplies were disrupted in that region. Today, it is a force in other states in the north and the east also. Last year, it paid Rs 8 crore as Central excise and Rs 1.5 crore in sales tax on tendu leaves.

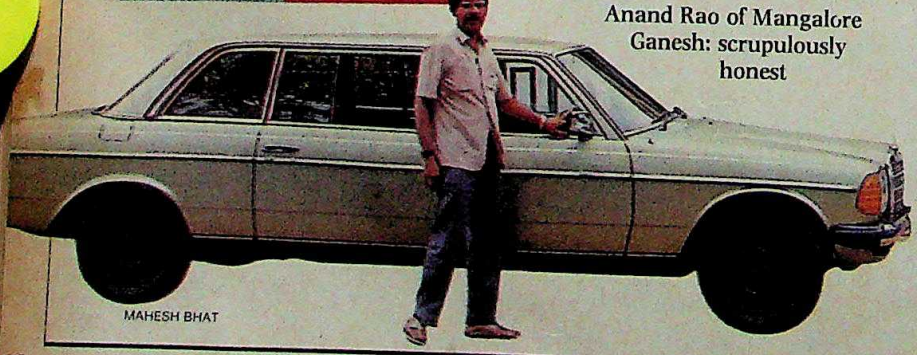
Bhagwandas Jain, founder of Bhagwandas Shobhalal, used to hawk clothes and other goods, moving from village to village in Sagar district. In 1920, he started rolling beedis himself, and then gradually began employing labourers. Recalls his son, Dalchand Jain, 61, Congress(I) MP from Damoh: "My father used to walk for miles, later he purchased a bicycle and in 1930, he bought his first Morris." Today, the firm and its allied companies have a turnover of Rs 20 crore and manufacture about two crore beedis every day. But in an age of digital quartz, the beedi industry has remained a clanging medieval clock. As Janardhan Rao, partner of Mangalore Ganesh says, "We have no faith in all these management techniques and gadgets. Success has come to us even as we have continued to follow what others condescendingly refer to as traditional methods."

But nevertheless the first winds of change have begun to blow in the beedi industry which clings to traditional values. Mohanlal Hargovinddas has installed computers and has also set up laboratories and advertised its products on film and radio. At Chhotabhai Jethabhai too, computers have been installed, though *munims* are still relied upon. The only son of Arvindbhai Patel, senior partner of Chhotabhai Jethabhai, attends a school in London. Rajnikant Bhai is sending his children to an English-medium school "so that they don't face the same problems" he did.

And perhaps most important of all, many of the beedi kings are diversifying into other fields. Two years ago, the Prabhudas Kishoredas group launched a drug unit in Kalol in Gujarat. Today, it boasts an annual turnover of Rs 3.40 crore. Chhotabhai Jethabhai promoted a soya extraction plant in 1984. Turnover: Rs 1.15 crore. And Bhagwandas Shobhalal has diversified into plastics, soya extraction, flour mills and mechanised farms.

But old fashioned or modern, all the beedi kings have an eye on the future—which they want to make sure is every bit as glowing as the past. Raghurama Prabhu may have been speaking for all of them when he said: "I still think of our venture as a small baby."

—N.K. SINGH in Sagar, Damoh and Jabalpur with CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA in Mysore and UDAY MAHURKAR in Ahmedabad



Anand Rao of Mangalore Ganesh: scrupulously honest

MAHESH BHAT

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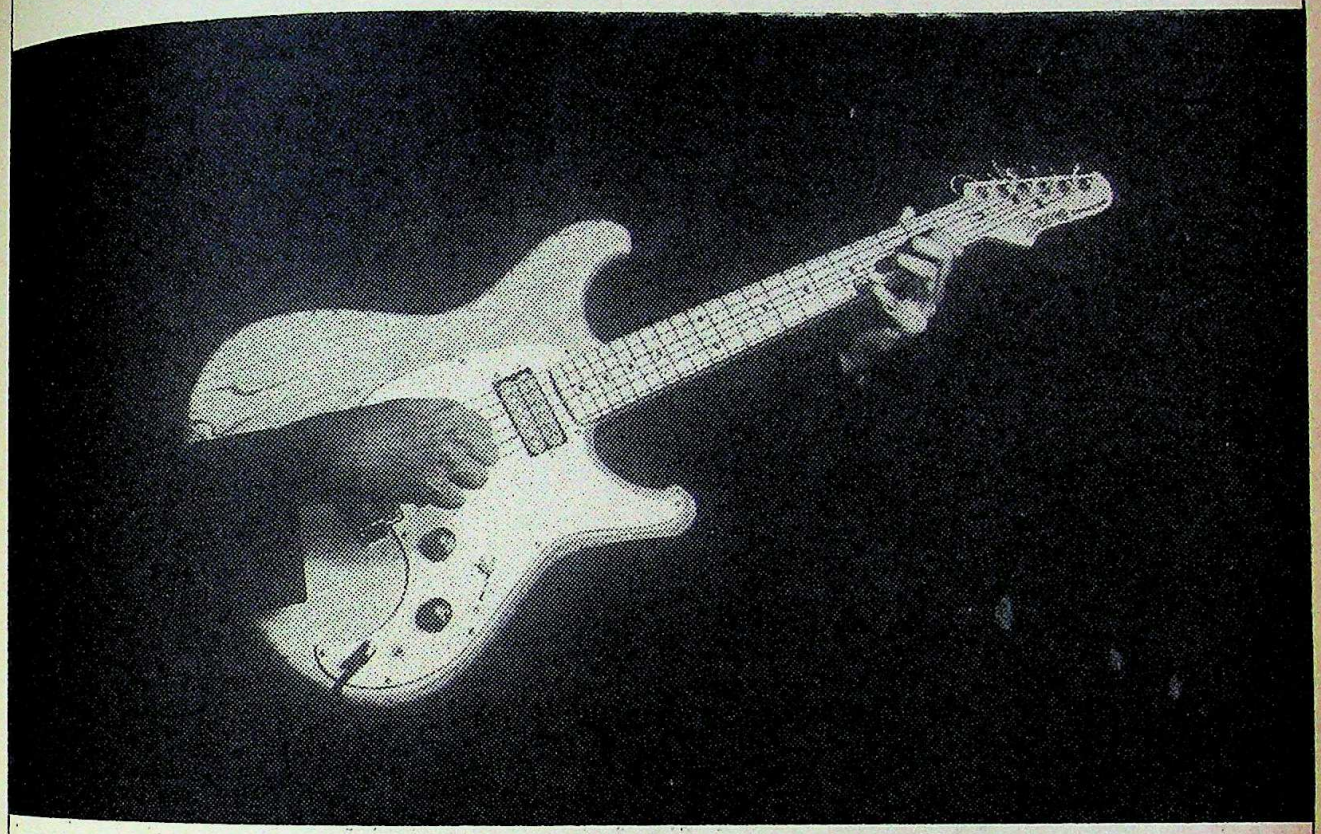

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RELIANCE ENTERS FINANCE

EVEN as the legal controversy over Larsen & Toubro's public issue hogged headlines last month, a significant development in the Reliance group went virtually unnoticed. In early October, the group received official permission to float a finance company with a share capital of Rs 125 crore. This particular proposal had been shot down three years ago by the then finance minister, V.P. Singh. Reason: a finance company can borrow ten times its net worth—in this instance Rs 1,250 crore—giving the group tremendous clout in the stock-market. But that's a thing of the past. A Reliance spokesman now says the new company, headed by a former Peerless employee, will pool the group's substantial investible resources and deploy them in the stock-market. However, banking sources contend that the company, besides dabbling in the inter-corporate deposit market, will serve as the group's new take-over arm. Move over Trishna, Reliance Capital and Finance Trust is here.

BUILDING BLOCKS

BALLARPUR Industries Limited (BILT), the flagship of the Rs 1,200-crore Thapar group, is entering the real estate and construction materials business in a big way. The company has formed a separate real estate division, and taken over the Rs 2-crore Modern Stramit (India) Limited, which manufactures fire-proof boards for doors and windows out of rice and wheat straw, at Rajamundhry in Andhra Pradesh. A Rs 27-crore project to produce light concrete blocks, using fly ash from the Badarpur thermal power plant, is underway at Palwal in Haryana. And plans are afoot to take over a similar unit near the Ennore power plant in Tamil Nadu. BILT, apparently, is keen to literally live up to its name.

DIVERSIFICATION SPREE

MORE and more large industrial houses are jumping on to the food processing bandwagon. The latest being the J.K./Singhania group. J.K. Industries Limited, controlled by Hari Shankar Singhania, has sought government approval to set up two such projects in Uttar Pradesh involving a total investment of Rs 43 crore. The first unit, to come up in Rampur district, will produce flavoured yoghurt, milk and cheese products, while the second will be for the manufacture of "high fructose" corn syrup at a yet undisclosed location. Another faction of the J.K. group, headed by Vijaypat and Ajaypat Singhania, is also on a diversification spree, this time into telecommunication equipment. This faction has drawn up plans to take over a telephone exchange manufacturing unit located at Srinagar.

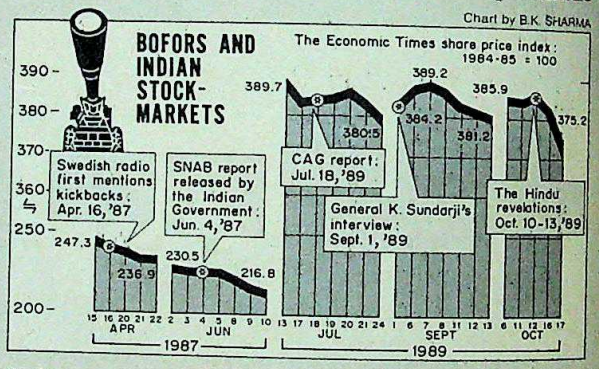
CIRCUMVENTION STRATEGY

THE Rs 60-crore Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories group has devised a unique plan to counter the threat of American trade retaliation under Section 301 of the US Trade Act. While many Indian pharmaceutical concerns apprehensively await a curb on exports of bulk drugs to the US, Dr Reddy's Laboratories is not letting the grass grow under its feet. The group plans to set up an export-oriented venture in Mexico. Reason: there are no restrictions on pharmaceutical exports from Mexico to the US. The venture may also enable the Indian company to obtain a toe-hold in the burgeoning pharmaceuticals market in Latin America. At present, Dr Reddy's Laboratories exports Rs 50-crore worth of methyldopa and ibuprofen to the US. And this figure is expected to treble in three years' time.

BOFORS SYNDROME

STOCK-MARKET indices may or may not be barometers of the health of the economy. But one thing is certain: investor sentiments take a beating every time there is bad news on the Bofors front. Within a week of the Swedish radio breaking news about kickbacks in the Bofors Howitzer deal, the *Economic Times* index fell by more than 6 points. The

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



decline was twice as much when the Swedish National Audit Bureau's report was disclosed by the Government. Curiously, the fall in the *Economic Times* index was much less (4 to 7 points) after the release of the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General. Gen. K. Sundarji's revelations in INDIA TODAY and the recent series of reports prepared by N. Ram and Chitra Subramaniam. Have Indian stock-markets become apathetic to the Bofors scandal? That's a moot question.

FACE-SAVING PLANS

FACED with charges of asset-stripping by its union leaders, the management of ICI India Limited is trying hard to convince all and sundry that the company does not want to curtail its operations in the country. Yes, it's fertiliser plant in Kanpur is up for sale. But not necessarily to the Abhey Oswal group, as has been widely reported, say company sources. Three others have bid for the plant, including a section of the Birla group, and a final decision is yet to be taken. Further, the sources add that though ICI's polyester staple fibre unit is performing badly, the company has not decided to hawk it. From the sale proceeds of its fertiliser unit, ICI plans to set up new projects manufacturing speciality chemicals, including new generation rubber chemicals, and hybrid seeds. There is also a plan to get into animal husbandry. That is not all. ICI hopes to invest Rs 250 crore in a new plant to produce base materials for polyurethane.

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PRICES

A Rising Election Issue

Prices ease, but the Congress(I) can gain little

FIRST, the good news for the Rajiv Gandhi Government. Post-harvest prices of cereals and vegetables are down as is typical at this time. Now, the bad news. The ruling party can gain no mileage from this. Reason: prices of other food items—notably sugar, edible oils and tea—have already risen to such an extent that a small decline will have little impact on household budgets. So, even as a second successive bumper crop is on the cards, official spokesmen are less than enthusiastic. For inflationary pressures remain strong.

For the last two months, Cabinet Secretary T.N. Seshan has been meeting officials of the Food and Civil Supplies Ministry virtually every day to devise ways to control prices. In the capital's Krishi Bhavan, a "control room" hums with activity. But the news flowing in has been mixed. For the Government realises that despite imports of sugar, pulses, rice and edible oils, they can have at best a limited impact on retail prices. "Our economy is market-oriented and the Government can do only so much and no more to control prices," says a government economist.

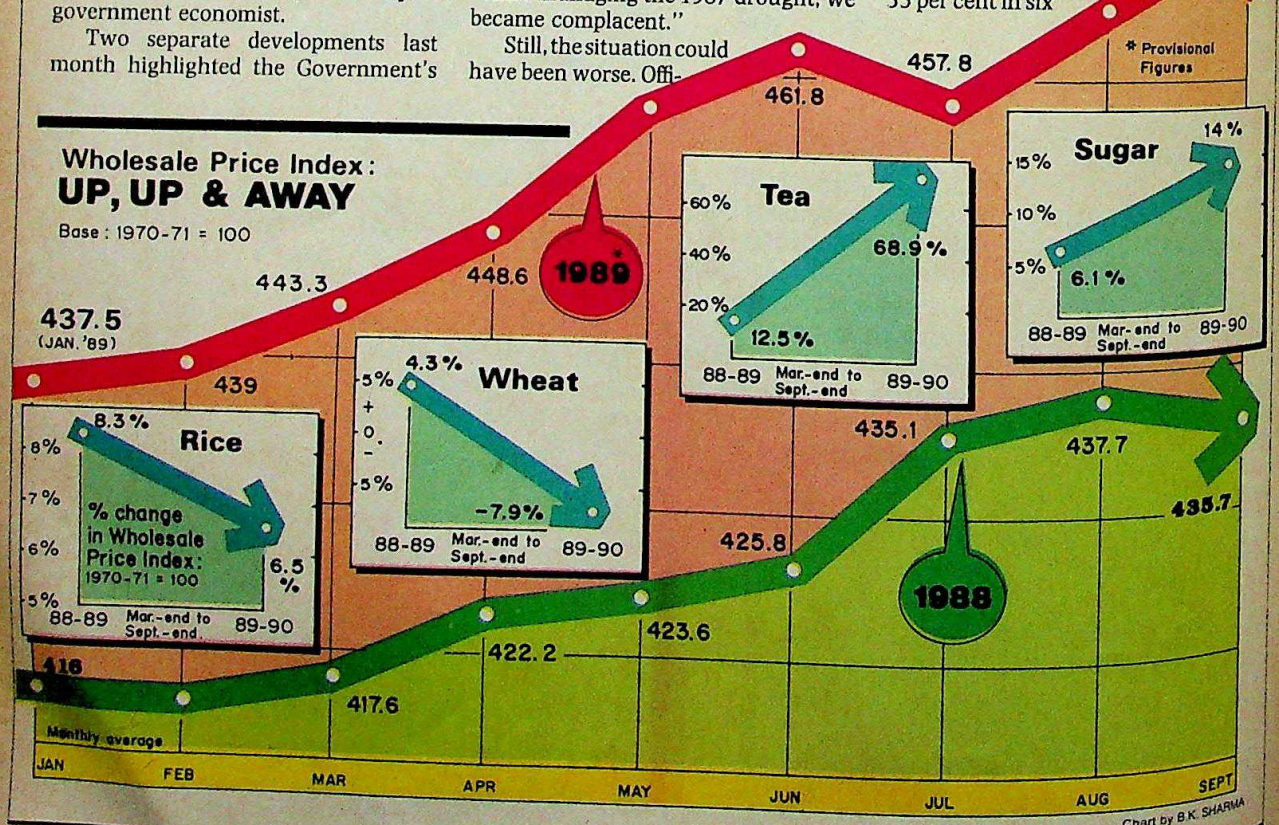
Two separate developments last month highlighted the Government's dilemma. A programme on inflation, *Money Matters*, prepared by PTI-TV and due for telecast on October 14, was abruptly withdrawn. Doordarshan developed cold feet because noted economists lambasted the Government's policies, particularly the high level of deficit financing which they felt led to the spurt in prices. Surprisingly, even Abid Hussain, member, Planning Commission, contended that "exaggerated" production estimates and the consequent delay in "essential minimum imports" were responsible for sugar prices rising.

The other development was that in the Lok Sabha, Congress(I) members grilled Minister of State for Food and Civil Supplies Sukh Ram on prices. While Ram argued that the "overall price situation is not as bad as is being made out", others were unconvinced. Queried MP Kishori Ram: "How is it that the same Government which could check prices in the 1987 drought year, cannot do so now in spite of favourable monsoons?" That question continues to rankle officials. Admits a bureaucrat: "After managing the 1987 drought, we became complacent."

Still, the situation could have been worse. Official figures show that wheat prices are below last year's levels. "This is no mean achievement considering procurement prices have been hiked twice," says a Finance Ministry official. Rice prices rose by only 6 per cent between March and October despite paddy procurement prices rising by nearly 16 per cent.

The Government expects edible oil prices to "crash" in November following good harvests of groundnut and mustard. But industry sources are less confident. Production has risen but imports have dropped even more causing a shortfall, they say. Compounding the shortage were late imports—as in the case of sugar. But unlike sugar imports which were made when world prices were high, the Government waited for edible oil prices to drop before importing. "The country may have saved foreign exchange but consumers had to pay the price," remarks G.K. Sood of the Vanaspati Manufacturers Association.

In the case of tea, production fell only slightly (3 per cent), but prices rose by over 35 per cent in six



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LEADERS IN EXECUTIVE SEARCH

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months. Tea industry representatives were threatened that the Government would "resort to other means to safeguard consumer interests" if the decline in auction prices was not reflected at the retail level. The industry then agreed to sell tea at Rs40 a kg to consumers, a good Rs20 lower than the price two months ago.

In order to check the price rise, this year the Government has imported over Rs 800 crore of pulses, rice and sugar. This has had some impact. Sugar prices which were ruling at Rs 12-13 a kg in early-September are now down to Rs 9-10. Which is still much higher than the price of Rs 6.50 a kg in April-May. But such stopgap measures exact a price: foreign exchange reserves are today lower than what they've been for years.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

"The overall situation on the price front is not as bad as is being made out."

SUKH RAM
Minister of State for Food and Civil Supplies

NAMAS BHOJANI

"The Union Government will blame traders for the mess because they are BJP supporters."

VIREN SHAH
President, Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Faced with flak from all sides, the Government wants to make scapegoats out of traders. In fact, Ram alleged in Parliament that opposition leaders are hand in glove with blackmarketeers. "The Government will blame traders for the mess because they are BJP supporters," says Viren Shah, president, Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India and an opposition sympathiser.

S.B. Gupta of the Delhi School of Economics also feels there's no point putting all the blame on hoarders. "What do you do if millions of housewives feel like hoarding essential commodities hoping to beat inflation?" he asks. Thus, despite the seasonal drop in agricultural prices, inflation remains a potent issue.

—PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA with bureau reports

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TELCO

Hotting Up

Workers intensify agitation

OVER the past 19 months, Pune has been witness to a series of skirmishes between two formidable opponents. One, the management of the Rs 1,600-crore automotive giant, the Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company (TELCO). And the other, the company's militant trade union, the TELCO Kamgar Sanghatana (TKS) led by Rajan Nair. Now another battle begins: an indefinite strike from October 24.

The strike is only a formal declaration of war. For months now, the labour unrest has cut production at TELCO to far below normal levels, besides crippling its ancillary suppliers. There have been countless morchas and several bandhs and rasta rokos. And last month, about 2,000 workers of the company went on an indefinite fast. They were arrested on September 30 but released later. The days that followed were a period of relative calm. Now, the city prepares for another storm.

Worse, the agitation threatens to spill over to other industries in the Pune-Chinchwad-Pimpri belt, home to over 2,000 industrial units with an annual turnover of Rs 3,500 crore. The unrest at TELCO has led to the formation of a federation of labour organisations, the Trade Union Council (TUC), which has over 70 member-organisations and claims the support of over 1.25 lakh workers in the area's organised sector. Says Ashok Manohar, the articulate convener of the TUC: "Support to the TKS is only the first step. The eventual aim is to broaden our base—and that means going to the unorganised sector." Others believe the TUC won't last long. Says Nana Shahane, a Pune-based consultant: "Each of the constituents has a different policy. The common goal is to fight the management, and hence they have come together."

For Nair, a Keralite who speaks chaste Marathi, the call for an indefinite strike is an attempt to regroup his supporters. He is more subdued now, no longer talks about "cracking the style of functioning of the management", and even concedes that TELCO Chairman Ratan Tata is a straight man who was "misguided" by the company's Pune management. Says he: "My main demand is that the 100-odd workers who had been suspended by the management be reinstated."

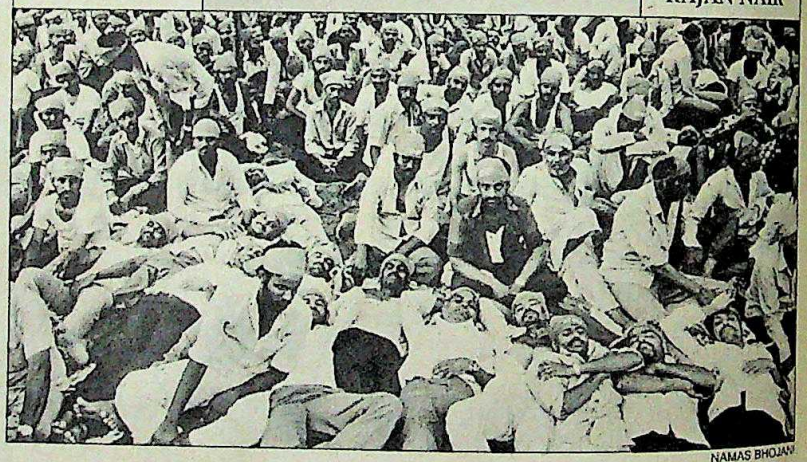
The management, on the other hand, seems more confident now. It claims that the company is turning out around 70 vehicles a day (the normal production is about 140 vehicles). A senior manager says that the number of employees on duty has risen from a low of 700 to 2,500. The company also claims that more workers are accepting the wage settlement signed with the breakaway TELCO Employees Union on September 19 that guarantees a raise of Rs 585 a month. Now, TELCO has made arrangements for the indefinite stay of 2,800 employees during the strike.

Nair dismisses the management's claims as propaganda, and says that no more than two or three vehicles are coming off the shopfloor. "There are only about 100 workers at the factory," he says.

RATAN TATA

As the labour strife at TELCO comes to a boil, it shows every sign of spreading to other companies.

RAJAN NAIR



NAMAS BHOJANI

Fasting workers: militant stance

Amid these conflicting claims, what's clear is that TELCO has been severely hit. The agitation comes at a critical time for the company. TELCO had reached an agreement, in principle, with Daimler-Benz of West Germany to manufacture commercial vehicles for export under the Benz banner. And negotiations were also on with affiliates of the US auto giant General Motors. Says J.E. Talaulicar, vice-chairman and managing director of TELCO: "With all our time and attention being taken up by the agitation, these have been put on the backburner." Still, TELCO's half-yearly results show a higher net profit (Rs 6.2 crore to Rs 9.05 crore). One reason: higher production at the Jamshedpur plant.

More severely affected are TELCO's ancillary suppliers which, in 1988-89, supplied about Rs 61-crore worth of goods to the company. For a lot of them, TELCO is the sole client. "The problem has got so critical that many have had to close shop or at least retrench half of their workers," says Kaushik Shah, president of the newly-formed Pune Ancillary Manufacturers' Association. An IIT graduate who set up his own unit after a two-year spell with TELCO, Shah has himself laid off several workers and can pay the rest only for a month more.

Add to that the fact that wages are far lower than in the large companies and it's not surprising that workers at ancillary units are resentful. At one unit, workers approached Nair who drew up a charter of demands—among them, a wage hike of Rs 2,800.

While that may sound unrealistic—and for the ancillaries, impossible to pay—the workers know that with elections round the corner, they are in a better bargaining position. They constitute a 2-lakh-strong vote bank, without taking their families into account, and Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar is under severe pressure to bring about a settlement.

Even if a settlement is signed, one thing is certain. Industrial relations in the languid city of Pune will never quite be the same again.

—SHIV TANEJA in Pune and Bombay

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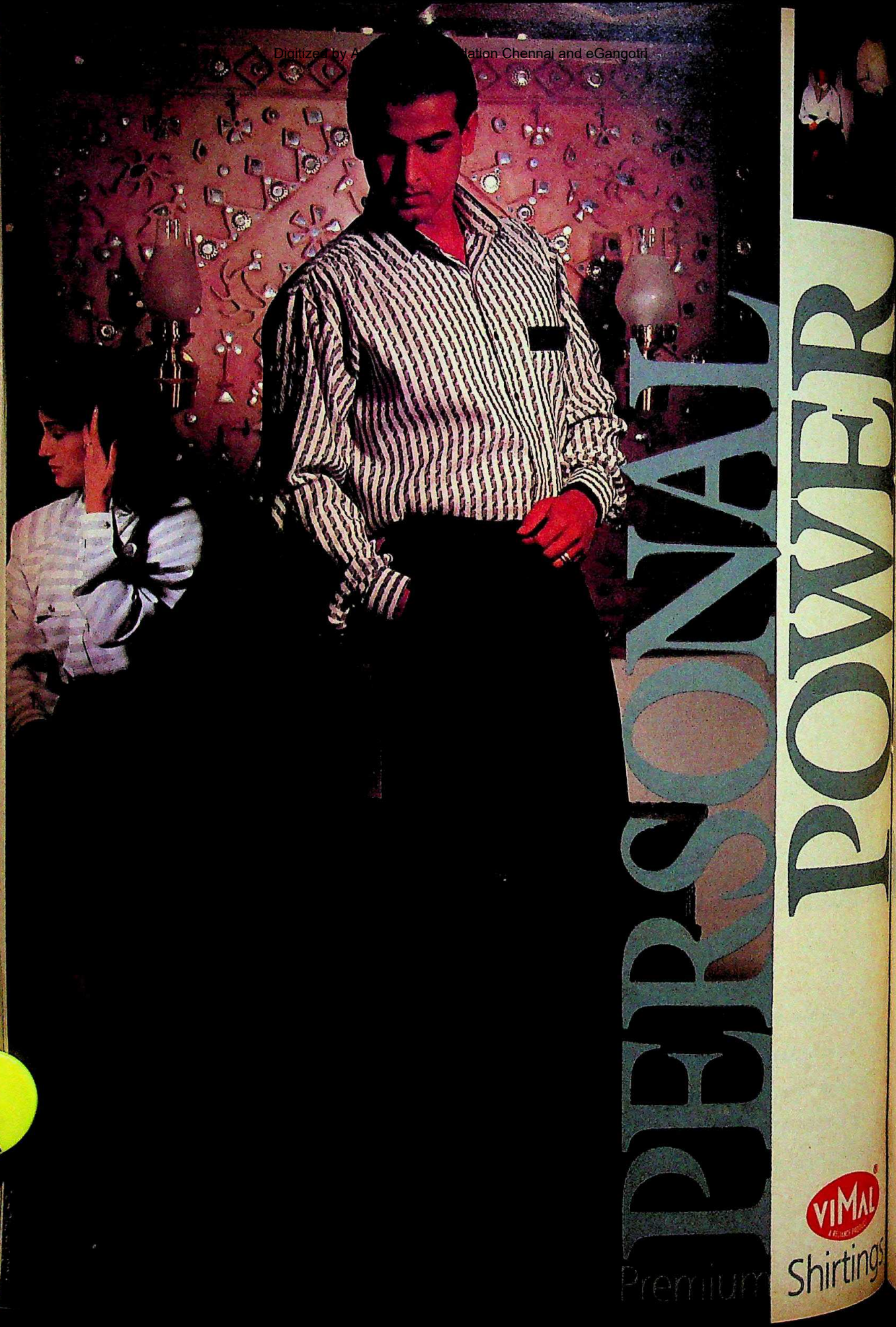

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PREMIER AUTOMOBILES

Revving up for Growth

After a good showing, a dose of modernisation

FOR decades, the Indian automobile industry rolled along merrily without competition—on obsolete engines, rattling bodies and outdated designs. Then, in the '80s, Maruti Udyog Ltd (MUL) crashed in and proceeded to rewrite the rules of the automobile game. The result has been mostly one-sided.

The Madras-based Standard Motor Products of India Ltd barely survives at the bottom of the industry pile. And the Calcutta-based Hindustan Motors has plunged deeper into the red with losses increasing from Rs 2.69 crore last year to Rs 5.81 crore this year. Amid the debris, one automobile manufacturer has emerged stronger—the Bombay-based Premier Automobiles Ltd (PAL).

The Rs 465-crore flagship company of the Walchand Group (turnover: approximately Rs 750 crore) closed its financial year in June 1989 with a net profit of Rs 13.65 crore—an increase of 21.8 per cent over the previous year. Sales have grown by 19 per cent; the industry figure is 12 per cent. And market share has gone up from 22 to 24 per cent. "It's been a good year for us," says a visibly pleased Vinod L. Doshi, chairman and managing director.

Now, more ambitious plans are in the offing. Says Doshi: "Starting now, over the next 24 months, you are going to see a tremendous change in this company." It's already begun. Recently, the company relaunched the old PAL faithful, the Premier Padmini, with a host of new features and an advertising budget of Rs 1 crore. In September, it kicked off a Rs 150-crore revamping exercise—to overhaul, upgrade and modernise key manufacturing facilities and products. The company is also introducing a new high-speed diesel engine, initially to be used exclusively for taxis. And it's planning changes in two models of the company's cars.

By any yardstick, it's a remarkable fightback. So, how did PAL successfully stave off the Maruti challenge? The Premier Padmini had an advantage. Falling between the Ambassador and the Maruti, it has a niche market. Then, the company improved its fuel efficiency. And in 1986, it introduced the 118 NE.

Finally, it backed all this with good marketing. Says President and Managing Director J.M. Vakil: "To a large extent, our good performance has to do with innovative marketing." The company has just two basic models, but it offers a variety of categories—six for the Premier Padmini and two for the 118 NE. Explains Vakil: "Earlier, we did not have this categorisation. Now, we are far more attuned to customer needs than ever before. And I think this is beginning to pay off."

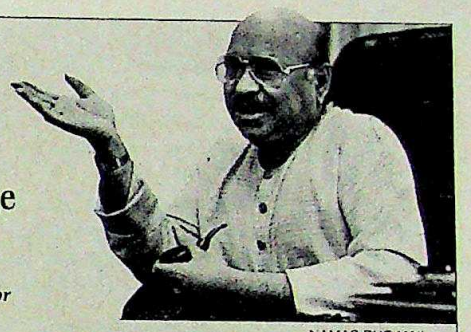
The attention paid to marketing is also evident in the additional features in the new-look Premier Padmini—backlit instrument panel, extra-soft leather cloth upholstery, dual tone horn, coat hanger hooks. Vakil admits the changes are "largely cosmetic in nature" though he hastens to add that certain mechanical and structural aspects of the car are also to be revamped.

Still, with competition hotting up, PAL seems to be aware that cosmetic changes won't work for ever. So it's taking a serious look at improving fuel economy and reducing noise levels and emissions. And in a bid to prepare for deep-going changes in future, the company is set on a major modernisation drive. The press shop at Kalyan near Bombay is being upgraded. The Kurla plant will get a brand-new press shop and its paint shop is being modernised. Also, the Nissan engine in the 118 NE is to be indigenised using computer numerical control machinery.

One objective of these changes: to substantially increase production of both the Premier Padmini and the 118 NE. Says Vakil: "Our immediate goal for Kurla is to increase production from the current 120 cars a day to 150." Clearly, the company expects demand to grow. Soon, however, that optimism will be put to a severe test after MUL launches the Maruti 1000 *(see box)*.

Before it takes on that challenge, however, the company has another one on its hands—to successfully market its new high speed diesel engine. Developed by the Italian firm Frateli Negri Machines, it will initially be used exclusively for taxis in the Premier 137D model. The company expects to manufacture around 3,000 137Ds in the first year and raise this to 10,000 in five

"Over the next 24 months, you are going to see a tremendous change in this company."
VINOD L. DOSHI
Chairman and Managing Director



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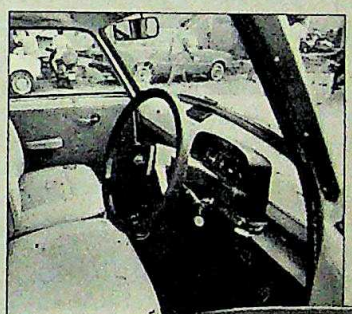

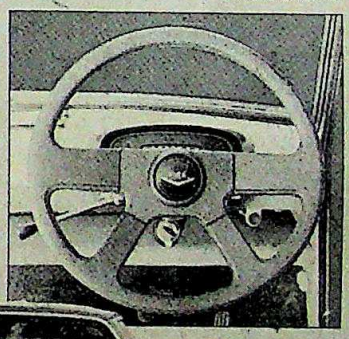

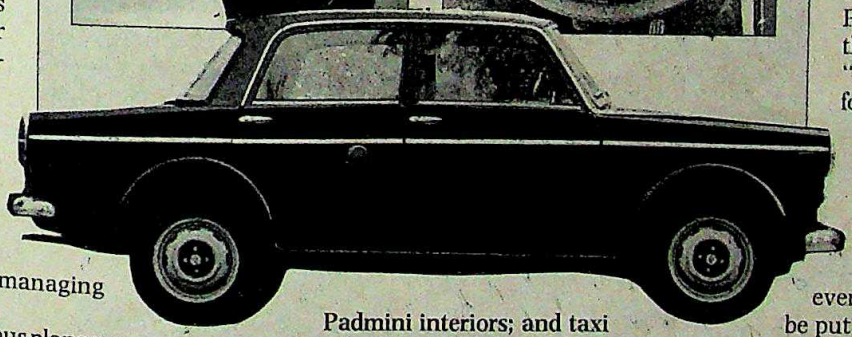

Padmini interiors; and taxi with diesel engine: success story

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years. Industry watchers question the optimism. The price-tag of Rs 1,49,000, they point out, is too hefty. Says Gautam Sen, editor of *Indian Auto Journal*: "The pricing for this car is crazy—almost Rs 50,000 more than the existing model used for taxis." Vakil, however, justifies the cost: "With the price of diesel being almost a third of petrol, taxi owners stand to gain in the long run."

Others are not so sure. Says one expert: "On paper, the engine may look very good. But Frateli Negri is not an original equipment supplier to anyone in Italy. They are retrofitters." Another industry analyst belittles PAL's technological abilities: "No matter what Premier may say about their product, and no matter how much tinkering around they do, basically their engineering skills are grossly inadequate and will be reflected in the product."

Critics argue that success in the automobile industry must be measured in terms of volumes and exports, in both of which PAL is a laggard. Counters Doshi: "We can only think of exports and large volumes if the Government allows us a good product." And, he continues: "Given the level of technology available in India, Premier cannot support it—as has Maruti—but the Government will not allow us to."

Nevertheless, the company has managed to more than hold its own. But ironically, that good showing has made it the target of take-over attempts.

IN 1982, PAL had thwarted a bid by an R.P. Goenka company. More recently, it was in the news when BoB Fiscal, the merchant banking arm of Bank of Baroda that was involved in the controversial Larsen & Toubro take-over, bought a large chunk of the company's shares. Says Doshi: "They had acquired over 85,000 shares, and we had neither accepted nor rejected them for registration with the company."

Officials are cagey about divulging details. But sources say the company bought time by asking BoB Fiscal to comply with certain legal reporting requirements and that it finally repurchased the shares at a cost slightly above the market price.

While that external threat has been warded off, there's reportedly trouble brewing within the family. Doshi's cousin, Ajit Gulabchand, chairman of Hindustan Construction Company, a Walchand Group firm, is said to have urged a couple of industrialists to buy into PAL and enlist the support of the financial institutions which have a 21.25 per cent stake. Among the names mentioned are the Ambanis. Gulabchand, however, denies the rumours. Says he: "I will not comment on Vinod Doshi, or his style of working. But I will say that all these rumours are utter rubbish."

Whatever the truth, for the moment, Doshi is very much in control at PAL, five years after he took over from father Seth Walchand Hirachand. His son, Maitreya, who was inducted into the company three years ago, is now vice-president (corporate planning). But Doshi himself closely oversees the company's working—from production schedules to advertising plans.

It is such painstaking attention to detail that enabled PAL to survive the first onslaught of the Maruti juggernaut. For a company that began by assembling vehicles for the US Chrysler Corporation in 1944, and has had no modernisation since, this is no mean achievement.

—SHIV TANEJA

MARUTI

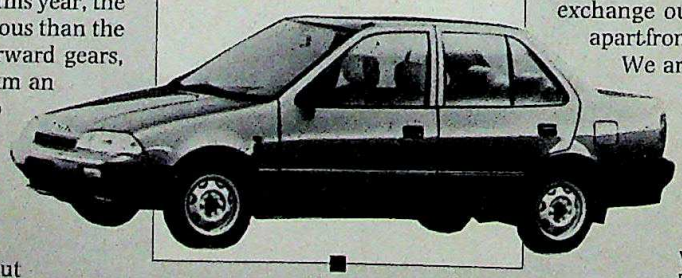
Fast Forward

IN the first round of the automobile battle, the judges' verdict was unanimous: the winner was Maruti. Last fortnight, Maruti Udyog Limited (MUL) served notice of round two by announcing a new upmarket model—a 1000 cc car which will hit the road by October 1990. Few believe that the second round will end any differently from the first.

Launched in Japan by collaborators Suzuki only in June this year, the new model is more spacious than the Maruti 800, has five forward gears, and a top speed of 140 km an hour. It's streamlined to reduce wind resistance, and runs 24 km on a litre of fuel.

Production plans are ambitious—the company hopes to roll out 30,000 a year by 1992. If these plans do work out, rivals could be heading for a toss. C.K. Birla, vice-chairman of Hindustan Motors, however, dismisses the possibility: "Our Contessa is a much bigger car. It will not be affected by the new Maruti car at all." Industry observers feel the principal victim will be the 118 NE which has been enjoying high premiums. PAL President and Managing Director J.M. Vakil simply says: "We will have to wait and see what the car is all about."

With a 1000 cc engine, the new Maruti car poses a serious challenge to the Premier 118 NE.



Much depends on the price-tag, which hasn't been announced. Says Managing Director R.C. Bhargava: "Let's see the demand after bookings close, what happens to the yen-rupee fluctuations and even the budget next year. We will price it so there's no premium. We are not sure but it will be slightly higher than that of the 118 NE (cost: around Rs 1,80,000)."

One dealer says that at that price, the car could command a premium of about Rs 30,000. He, however, expects the price to be closer to Rs 3 lakh.

To keep costs down, just 30 per cent of the parts will be imported at the outset (far lower than the figure for the Maruti 800) and this will be reduced to 6 per cent in three years. Says a senior company official: "Our initial foreign exchange outgo will be Rs 25 crore, apart from Rs 57 crore on the plant. We are not getting foreign exchange from the Government. The project is tied to exports of Maruti cars." And, he adds: "We might reduce the price once we indigenise more."

That's a tall order, if the price and indigenisation record of the Maruti 800 are anything to go by. Still, if the Maruti 1000 repeats the success of its little brother, few are likely to complain. Except MUL's rivals.

—SURAJEET DASGUPTA

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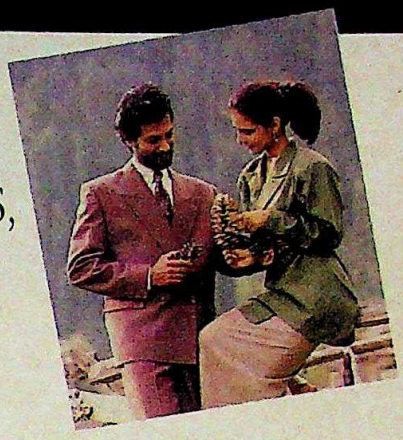

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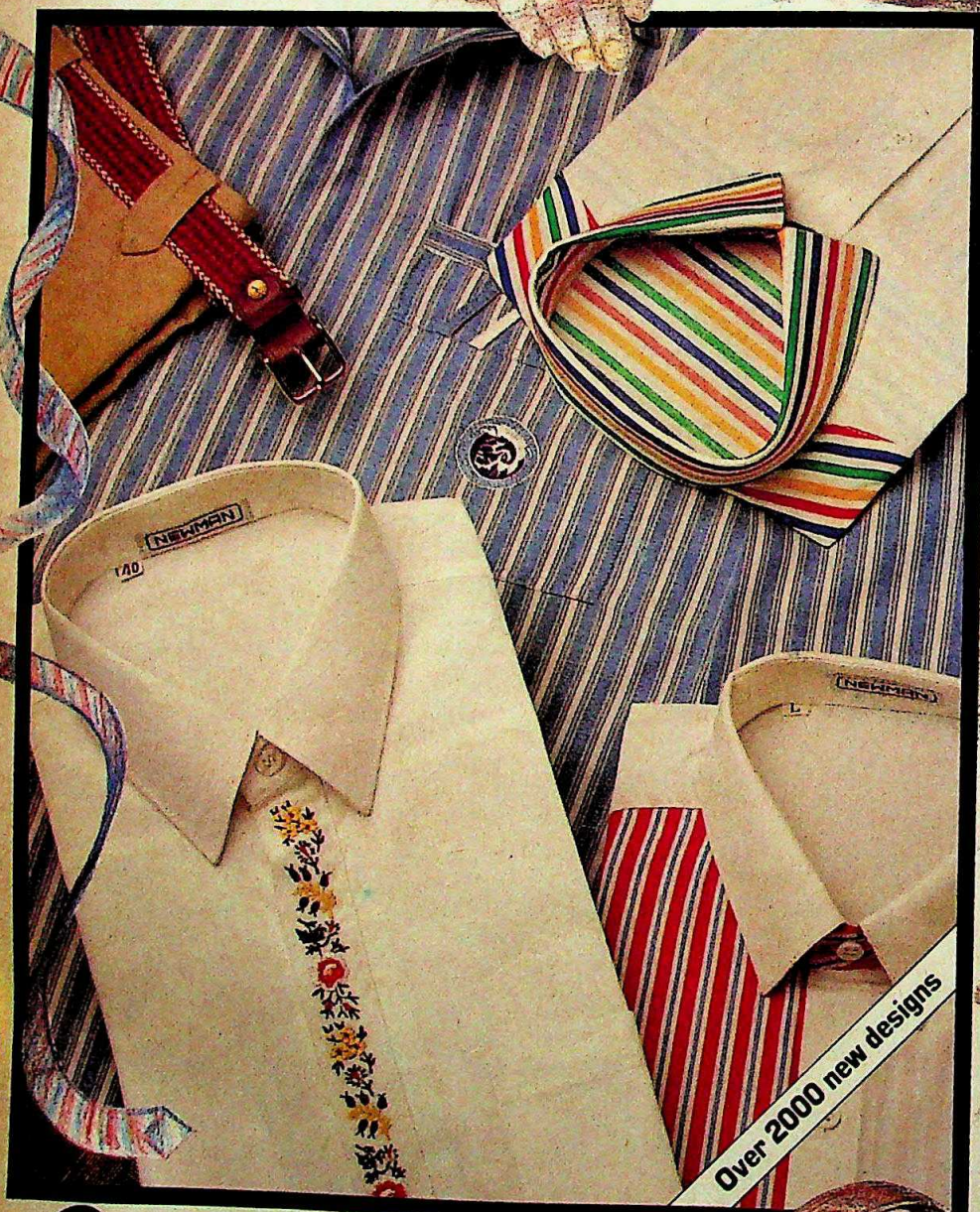

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NRI INDUSTRIALISTS

Quiet Success

A new breed establishes itself

THEY are a different breed of non-resident Indian industrialists. Unlike the Chhabrias, they did not arrive with a bang. Unlike Swraj Paul, they did not leave with a whimper. And unlike both, they chose not to grow by take-overs. They also keep a low profile. Men like M.L. Mittal of the Ispat Group, Satyadev Bhardwaj of Sunflag, M.L. Lohia of Indo-Rama, Mahendra Mehta of the Mehta Group and the Lalvani brothers of Binatone Electronics. In the early '80s, when the Government liberalised the economy, they quietly set up a unit or two here. Since then, they have unobtrusively spread their wings.

M.L. Mittal of the Ispat Group (world turnover: Rs 1,000 crore) has set up four companies in India—Nippon Denro Ispat, Ispat Alloys, Gontermann-Peipers (India) and Ispat Profiles. Products range from galvanised sheets to high tension rails. The turnover from Indian operations is an impressive Rs 400 crore.

Now, the group is investing Rs 300 crore to expand its ferro silicon alloy, charge chrome and cold-rolled steel coil units. Last month, the Government cleared proposals for a seamless pipe and sponge iron unit. Also on the anvil are ventures in float glass and specialised oil drilling tubes. The investment tab: Rs 1,150 crore. Says group Chairman Mittal: "There is a tremendous potential waiting to be tapped in this country."

A year ago, London-based Satyadev Bhardwaj and his three sons of the Sunflag Group (turnover world-wide: Rs 500 crore) set up the Rs 250-crore Sunflag Iron and Steel Company Ltd at Bhandara in Maharashtra. This year, it expects a turnover of Rs 150 crore.

Next, the group plans to increase capacity from 2 lakh tonnes to 5 lakh tonnes and manufacture automobile components for export. Says Bhushan Bhardwaj, Sunflag chairman: "There's a large market. After expanding capacity we will move into downstream products." Expected cost: Rs 500 crore.

M.L. Lohia, chairman of the Indonesia-based Indo-Rama Group with operations in Thailand and Nepal (turnover world-wide: Rs 400 crore) has set up a Rs 21-crore synthetic and blended yarn unit in Indore. This year, Indo-Rama Synthetics India Ltd had a Rs 40-crore turnover, and is doubling capacity with an additional investment of Rs 25 crore. Says Managing Director O.P. Lohia, M.L. Lohia's son: "Our first project was set up only to understand local conditions. We are looking for big projects." The firm has tied up with the Madhya Pradesh Government for a Rs 200-crore nylon tyre cord project. The Lohias have received a letter of intent for a Rs 30-crore plant to manufacture blended yarn fabrics and ready-made garments.

Mahendra Mehta of the Mehta Group (turnover worldwide: Rs 250 crore) with interests in Africa, North America and Great Britain, was one of the earliest NRIs to venture to India—with a cement plant in Gujarat in 1960. But it was only after the liberalisation of the '80s that interest in India revived. In 1981, Mehta set up the joint sector Cement Corporation of Gujarat. The turnover in India is now Rs 120 crore, nearly half of the group's total turnover. Nevertheless, with the cement industry facing a glut, the group is cautious. Says Jay Mehta, Mahendra's son: "We're not planning any further investment until the cement industry stabilises."

The London-based Lalvani brothers—Gulu and Partap—of Binatone Electronics (world-wide turnover: Rs 200 crore) already derive one-fifth of their turnover from India. Still, the operations have not been very successful. Says Partap bitterly: "I would not have come back to India at all. I got my letter of intent in 1983. Yet after that, competitors placed various hurdles and I got my licence only two years later." He's the only one with regrets about setting up operations in India. The rest are upbeat about future prospects in India.

What prompted the move in the first place? The answer: liberalisation. In the '80s, the Government opened up the economy and set out to woo non-resident Indian investment. Says M.L.

Bhushan Bhardwaj, Chairman, Sunflag

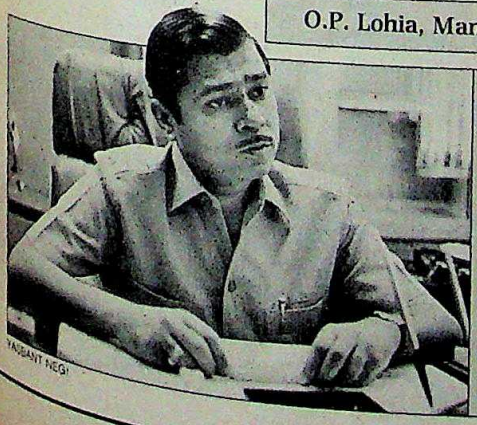
"There is a large market in India. We are going in for expansion and downstream products."

Mohan Lal Mittal, Chairman, Ispat Group

"Our aim is to get into products not manufactured in the country and back it up with technology."

YASBANT NEGI

O.P. Lohia, Managing Director, Indo-Rama



YASBANT NEGI

"Government said it was not possible to export synthetic yarn. We proved it wrong."

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Lohia: "We always wanted to set up units in India. The improved industrial climate here has now made it possible."

It hasn't been a cakewalk, though. The Lalvanis underestimated the competition. Partap laments: "We expected 10 per cent of the television market; we have 3 per cent." As a result, Binatone's turnover is expected to fall this year. The Lohias took three years to get their textile project cleared. O.P. Lohia recalls: "We were not able to convince them there was a demand for a spinning unit. They said it was not possible to export synthetic yarn. We proved them wrong." The Bhardwajs had trouble convincing the Government that a composite plant would be viable.

Nevertheless, all of them seem to have improved on their earlier attempts to gain a foothold in India. Binatone set up a 100-per cent export oriented unit in 1975, but found components too expensive. The unit is still operational, but not very successful. The Lohias tried to acquire textile giant OCM in 1971, but the Birlas outbid them. Says Lohia: "After that we decided we would never try to take over companies." In 1974, the Sunflag Group set up a small textile unit in Faridabad but it never really took off. The Mehtas who had long run a textile mill had to shut it down in 1983.

STILL, all five groups had an advantage—the first-hand experience of setting up industries from scratch. M.L. Mittal broke away from the family steel business in the '70s and moved to Indonesia when the Indian Government was reluctant to allow private sector steel units to expand. Satyadev Bhardwaj began with a small cottage hosiery unit in Nairobi. M.L. Lohia was initially a petty trader in Calcutta. Mahendra Mehta had to virtually start all over again when Ugandan dictator Idi Amin expelled Asians from Uganda in 1972.

The overseas experience helps in several ways—access to the latest technology, for instance. The Mittals imported technology for specialised silicon alloys, used in automobiles, from Alchem, the Norwegian steel giant. M.L. Mittal explains: "Our aim was to get into products not manufactured in the country so that there is no competition, and to back it up with the latest technology."

Overseas contacts also help exports. Says O.P. Lohia: "We already have a well-defined buyers' network all over the world." So the Lohias are already the country's second-largest exporters of synthetic yarn. This year's export earnings are likely to touch Rs 15 crore, half of Indo-Rama Synthetics' turnover.

The new breed of NRIs also seems to have brought with it superior project execution skills. Sunflag's steel plant was completed six months ahead of schedule. And the Lohias' synthetic yarn unit began production nearly a year ahead of schedule.

The close attention they pay to their projects doesn't stop with execution. Mittal is now a resident Indian. Two of his sons live in Calcutta and Pune. Binatone's Partap Lalvani spends nine months in a year in India.

Still, there's been criticism. A senior executive in a leading textile unit says of the Lohias: "They aren't bringing anything new. Synthetic yarn is manufactured by many other units. Soon they will face tough competition."

Possibly, but if their past is anything to go by, they should be able to weather that too. Proving that while they are—or were—non-resident Indians, they are here to stay. —SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

TAX BOARD

Post Haste

HISTORY was created in the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) last fortnight. For one, the junior-most member of the board, A.S. Thind, was formally appointed chairman, flouting all conventions. And for another, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi personally intervened to ensure Thind's appointment.

But the appointment came as no surprise. For much before it was announced, the Government had made it clear that none else than Thind—who is due to retire on January 31 next year—would head this crucial department which will collect over Rs 9,000 crore in income tax this year. A peremptory letter was sent by J.C. Lynn, additional secretary in the Ministry of Personnel to N.K. Sengupta, revenue secretary, on September 27: "The prime minister has indicated that these orders must be implemented today." The orders: immediate transfer of CBDT members T.N. Pandey, O.P. Bhardwaj and C.S. Jain.

There was a flurry of activity in the Finance Ministry when the letter communicating the Cabinet's Appointments Committee's decision on the transfers was received the same day. Officials scrambled to telephone Sengupta, who was in Meerut, and to contact Jain, then holidaying in Kashmir.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Thind: unconventional appointment

What was unusual was the urgency of the orders. For the CBDT has been headless since its last chairman, G.N. Gupta, retired on July 31, with no one officiating in the interim. Also unusual is the fact that the seven-member board now has only two members. One was transferred to the Central Administrative Tribunal in June. So, apart from Thind, the only other member is A.V. Swaminathan, whose term ends in July 1991.

Officials are questioning the undue haste shown in the matter. "What was the tearing hurry to transfer three members and why did the prime minister take personal interest in the matter?" asks a senior bureaucrat in the Revenue Department. Sengupta's answer: the transfers had been planned earlier and the board's work is "not suffering".

Many disagree. Not only do they question the motives behind the transfers, but they also point out that the CBDT has not met for the last three months.

The goings-on in the CBDT have certainly had an impact on the morale of a large section of the country's 54,000 income tax employees. Says a senior official: "We are expected to work without fear or favour. But even if we do so, there is no certainty that we will get what we deserve. We may suffer the fate of Pandey, Bhardwaj and Jain."

For those in the corridors of power, however, that hardly seems to matter.

—PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA

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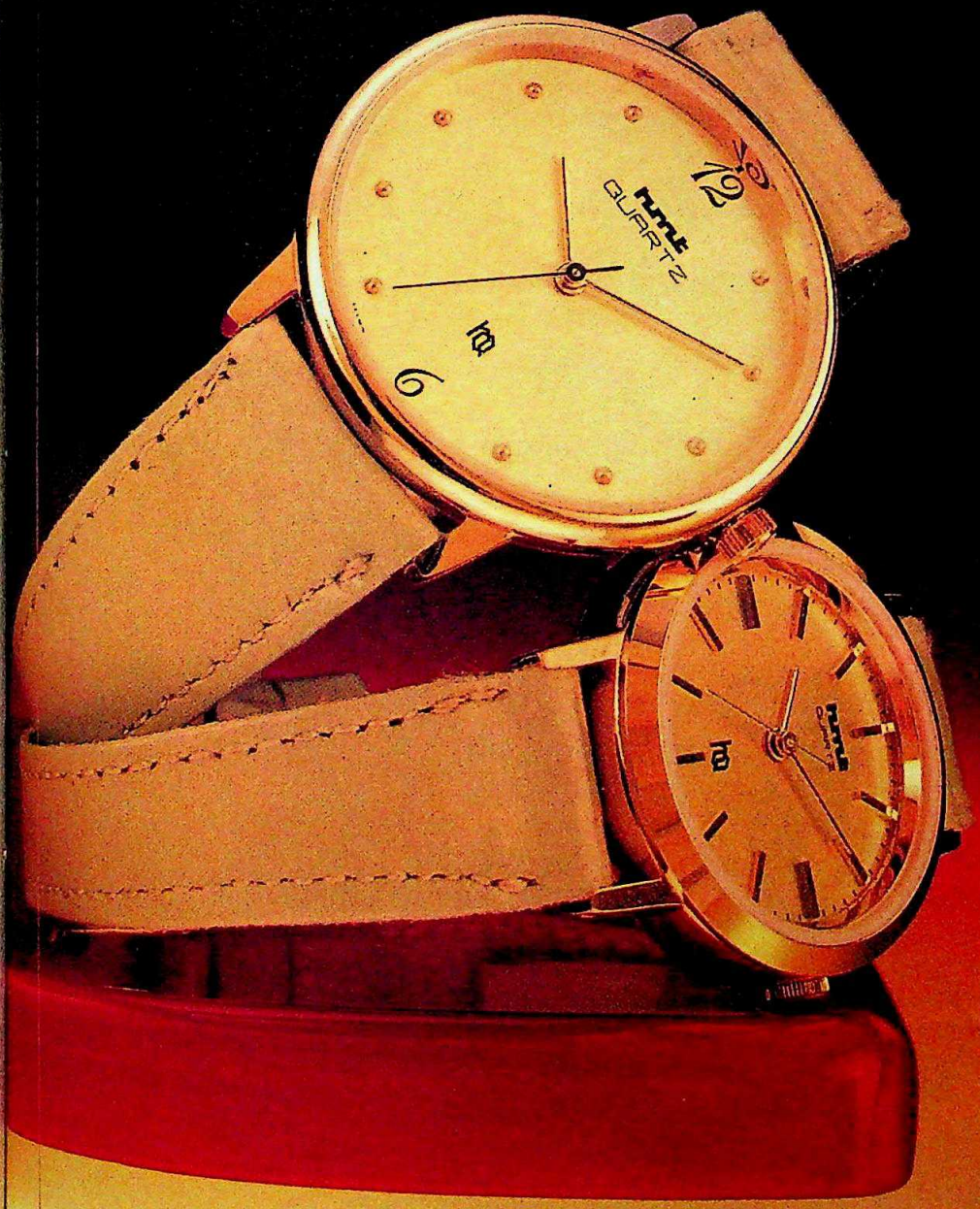
SOME FACES, AS YOU CAN SEE, HAVE CHARACTER.



BORN OF A LINEAGE AS ILLUSTRIOUS AS HMT. TECHNOLOGY, GRACE AND SINCERE AFTER SALE CARE DISTINGUISHING THE FINEST FROM THE REST.

CHARACTER TELLS.

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SHE'S HERE.

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Or how the Conversation was skilfully steered.

Just look at her, I said to my husband excitedly. Th Wall Street Journal inched lower. (He's a little cautio you know.) She's the new Maruti 1000, I explaine ▶ *Maruti? he queried.* ▶ (Aha. We were gettin somewhere.) Imagine a gleaming work of art, style beautifully — aerodynamic is the word, I believe. Wrap-around design headlights, tempered glass windows. 5-speed gear shift for that effortless glide, kilometre after kilometre. ▶ *Uh?* ▶ (An expression I have come to recognize as Go on, tell me more.) Imagine sinking into sumptuously contoured seats, whisper-soft carpeting beneath our feet. S-T-R-E-T-C-H-I-N-G out in a cool, quiet haven. Everything we need at arm's length. Seat belts. Adjustable head restraints, I went on, warming to the subject. ▶ *Uh. Uh.* ▶

▶ BOOKINGS OPEN FROM NOVEMBER 14, 1989.*

*Maruti Udyog Limited reserves the right to close bookings anytime after 15 days from the date of commencement of booking, on receipt of a minimum of 25,000 booking applications.

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(After seven years of marriage I knew I was nearly there.) Travelling at a speed that's luxury itself, I continued dreamily. ▶ *Hmm... he responded, folding the WSJ patiently.* ▶ (As you may have gathered by now, my husband is not of a very excitable temperament. But now appeared visibly moved) ▶ *Sounds interesting, he finally ventured. And rather quickly added: And what else?* ▶ She's the latest Suzuki model, I continued. Which means she's been nit-picked to perfection. She was launched in Japan only four months back. And is here, in India. ▶ *The very same car? He actually got to his feet.* ▶ (I could feel the reserve give way.) ▶ *How do you know all this? he suddenly asked.* ▶ Gossip! I replied nonchalantly, studying my fingernails.

MARUTI 1000

Quite a conversation piece.

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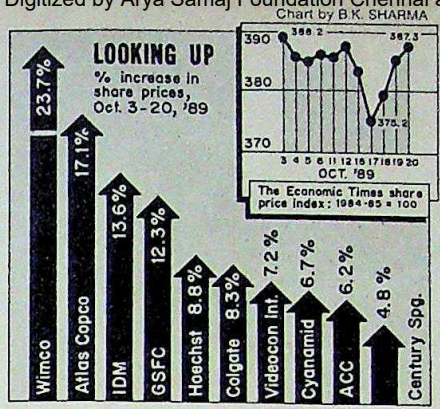
THE MARKETS

Electoral Sway

Stock-markets go see-sawing

UP, down, up, down, up again. That's the see-sawing story of India's stock-markets for the past two months. Last fortnight was no different. The day after general elections were announced, market indices plunged dramatically. But they bounced back in no time at all. *The Economic Times* share price index dropped from 383.1 on October 16 to 375.2 the next day. But four days later, it again rose to 387.3, just below the month's peak of 388.3 touched on October 3.

Around the middle of the month, the mood was distinctly downbeat. Bears were ruling the roost and selling pressures were strong as old shares were offloaded to raise funds for subscribing to the mega issues. There was a squeeze on liquidity in the wake of the spate of rights issues of equity shares and debentures. Market conditions were characterised by considerable short-selling. For instance, in the case of the Larsen & Toubro share, sellers could not deliver



scrips when the time came for settlement of business. Result: they had to cough up steep backwardation (contango) charges of Rs 13 per scrip.

Compounding the bearish situation was the bad news on the Bofors front. The downswing culminated in a knee-jerk reaction with the announcement of elections. But within a day, the pendulum had started swinging in the opposite direction. Investors evidently thought that the Congress(I) and not the Opposition would stand to gain by early polls. Thus, the 100 scrips national index of the Bombay Stock Exchange which had crashed by nearly 8 points from 377.72 on October 16 to 369.30 the next day, had recovered to 376.60 the day after.

The bullish sentiments which persisted thereafter were undoubtedly abetted by large-scale purchases by the state-owned financial institutions. And there is every indication that there will be no let-up in such purchases, if for nothing else, because of the fact that the Government can ill-afford to allow stock-markets to turn sluggish.

During the fortnight which ended on October 20, there were major gainers *(see chart)*, but the overall picture was a mixed one for there were quite a few losers. Such shares included Food Specialities, Hindustan Motors, J.K. Synthetics, Southern Petrochemicals and Voltas. Despite the clearance given by the financial institutions to divide the assets of DCM Limited among the squabbling members of the Shri Ram family, the company's scrip failed to revive.

On the positive side, there were indications that the protracted labour dispute at TELCO's Pune plant may be coming to an end. And promoters of companies which went in for mega share issues claimed that investor response had been enthusiastic. Market observers expect that in the weeks to come, that is before the elections, equity values will move only in one direction—that is, upwards.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1989 HIGH	1989 LOW	CLOSE 20.10.89	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	84.00	61.00	78.00	2.00 +
Associated Cement	345.00	230.00	292.00	24.00 +
Asian Paints	226.25	165.00	211.25	6.25 +
Atlas Copco	53.00	32.00	48.00	7.00 +
Bajaj Auto	450.00	290.00	321.25	18.75 +
Baroda Rayon	755.00	285.00	740.00	10.00 +
Bata India	89.00	60.00	67.00	1.00 +
Bayer	910.00	580.00	720.00	17.50 +
Bharat Forge	202.50	65.00	72.50	1.25 +
Birla Jute	73.75	41.50	61.00	0.50 –
Bombay Dyeing	162.00	104.00	124.00	3.00 –
Britannia Ind.	126.00	89.00	126.00	15.00 +
Brooke Bond	155.00	75.00	97.00	6.00 + *
Century Spinning	2295.00	1230.00	2295.00	140.00 +
Chloride India	88.50	72.00	83.50	0.50 –
Colgate Palmolive	371.25	162.50	195.00	16.25 + *
Cyanamid	92.00	55.00	88.00	5.50 +
DCM	85.00	31.00	52.50	5.50 –
Dunlop	95.50	70.00	74.00	1.00 +
E.L. Hotels	68.00	50.00	61.00	1.00 +
Escorts	84.00	58.00	79.00	1.00 –
Finolex Cables	430.00	290.00	320.00	10.00 +
Food Specialities	224.00	100.50	106.00	55.00 –**
Garware Nylon	55.50	36.00	50.00	0.50 +
G.E. Shipping	46.50	33.75	43.35	2.85 +
G.S.F.C.	190.00	123.75	182.50	20.00 +
Grasim Ind.	137.00	75.00	102.50	1.50 + ***
Hind. Aluminium	327.50	155.00	255.00	15.00 +
Hind. Ciba	1090.00	600.00	970.00	nil
Hind. Cocoa	141.25	98.75	128.75	1.25 –
Hindustan Lever	103.00	69.50	101.50	0.50 +
Hindustan Motors	52.50	24.40	24.40	3.90 –****
ICI India Ltd.	68.00	39.00	50.00	2.00 –
Indian Organic	54.50	23.00	51.50	0.50 +
Indian Rayon	106.00	75.75	84.50	0.75 +

	1989 HIGH	1989 LOW	CLOSE 20.10.89	Change in Fortnight
Indrol	335.00	218.75	242.50	6.25 –
Ingersoll-Rand	423.75	267.50	385.00	17.50 –
ITC	129.00	46.25	66.50	0.50 +
J.K. Synthetics	92.00	62.50	65.00	8.00 –***
Kinetic Engineering	395.00	126.25	133.75	3.75 –
Kirloskar Cummins	88.75	54.50	68.50	1.00 +
KSB Pumps	445.00	185.00	195.00	2.50 +
Larsen & Toubro	128.00	81.50	104.00	4.00 + ***
Lipton	90.00	81.50	104.00	4.00 +
LML Ltd.	28.00	12.50	16.00	1.00 –
Madura Coats	104.00	92.25	98.00	2.00 –
Mahindra & Mahindra	113.50	76.50	95.50	1.50 +
Milk Food	300.00	180.00	210.00	10.00 –
Motor Industries	695.00	560.00	660.00	nil
Mukand Ltd.	140.50	75.00	136.00	2.00 +
National Organic	1180.00	710.00	1090.00	25.00 +
Nirlon	17.00	8.00	12.50	1.50 –
Orkay Silk Mills	29.00	13.50	16.50	1.00 –
Pelco Electronics	30.50	16.50	23.00	1.25 –
Pfizer	80.00	58.00	73.00	1.00 –
Ponds	212.50	151.25	175.00	1.25 +
Premier Auto	68.00	40.00	62.00	3.50 +
Raymond	85.00	60.00	68.00	5.50 + ***
Reliance Industries	158.00	84.00	95.00	6.50 –
Siemens India	95.00	65.00	74.00	2.00 –
Shaw Wallace	103.25	62.00	87.00	4.00 –
Shriram Fibres	94.00	55.00	57.00	3.00 –
SKF Bearings	3020.00	1140.00	1260.00	nil
SPIC	67.00	39.00	44.30	4.70 –
Tata Steel	1580.00	1062.50	1237.50	42.50 +
Telco	1097.50	657.50	1070.00	58.75 +
Vam Organic	178.00	136.00	160.00	nil **
Videocon Int.	192.50	55.00	185.00	20.00 +
Voltas	1000.00	470.00	900.00	20.00 –
Wimco	32.00	15.00	23.50	5.75 +

*Ex-dividend **Ex-bonus ***Spot delivery ****Ex-right

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	13.1581	13.0144
Austria	Schilling	100	1.3079	1.2937
Bahrain	Dinar	1	44.5236	44.4128
Bangladesh	Taka	100	53.2928	53.1726
Canada	Dollar	1	14.4505	14.2988
Denmark	Kroner	1	2.3560	2.3306
Egypt	Pound	1	6.1526	6.1029
France	Franc	1	2.7473	2.6774
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.1721	2.1500
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.9526	0.9428
Iran	Rial	100	23.2928	23.1526
Italy	Lira	100	1.2482	1.2338
Japan	Yen	100	12.1655	11.8624
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7926	0.7528
Kuwait	Dinar	1	55.9288	55.7128
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.2984	6.2333
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.0420	1.0100
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6528	0.6128
Netherlands	Guilder	1	8.1242	8.0347
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7826	0.7528
Singapore	Dollar	1	8.6716	8.5799
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1300	0.1200
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4200	0.4000
Sweden	Kroner	1	2.6422	2.6136
Switzerland	Franc	1	10.4952	10.3831
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.1160	0.1000
Thailand	Baht	100	63.2829	63.0000
UK	Pound	1	27.0083	26.8097
USA	Dollar	1	16.9635	16.7926
UAE	Dirham	1	4.1526	4.1000
USSR	Rouble	1	25.9829	25.7928
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	9.3485	9.1158

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 21.10.89.

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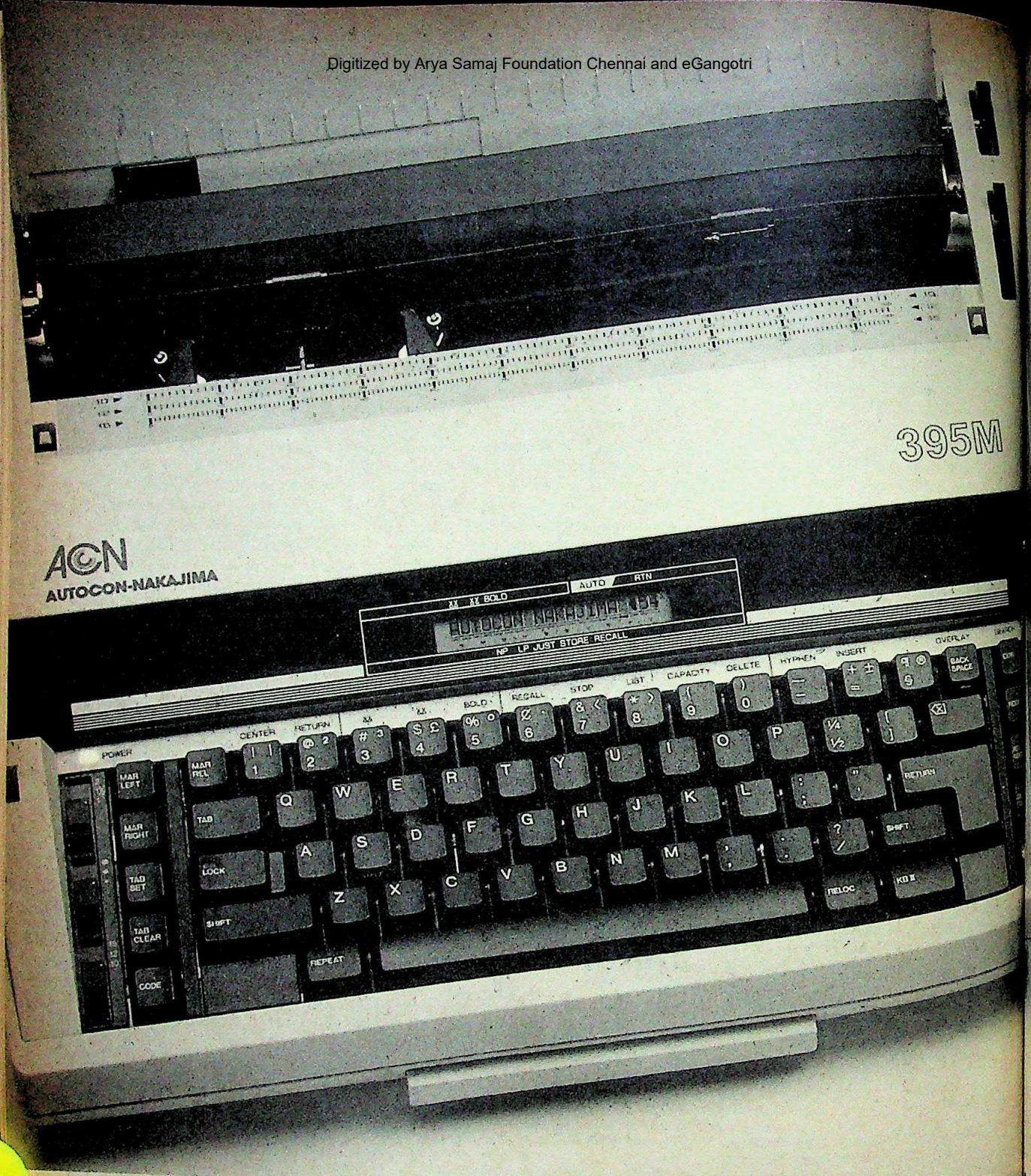

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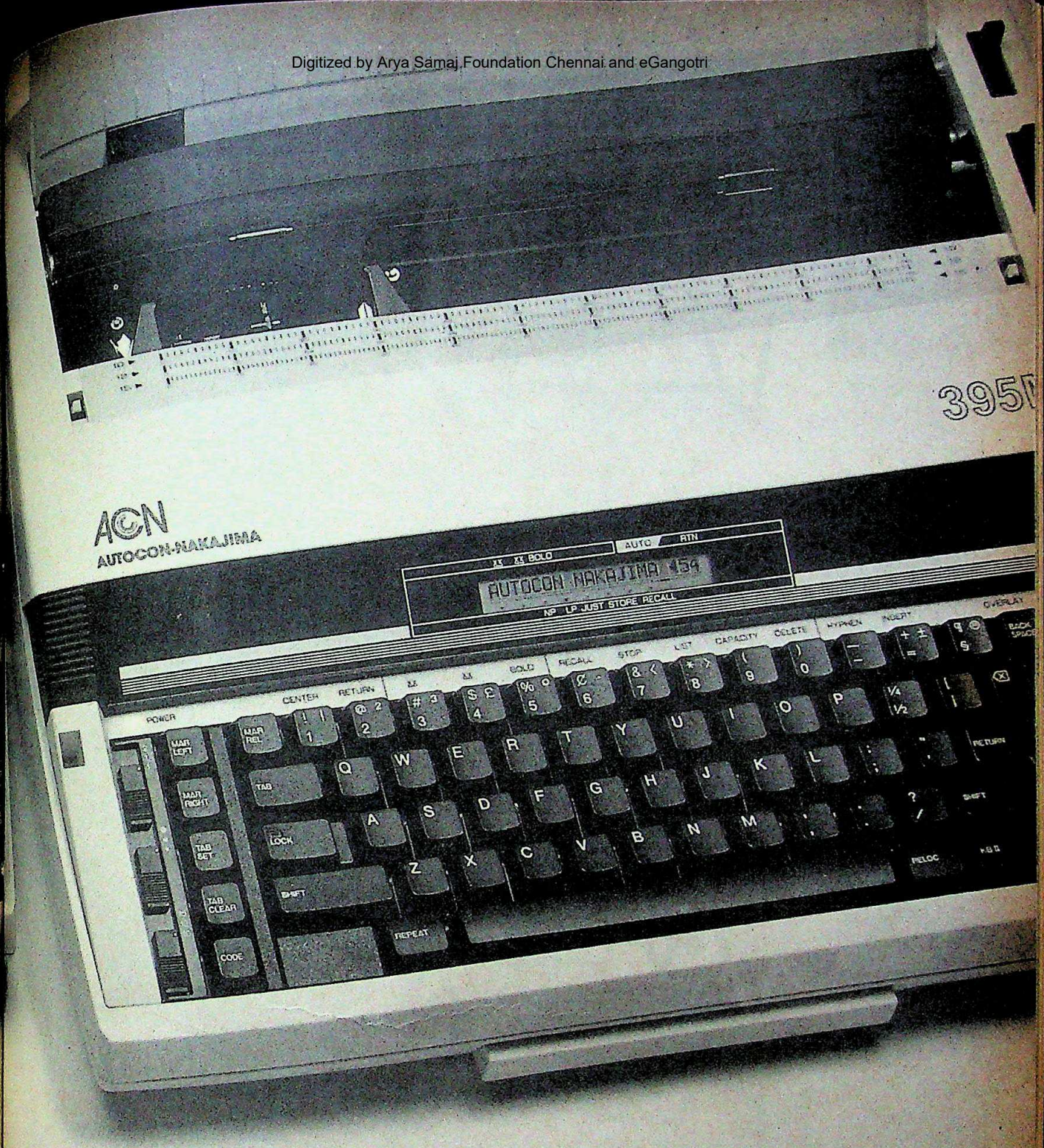

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Enterprise/D/ACL/30...

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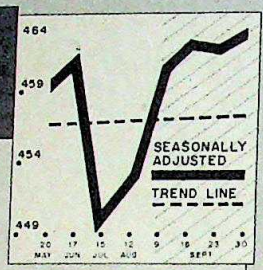
After some months of reasonably good trade figures, the latest two rounds show very poor results; the export boom seems to have faded away, while imports continue to rise sharply. The balance of payments position and foreign debt are the single biggest worry in the Indian economy today. Prices showed some signs of reaching a plateau but the growth in money supply was considerable and can only add to inflationary tendencies.

All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.

Wholesale Price Index

1970-71 = 100

Current Trend
2.17% p.a.

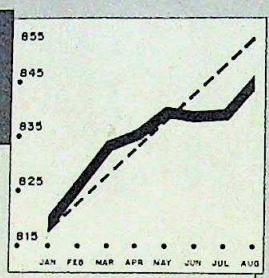


During the last fortnight, the spiralling trend in prices seemed to have come to a halt but there are no signs yet of a downturn.

Consumer Price Index

1960 = 100

Current Trend
7.1% p.a.

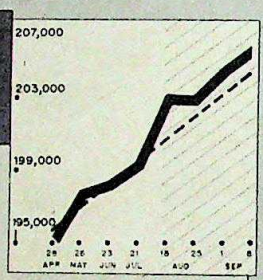


The rise in consumer prices during the last month was above trend—at a 9 per cent annualised rate.

Money Supply

Rs Crore

Current Trend
11.7% p.a.

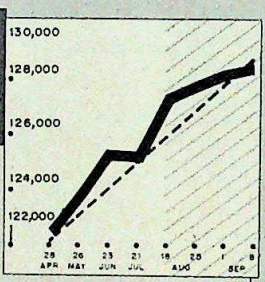


There was a sharp increase in liquidity last fortnight. This may exacerbate inflationary pressures.

Commercial Bank Credit

Rs Crore

Current Trend
14.4 p.a.

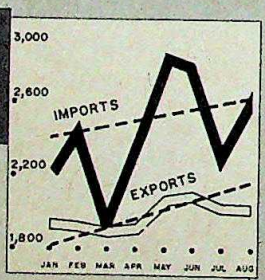


Credit conditions in the country were tight during the last fortnight—rising by the annual trend rate.

Foreign Trade

Rs Crore

Current Trend
31.0% p.a. EXPORTS
15.35% p.a. IMPORTS

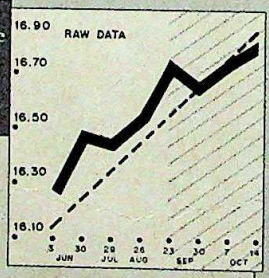


There was more bad news on the trade front. While imports increased sharply, exports failed to grow.

Foreign Exchange Rate

Rs per $

Current Trend
12% p.a.

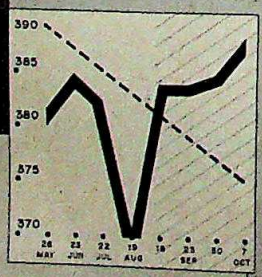


The devaluation continues—but the annual trend is now 12 per cent compared to 20 per cent earlier.

Share Price Index

1984-85 = 100

Current Trend
10.0% p.a.

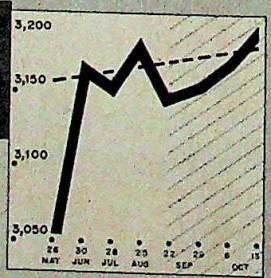


The stock-market showed remarkable resilience despite the series of mega-issues and consequent reduction of liquidity.

Closing Gold Prices

Rs per 10 gm

Current Trend
2.14% p.a.



Bullion prices continued to see-saw. During the last fortnight, the price of gold again increased by a small amount.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 2nd fortnight of September 1989

	% Growth
Tea	17.87
Oranges	16.44
Onions	12.25
Cotton Seeds	8.27
Gingelly Seed	5.82
Turmeric	5.71
Betel-Nuts	4.65
Vanaspati	4.25
Moong	3.93
Diesel Engines	3.86
Khandsari	3.44
Art Silk & Artificial Fabrics	2.81
Ceramic Tiles	2.73
Ball Bearing	2.62
Groundnut Seeds	2.62
Hides Raw	2.57
Radio & T.V.	2.49
Boilers	2.34
Arhar	2.28
Groundnut Oilcake	2.10
Cashew-Nut	2.06
Mustard Oil	1.83
Atta	1.53
Urad	1.48
Handloom & Powerloom Products	1.32
Masoor	1.31
Linseed	1.28
Gram	1.20
Solvent Extracted Oil	1.17
Groundnut Oil	1.13
Cotton Cloth	1.11
Copra	1.11
Jute Textiles	0.93
Rape & Mustard Seeds	0.81
Wheat	0.79
Coconut Oil	0.76
Fish	0.67
Ghee	0.66
Cables & Wires	0.61
Coffee	0.53
Maida	0.52
Gingelly Oil	0.51
Electrical Motors	0.40
Board	0.39
Tractors	0.31
Butter	0.29
Dairy Products	0.11

Of the 136 series considered, 49 of them with a total weight of 38.324 had a positive growth and 21 of them with a total weight of 21.717 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1989	1988
Coal Thousand Tonnes, September	14720	14130
Saleable Steel Thousand Tonnes, September	697.8	722.0
Cement Thousand Tonnes, September	3300	3362
Petroleum Crude Thousand Tonnes, September	2765	2590
Petroleum Refinery Products Thousand Tonnes, September	3474	3703

Compiled by THE POLICY GROUP

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And you thought Modi Continental only makes India's best truck tyres?

You could hardly help thinking that.

After all Modi Continental's N416 and RL8 truck tyres have led the way on India's challenging highways for the last 14 years – and have set standards others are still trying to match.

And the same proven technology – backed by the world renowned tyre manufacturer, Continental Aktiengesellschaft, West Germany– has gone into making Modi Continental No. 1 in two-wheeler tyres too.

What makes "Treadsafe" a safer choice for scooters and motorcycles?

- Special tread pattern and superior tread compound give better skid resistance, high cornering and braking efficiency
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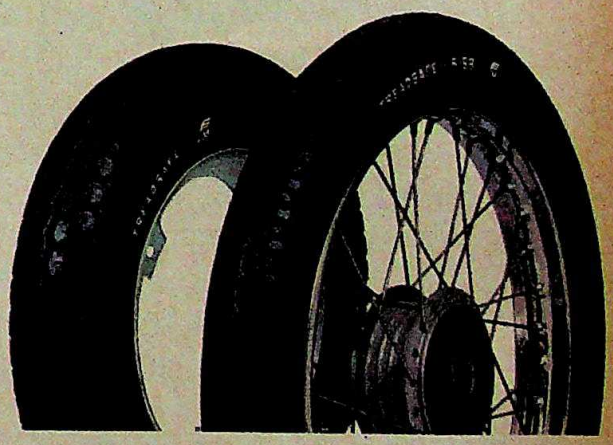
- Nylon construction and 50% more casing strength give good double impact resistance.

Plus! A nationwide network of 40 centres to ensure prompt after sales service.

Modi Continental two-wheeler tyres. Excellence only India's No. 1 tyre manufacturer can offer.

TREADSAFE



No. 1 in tyres – technology, sales, exports

Modi Continental

The tyre that never tires

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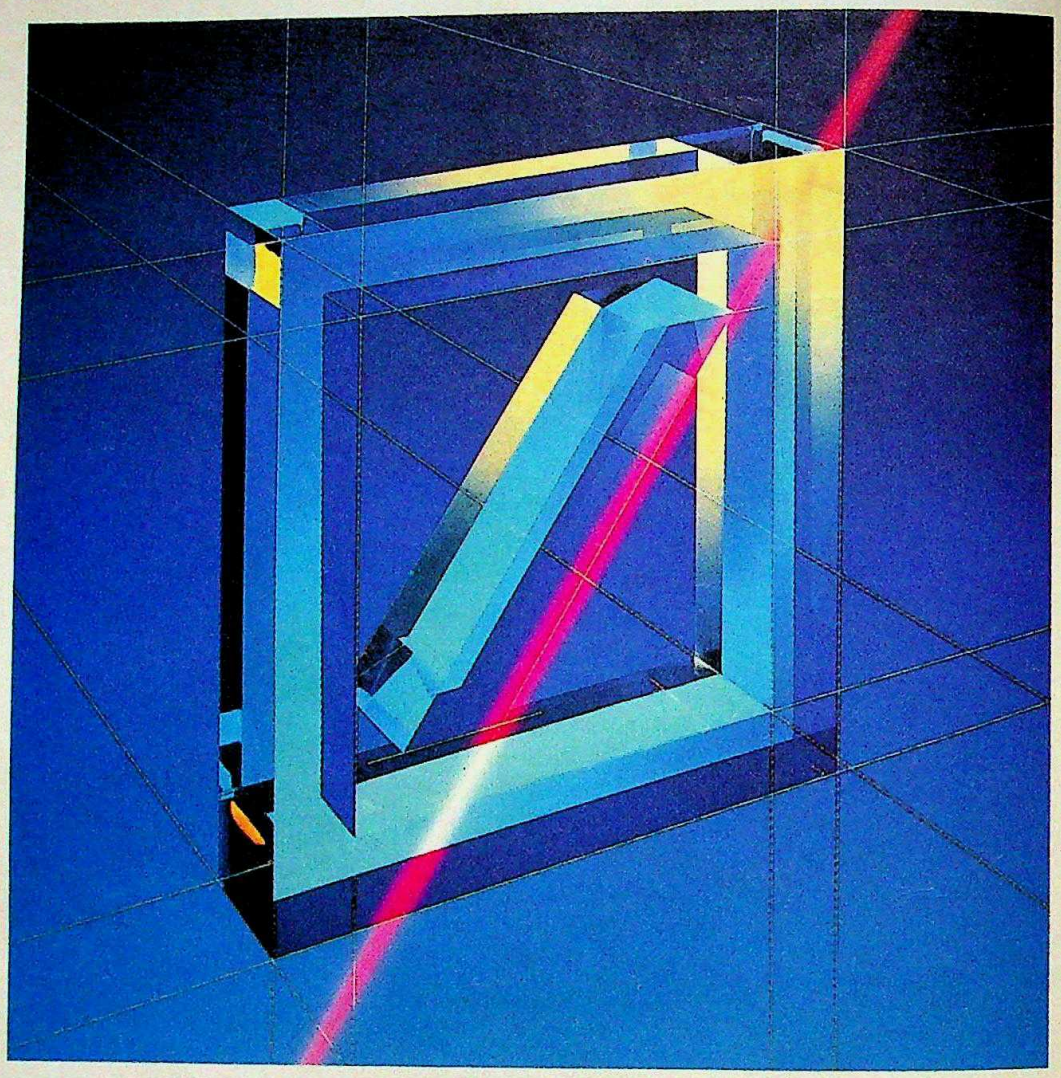
Germany's leading bank is now in Bombay and New Delhi.



The successful introduction of products to worldwide markets requires a bank with international resources. Deutsche Bank, with offices in more than 40 countries around the globe, is such a bank.

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A Dangerous Drift

IT is a sign of the schizophrenic times we live in that in the drama enacted by N. Ram, associate editor of *The Hindu*, to denigrate his uncle and editor, G. Kasturi, the majority of the press egged him on and cheered. And in an appropriately surrealistic act, C.R.Irani, managing director of *The Statesman*, pinned a medal on Ram's chest.

Almost all journalists' organisations came out in full-throated support of Ram, revelling in pulling down the editor. And the newspapers favoured by Ram to publish a part of the exposure of Bofors, vetoed by his editor, preened themselves in borrowed *Hindu* plumes the next morning.

It is immaterial whether *The Hindu* issue is an intra-family affair. The relevant point in the extraordinary denouement is that a member of the staff of *The Hindu* chose publicly to berate his editor while vowing to stay on in the paper.

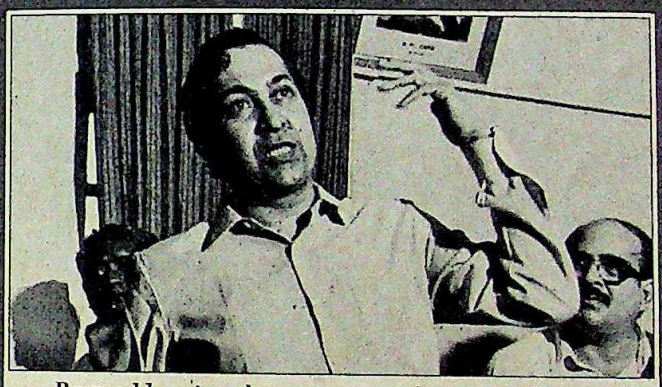
The issue of Bofors must be separated from Ram's conduct. Ram and in particular his intrepid colleague in Geneva, Chitra Subramaniam, deserve the highest praise for their consistent expose of the Bofors scandal. With admirable meticulousness, the team tore apart the Government's self-serving alibis to land their paper the biggest scoop of the decade among Indian newspapers.

True, the manner in which the expose was displayed over the months was out of character. It would have been more in *The Hindu* style to underplay it, rather than plaster the front page and inside pages with facsimile of letters. But that is a relatively minor point of style.

It would appear that Ram was carried away by his own success and planned to continue hogging the paper for a succession of follow-up exposes on the Bofors deal. The vetoing of the controversial second portion of the Bofors story raised Ram's ire. Judging by what appeared in other papers, courtesy Ram, it is difficult to disagree with the editor's decision that it did not take the expose much further.

The point is not whether the editor was right or wrong, nor even whether he was influenced by the Government in the decision he took. The editor made a decision and the only honourable course for Ram, if he wanted to challenge it, was to resign his job and fight.

In the lengthy statement Ram made at the standing-room-only press conference in Delhi, he raised the question of the need to look at the decision-making structure in newspapers. He must know as well as any journalist that if the institution of the editor is denigrated, the loss is the newspaper readers'. Kasturi, indeed enhanced his reputation by publishing the full text of Ram's statement attacking him, together with his own brief rejoinder, couched in dignified language.



Ram addressing the controversial press conference

As editor, Kasturi had taken a decision and the only honourable course for Ram if he wanted to challenge it as associate editor, was to resign his job and fight.

It is perfectly in order that an owner should also be the editor of a publication if he has the yen for the profession. What is happening in Indian newspapers is the deliberate diminution of the editor's status, with the owner becoming a backseat driver.

There is no great mystery about the proprietor-editor relationship and how a healthy interaction between the two can benefit the paper and readers. A newspaper owner is fully entitled to lay down a policy, and if an editor is not in full agreement with it, he has no business to take on the job. Similarly, within the broad parameters of laid-down policy, the proprietor has no business to interfere with the editor's day-to-day direction of the newspaper.

The tragedy of Indian journalism is that the editor is becoming an endangered species. We have seen this happen over the years in *The Statesman*, and in more recent times, *The Times of India* has taken a sharp turn from being an editor's paper to a paper for advertisements and the make-up department.

As the poet said, a little learning is a dangerous thing, and an imperfect understanding of how the great American papers work has caused havoc. It is forgotten that a Sulzeberger of the *New York Times* can be an activist publisher in the American sense because he has been put through the mill and devotes full-time attention to the paper. In a sense, *The Hindu* structure corresponds to *The New York Times* tradition in that the co-owners, including Ram, have had to earn their spurs.

The Hindu controversy is another nail in the coffin of the editor's position. It also highlights a tragic aspect of the Indian scene. In the run-up to the elections, many journalists have become warriors in the political battle for or against Rajiv Gandhi.

The opposition parties are not the only ones who are licking their lips as another exposure on Bofors is flashed across the front pages of newspapers. Journalists are also rooting for one side or the other, having lost their professional scepticism and objectivity.

In the process, we are reaching further depths of partisanship in the newspaper profession. Perhaps it is unrealistic to hope that journalists can stay virtuous in the increasingly muddy pond of Indian politics. But we should be clear about the direction in which we are heading. It is a direction that bodes ill for the future of Indian journalism.

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Garware Marine Industries Limited

Registered Office: Raheja Centre, Nariman Point, Bombay 400 021.

Statement by Mr. Ashok Garware, Chairman at the 12th Annual General Meeting of the Company on Friday, 22nd September, 1989.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have great pleasure in extending to you a warm and cordial welcome to this Twelfth Annual General Meeting of your Company.

The Directors' Report and Audited Accounts for the 18 month period ended 31st March, 1989 have been with you for sometime now, I presume you have had the opportunity of going through the same, and I shall take them as read

Founder Chairman

On 29th October, 1988 Founder of the Garware Group and Chairman Padma Bhushan Dr. B.D. Garware resigned from the Board of Directors, after having guided and inspired the Company's growth since its inception, which has resulted in the Company's products receiving wide acceptance in the country and abroad. Due to his dynamic leadership, the Company is now poised for a bright future. You will be happy to know that his advice and guidance will always be available to the Company whenever he is approached.

Year Under Review

I look back with satisfaction at the period under review, inspite of the severe adversities faced by the Company during 1986-87. The results for the period would have been even better, if the price level of the input costs could have been contained. I am sure my feelings will be shared by all the Shareholders who are interested in the progress of the Company. Barring unforeseen circumstances the upward trend in sales and profitability is likely to continue.

Our Commitments

We on our part are continuing our efforts to reduce costs, augment productivity to achieve better results. The working of the Company during the current period till date has also been encouraging.

I am pleased to state that with the infrastructure the Company has established over the years, we are well equipped to face the challenges ahead.

Fisheries Industry

India has a 6,100 kilometre coast-line which offers vast potential for in-shore, off-shore and deep-sea fishing. It is estimated that marine fishing resources alone can be easily tapped to the extent of 14 million tonnes per annum. Against this back-drop the actual fish production in the country increased from approximately 1 million tonnes in 1962 to only 3.2 million tonnes in 1988, whilst the present world fish production is 85 million tonnes per annum. Thus India accounts for only 3.8% of the world output and the need to further augment and boost fisheries as a potential industry acquires significance.

On the export front India is fast emerging as the major exporter of marine products with exports for the year 1988 touching Rs.598 crores against Rs.460 crores in 1987. Frozen shrimps continue to have a dominant share both in terms of quantity and value in the overall exports of marine products. The major markets for Indian Marine products continue to be Japan, USA, France, Netherlands and UK.

Looking at the vast untapped marine fishery resources, I expect that with the growth of the Fisheries Industry - (increase in the fleet of deep-sea fishing vessels, as also thrust on the export front) - there will be larger demand for fishing nets as well as floats which are beyond the capacity of the un-organised sector of the fishnet-making industry. Consequently, your Company has a pivotal role to play.

Acknowledgements

Before I conclude, I wish to place on record my deep appreciation of the whole hearted support and valuable guidance received from my colleagues on the Board. At this juncture, I would like to make a special mention of the inputs of Mr. A.S. Sule who has closely guided the activity at the factories as a result of which, there has been a substantial increase in the production - and Mr. H.C. Sethna who similarly, has given direction to marketing and other activities normally carried out in the Head Office. The work of both these directors has contributed in no mean measure to the substantial progress made by the Company. I would like to express on behalf of the Board and myself, our sincere appreciation of the efforts being put in by the employees at all levels in the working of the Company. I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Financial Institutions and the Banks for their continued and active support, and last but not the least I wish to express my sincere thanks for the support and understanding of all the Members as also those of you present here this afternoon.

Thank you,

Bombay, *Chairman*
22nd Sept, 1989.

This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

BIG A/GMIL/1/89

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THE PRESS

Under Pressure

Mega-battles over editorial ethics

THE delicate issue of press freedom came to the fore again last fortnight, embroiling in controversy some of India's most prestigious newspaper groups: *The Hindu*, *The Hindustan Times*, and *The Times of India*. A public battle resulted between the editors of the first, a threat to quit came from Editor H.K. Dua of the second, and an actual resignation from Editor Vinod Mehta of the fledgling *The Independent*, youngest sister in the gargantuan *Times* family.

The issues involved the authority and responsibilities of the editor and the duty of a journalist towards his editor, his sources and his readers. Not the least of the issues, though, was the political interference that emerged in each case.

Without any legal protection, the Indian press has often been buffeted by government pressures, the nadir being the Emergency censorship. On the slippery path to the general elections, the Government's subtle tentacles seemed hyper-active. If the associate editor of *The Hindu* had suspected (INDIA TODAY, October 31) the Government of pressuring his editor to suppress news, Editor Dua of *The Hindustan Times* had reason a few days later to suspect it of trying to use one of his senior staff to plant material in his paper. He put his foot down after the paper carried a report by Senior Editor Shubhabrata Bhattacharya, datelined 'lately in St Kitts', regarding alleged secret accounts of opposition leader V.P. Singh's son, Ajeya Singh.

Bhattacharya had been on leave, ostensibly on honeymoon in Udaipur, when he found his way to St Kitt's and returned to publish the report, all without the knowledge of the editor. A former Youth Congress activist, Bhattacharya has made no bones about his political preferences. While refusing to comment on the controversy, he did not deny the allegation that party backers paid for his trip. *The Hindustan Times* was the only paper apart from *The Telegraph* of Calcutta to print the allegations. Ajeya sued both and such disclosures could only further reduce the credibility of the paper, which has gained circulation during Dua's two-and-a-half year tenure. Newspapers speculated that he had put in his resignation, insisting on his prerogative to commission reports.

Dua refused to confirm or deny the rumour, though he insisted that "there is no problem between the proprietors and me. The issue relates to freedom of the press. There is need for all the newspapers to insulate themselves from pressures from outside."

The allusion was clearly to Race Course Road. This is not the first time Dua has taken a bold stand at variance with proprietor and Congress(I) MP K.K. Birla's political commitments on such issues as the infamous Anti-Defamation Bill. So while there was speculation that the management was using him as a front to balance out its pro-Congress(I) slant in the run-up to an election that might go either way, it was more likely that Dua was sending a signal, both to the owners and to the Government, by taking a firm stand.

While Dua's management was likely to stand by him, at least till the elections, Mehta was not so fortunate. His resignation was accepted after a front-page report in his 29-day-old, upmarket *The Independent* caused an uproar. The October 19 report had claimed that it was former deputy prime minister Y.B. Chavan, not former prime minister Morarji Desai, who had spied for the CIA. Based largely on a letter written by disgruntled RAW employees, it alleged that Chavan had a clandestine affair with a US woman diplomat.

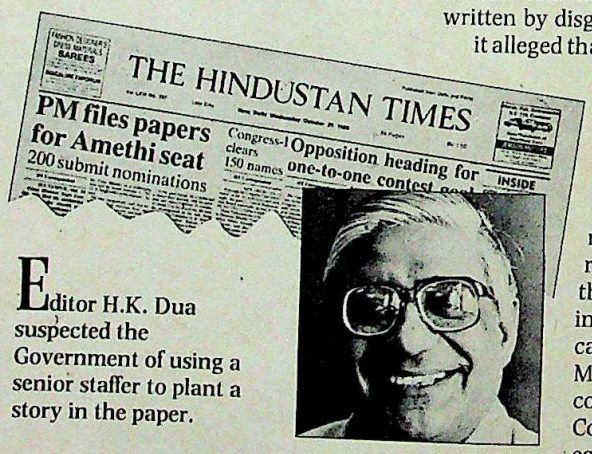
Chavan is something of a Maharashtrian hero. The Shiv Sena has stoked Maharashtrian chauvinism in recent years, and with the tension of the impending elections, the issue became explosive. Chief Minister Sharad Pawar, a corner-stone of the Congress(I)'s poll strategy, is also president of the Yeshwantrao Chavan Pratishthan. The Government sacked the two employees responsible for circulating the letter and Pawar demanded that the paper apologise.

Intriguingly, the most scathing criticism of the report came from the editorial columns of the paper's own sesquicentenarian sister. After excoriating "juvenile zeal for sensationalism", the *Times of India* concluded: "The hysterical self-righteousness of sections of the press is only a facade for perpetrating politically-motivated intellectual terrorism."

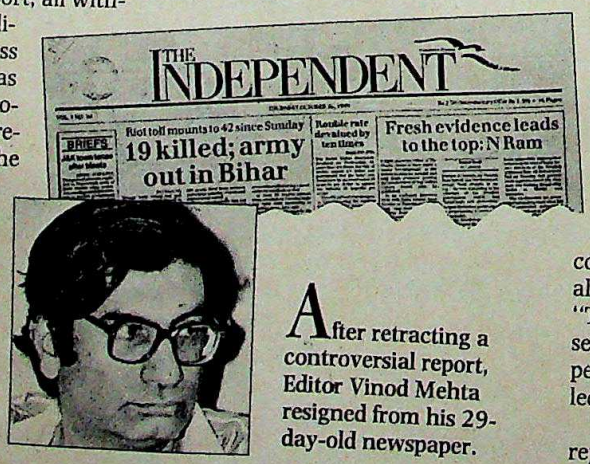
In an editorial, Mehta defended the report as an attempt to reveal how

THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper
Rajiv Gandhi plays it safe
Most outgoing
Army called out in riot-hit Bhagalpur

Editor G. Kasturi was accused by Associate Editor N. Ram of buckling under government pressure.


THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
PM files papers for Amethi seat
200 submit nominations
Congress-I clears 150 names
Opposition heading for one-to-one contest
INSIDE

Editor H.K. Dua suspected the Government of using a senior staffer to plant a story in the paper.


THE INDEPENDENT
BRIEFS
Riot toll mounts to 42 since Sunday
19 killed; army out in Bihar
Rotable rate devalued by ten times
Fresh evidence leads to the top: N Ram

After retracting a controversial report, Editor Vinod Mehta resigned from his 29-day-old newspaper.

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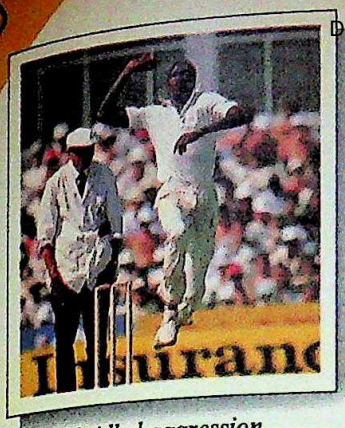
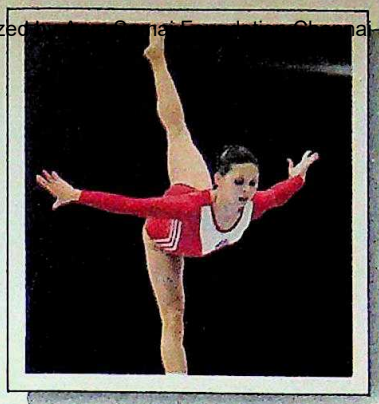
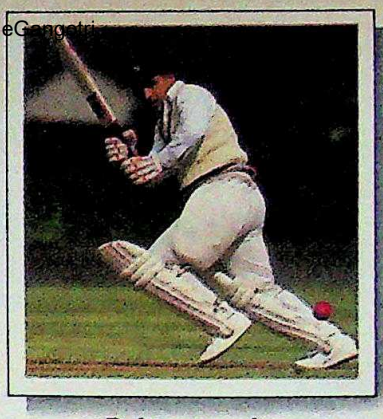


Unbridled aggression...



Exquisite grace...



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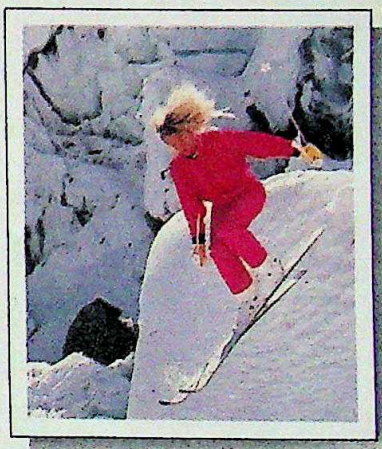
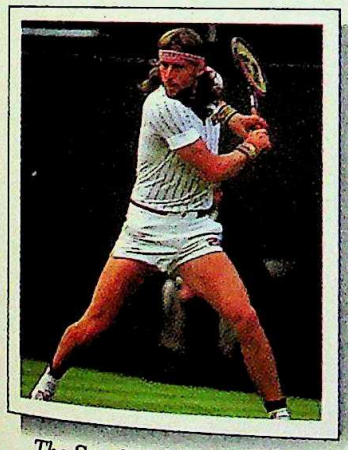
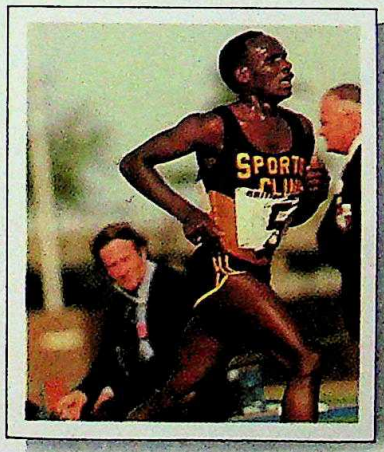
Sheer power...



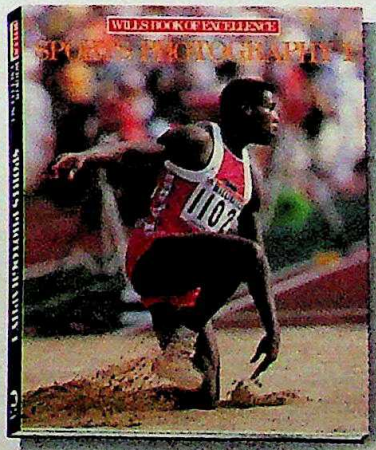
The speed of skiing...



The Swedish revolution...



The African antelopes...



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49 ● HYDERABAD: Meena Jewellers: 231073 ● AHMEDABAD: Vajubhai Jewellers: 401901 ● Kenya Watch Co: 448035 ● Favourite Watch Co: 78395 ● Khazana: 466625 ● BANGALORE: Perfect
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intelligence is used to defame people like Desai. He offered to apologise if the Government produced Intelligence Bureau documentation and they proved the information wrong.

That, however, did not suffice. Pawar met the Jains, owners of the *Times of India* group, in Delhi. Mehta retracted the story and apologised on the front-page on October 25. Within 12 hours, he had resigned, stating that with the apology, he had lost his moral authority in the paper. "This whole thing has been politicised," he later said, adding that "Pawar is a politician, and he obviously saw his chance."

In the process, not only did the fledgling paper receive a possibly fatal blow, an editor—who had resigned from *The Indian Post* rather than accept the proprietor's orders to avoid criticism of certain key politicians—was deprived of his forum just before a crucial election. Pertinently, Pritish Nandy was allowed to continue as editor of the *Times'* sister publication, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, despite his inability to substantiate the libellous story he published about Orissa Chief Minister J.B. Patnaik.

Meanwhile, the family battle at *The Hindu* landed in court, with affidavits and counter-affidavits over Managing Director and Editor G. Kasturi's October 18 move to suspend nephew-Associate Editor N. Ram. The case was adjourned till November 3 to allow a compromise.

However, any compromise is bound to be tenuous. For the rift represents a fundamental difference of perception. A prominent member of the Kasturi group held that the issue was that "much damage has been done to the reputation of the paper". Meanwhile, Ram flew to Sweden, Geneva and London where he revealed that he had made "a major breakthrough" in his Bofors investigations, hinting that his new disclosures would "lead right to the top".

That promises to trigger off another clash at the paper—Kasturi's staid conservatism against Ram's determined radicalism, which insists on taking a stiff stand on issues. Ram's pro-LTTE stand on the Sri Lanka imbroglio and his open support for the DMK in Tamil Nadu politics are among issues that have previously brought him into conflict with Kasturi. While none of these issues caused a break, the family is at the brink of coming apart at the seams over the suspicion that a shadowy hand is trying to stifle a major critic. Now, with the election charge at full tilt, the seats at newspaper boardrooms are likely to get hotter than ever.

—DAVID DEVADAS with bureau reports

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Z.R. ANSARI

Shock Charge

Minister accused of rape bid

An ordinary girl might have gone home and wept for two days, then dried her eyes and sulked back to her daily routine. But Mukti Dutta, 26, is no ordinary girl. Born to the owner of a huge orchard at Binsar near Almora in Uttar Pradesh, and alumna of the prestigious Maharani Gayatri Devi Public School in Jaipur, she has devoted herself for the last four years to grass roots work in about 300 villages near her father's estate. And she has earned respect for her work as secretary of the Jan Jagran Samiti which deals with environmental problems.

So she made a public issue of an incident on October 11 when she says Minister for Environment and Forests Z.R. Ansari, 64, molested and tried to rape her. She had gone to meet him in New Delhi about the misfunctioning of an Almora-based environmental institute and about the timber and resin mafia there. She says that after listening to her in his main office, he suggested they go to the ante-chamber.

According to an FIR lodged by her, Ansari shut the door behind them, "lunged at me and proceeded to embrace and kiss me and ran his hands over my body and under my clothes. I began to struggle violently. And during the course of the struggle, Ansari pinned me down on the couch and got on top of me". But she managed to escape.

Ansari had, obviously, not calculated on Dutta's contacts. Her father, Vivek Dutta, is a leading light of Almora, and former prime ministerial aide Arun Singh's current retreat is on land which belongs to her family. Her work has brought her into contact with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, with whom she lobbied to have Binsar declared a sanctuary. She has also worked closely with Cabinet Secretary T.N. Seshan when he headed the Environment Department.

Within a couple of hours of her traumatic experience, Dutta contacted Seshan, demanding that he inform the prime minister. She says he promised to call B.G. Deshmukh, principal secretary to the prime minister. Meanwhile, a family friend, Brijendra Singh, called Rajiv directly and Dutta says she got the impression that Ansari would be sacked.

But after a week of assurances by Seshan, Deshmukh and Minister of State for Welfare Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, Dutta realised nothing would happen. She says Bajpai told her that, though what had happened was terrible, the situation was delicate because of the elections. Obviously, a beleaguered prime minister decided he could not afford to act against one of the two Muslim ministers in his cabinet.

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Protesting activists; and (inset) Ansari

But when Ansari got the Congress(I) ticket, Dutta declared battle. She filed her FIR on October 26, and went to the press. "If a stand could not be taken on this kind of straightforward issue, then at what point will a stand be taken?" she asked. As many as 13 women's and civil liberties organisations have backed her.

After avoiding questions on the subject for a day, and after frantic phone calls to the Prime Minister's Office, Ansari finally denied the charge the next day: "I have been set up. This is a conspiracy by my opponents in the Congress and outside."

Said the delicate-looking Dutta: "I would like to invite Mr Ansari to come to the dargah at Ajmer Sharif and swear on his and on his children's head that he never laid a finger on me." The issue, she added, went beyond her and Ansari. "All these filthy politicians are the same, whether they are from the Congress(I) or the Janata Dal or any other party." Her soft voice expressed the anguish of the many women who suffer such indignities in silence.

—DAVID DEVADAS

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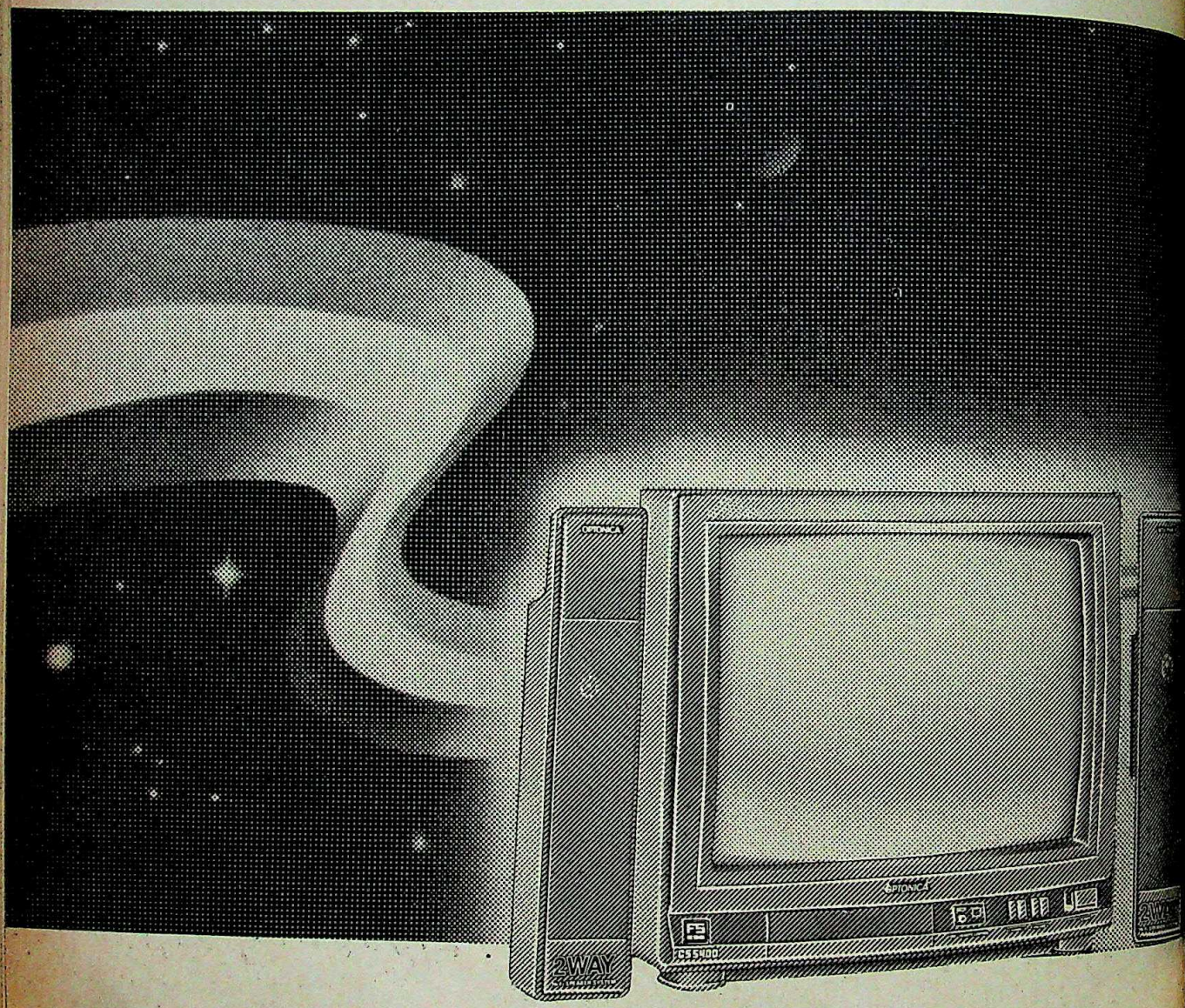

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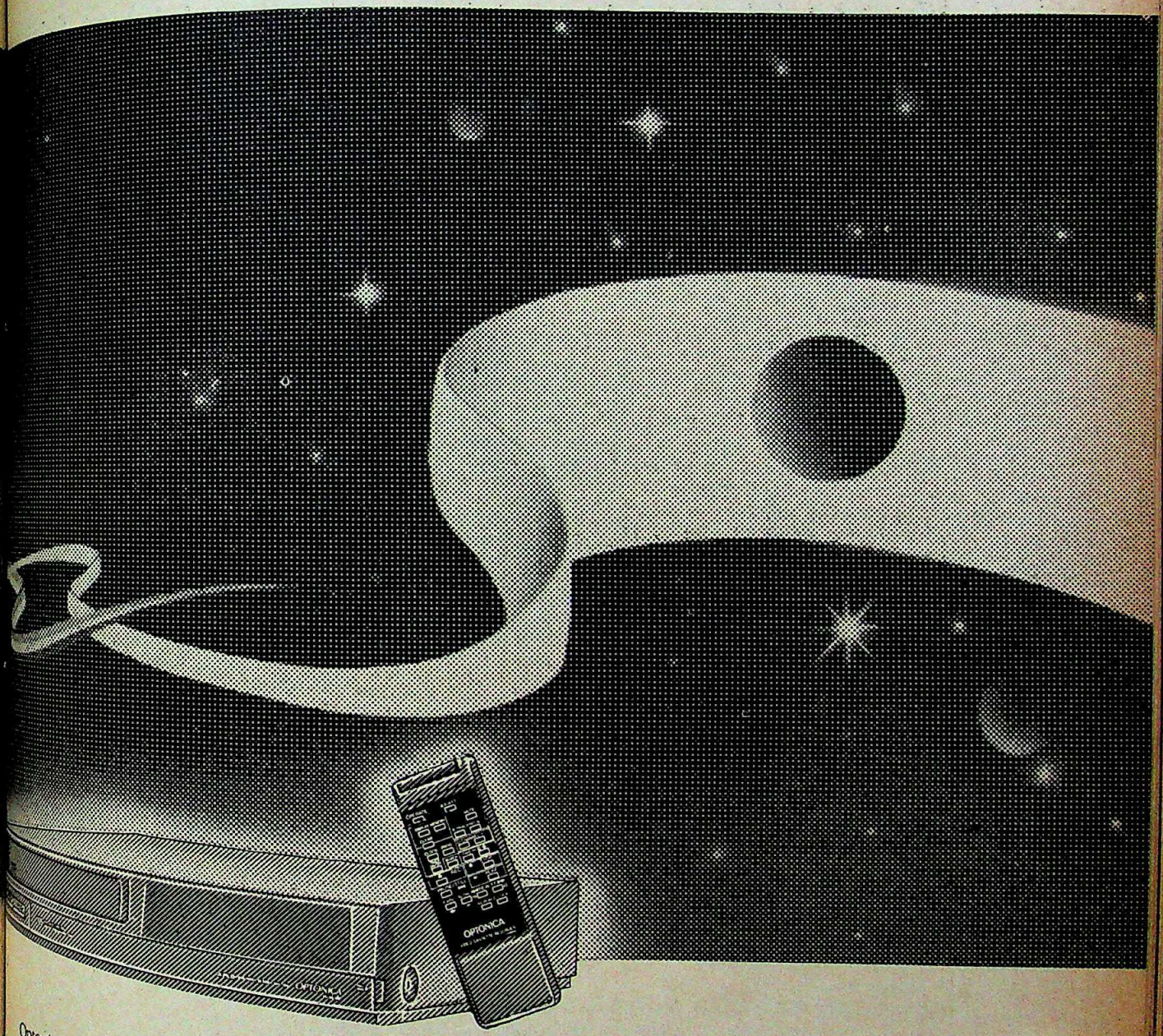

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ESPIONAGE

Leaks in High Places

Prosecution of two officials sends shivers down bureaucratic spines

IN early April 1987, two innocuous looking packages landed on the desk of Joy Thomas, supervisor in the Delhi office of a little known courier company Trident Express. One package was addressed to Paris and the other to the Netherlands.

In the normal course, the packages would have been winging their way to their destinations in a matter of hours. But for a small discrepancy which triggered off Thomas' suspicions. He knew that the parcels had originated from William Jacks, a company owned by K.K. Jajodia and his son A.K. Jajodia, which frequently used his courier services. But the sender's name and address on both parcels had been intentionally falsified.

Thomas opened the packages. The one addressed to Paris contained an army document prominently marked 'secret': a photocopy of a trial report of a battlefield surveillance radar, evaluated by the Army School of Artillery at Deolali. The second package contained 13 letters addressed to the Ministry of Defence. Some dealt with the Flycatcher radar, used by the army to detect low-flying aircraft and the other referred to a modification proposal for the Super Flader Maus radar used by the defence forces.

The courier company promptly called in the CBI, which in turn raided Jajodia's house to recover another secret document, containing details of the army's operational requirement for utility helicopters. Tracing the source of the leaked documents, the CBI investigators sniffed their way into the very heart of the defence establishment.

One trail led the CBI to the office of the Adviser (Defence Electronics) in the Department of Electronics, Dr N.W. Nerurkar, and the other to Brigadier R.S. Diol in the Directorate of Weapons and Equipment at Army Headquarters. The Jajodias were arrested in June 1988 and Diol and Nerurkar in November 1988. The CBI charged them with offences under sections 3 and 5 of the Official Secrets Act, which carry a maximum punishment of 14 years.

Discreet inquiries were initiated to ascertain the extent of Nerurkar's access to the secrets of the three services. The Defence Ministry was horrified to discover that Nerurkar had been privy to a treasure trove of sensitive information pertaining to current and future equipment plans of all three services.

Nine years earlier, in 1979, the Defence Ministry had directed the army, the navy and the air force to inform the adviser (defence electronics) of all their plans to procure major equipment with an electronic component; the adviser would determine whether the electronic component could be manufactured indigenously or whether import was inescapable. Nerurkar had been performing this function of adviser for over 10 years, so there was little he did not know about the equipment plans of the three services. In exercise of the powers conferred on him, Nerurkar had, in the early 1980s, asked in writing for the Indian Air Force's future procurement plans.

Brigadier R.S. Diol, who worked in the Directorate of Weapons and Equipment, dealt with most of the army's equipment plans.

The arrest of Diol and Nerurkar set the alarm bells ringing in the Defence Ministry. "If Nerurkar is a spy, then the country's defence strategies, equipment and operational plans would have been compromised," commented a senior official of the Department of Electronics and a former colleague of Nerurkar. The same would apply to Diol, who, as brigadier (general staff) in the Directorate of Weapons and Equipment, dealt with most of the army's equipment plans.

As a first step, the Defence Ministry some months ago pruned the powers of the adviser (defence electronics): it ordered that all super-sensitive equipment plans need not be sent to the Department of Electronics for clearance. According to government guidelines, top secret documents are meant to be kept in the custody of officers of the rank of joint secretary and above and handled with utmost care. They are not supposed to take these documents home or even pass the documents on to people below them.

Papers marked 'secret' can be marked down to junior officials, but a record of the movement of the papers has to be maintained. The rules pertaining to movement of 'confidential' and 'restricted' documents are a little less tight.

There is a general tendency in government offices to over-classify papers. And even the senior-most officials are forced to take sensitive documents home, even though this is technically against the rules. They say it is logistically impossible for them to deal with all these papers during office hours.

But are Nerurkar and Diol really spies? The Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate of Delhi, J.M. Malik, found enough evidence of a prima facie case against them in September when he committed all the accused to stand trial before a sessions court. What is the evidence against them?

The CBI found that the evaluation report of the West German manufactured RATAC-S battlefield surveillance radar, discovered by the courier in the package being sent to France by the Jajodias, was a photocopy of the report sent to the Department of Electronics by Army Headquarters.

Nerurkar had received the report on February 17, 1987, and kept it with him till April 9, when he forwarded it to a joint director in his department, S.P. Singh. Experts of the Central Forensic Sciences Laboratory opined that the copy being sent abroad had been xeroxed from Nerurkar's copy.

The second parcel opened by the courier contained 13 letters pertaining to the army's Flycatcher radar and the Super Flader Maus radar. Nerurkar was dealing with these radars, and had in August 1986, sought written permission from the secretary of the Department of Electronics 'to continue dealing with the three radars. The CBI feels it was too much of a coin-

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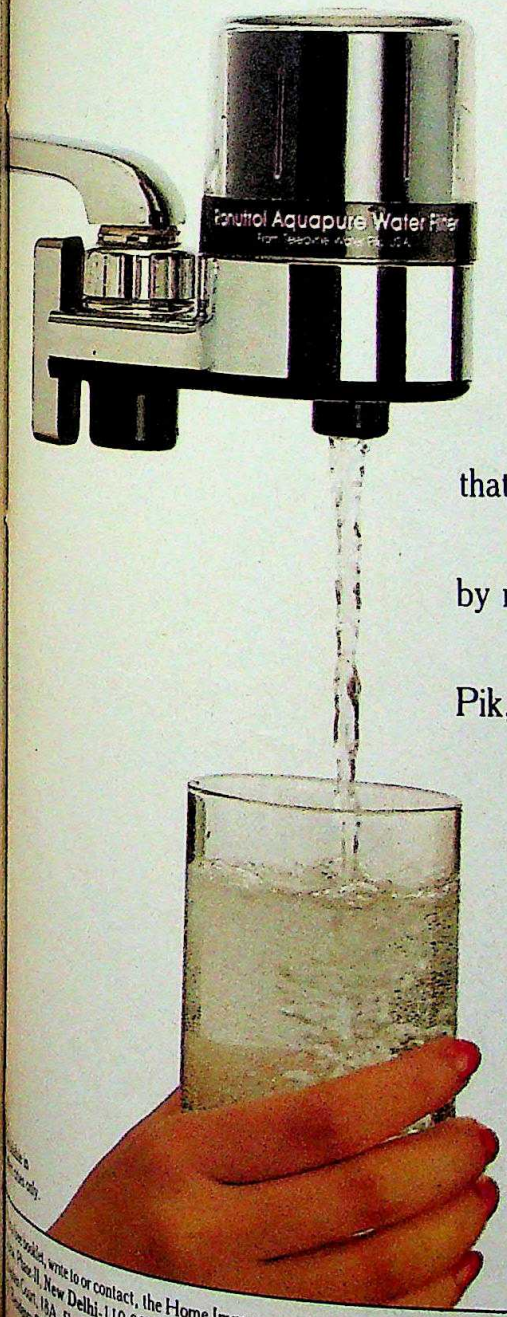

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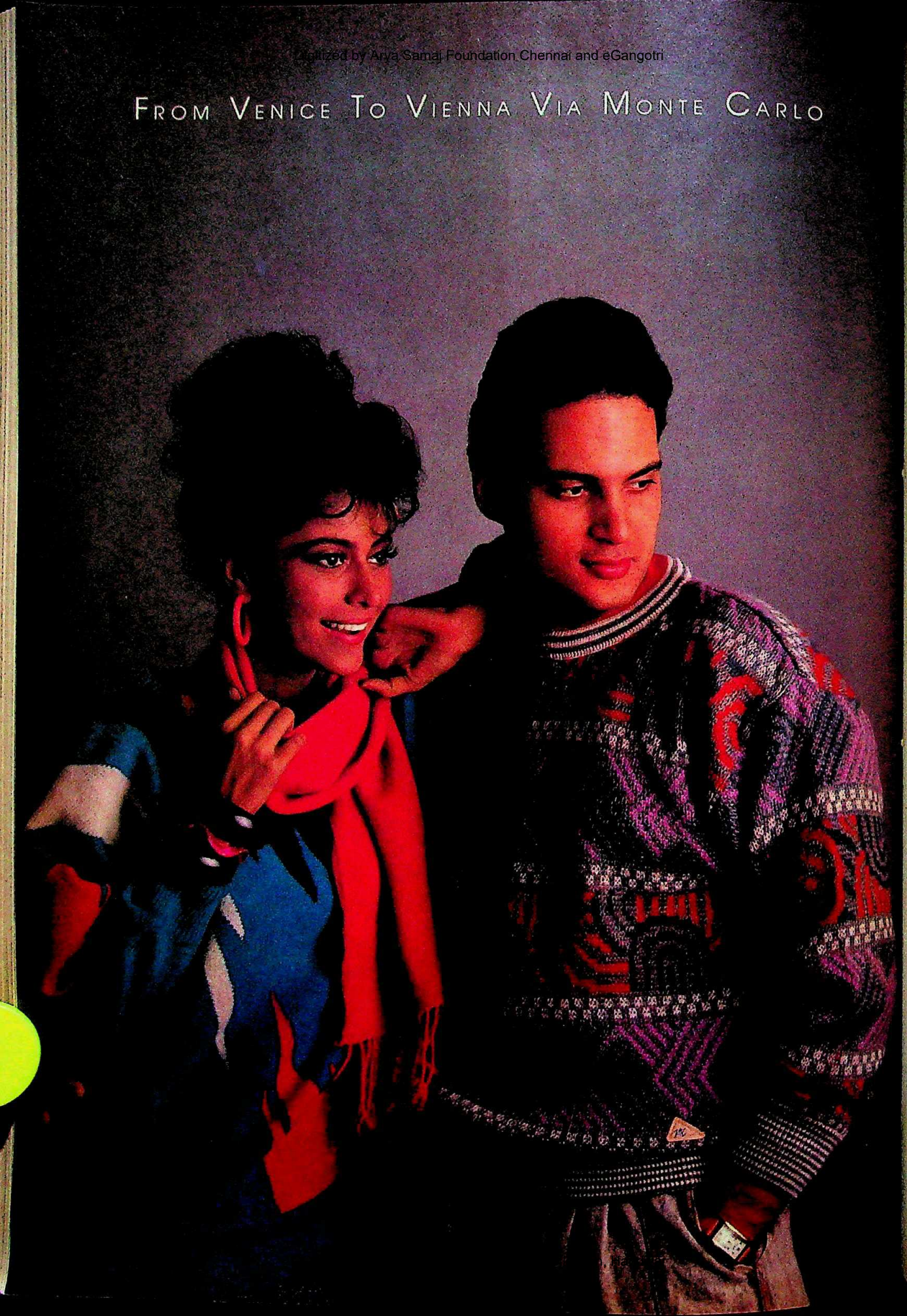

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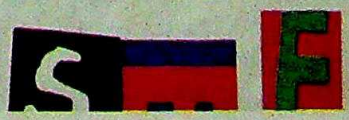

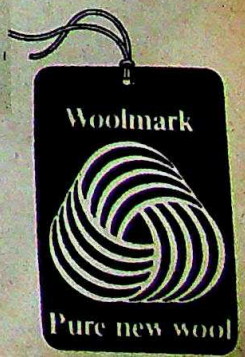

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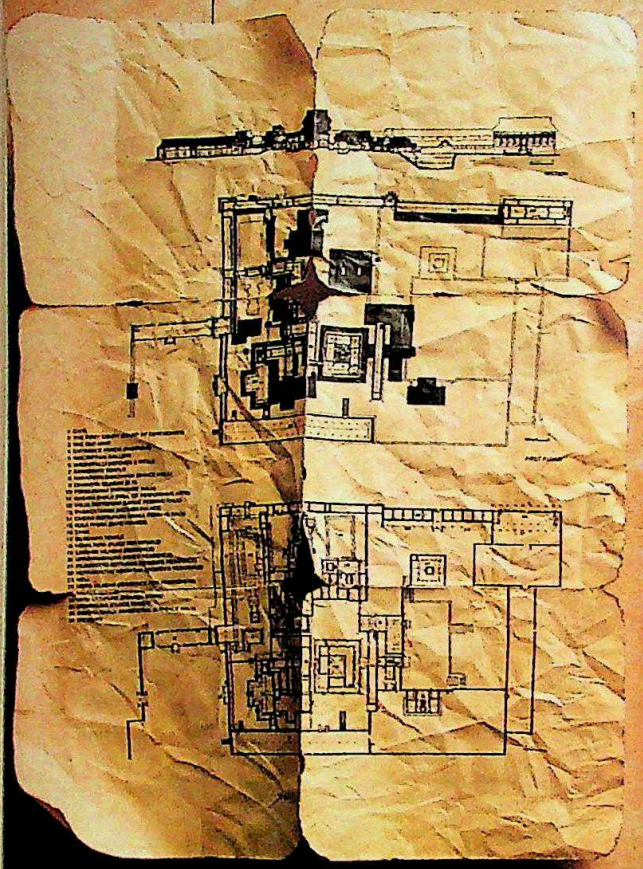

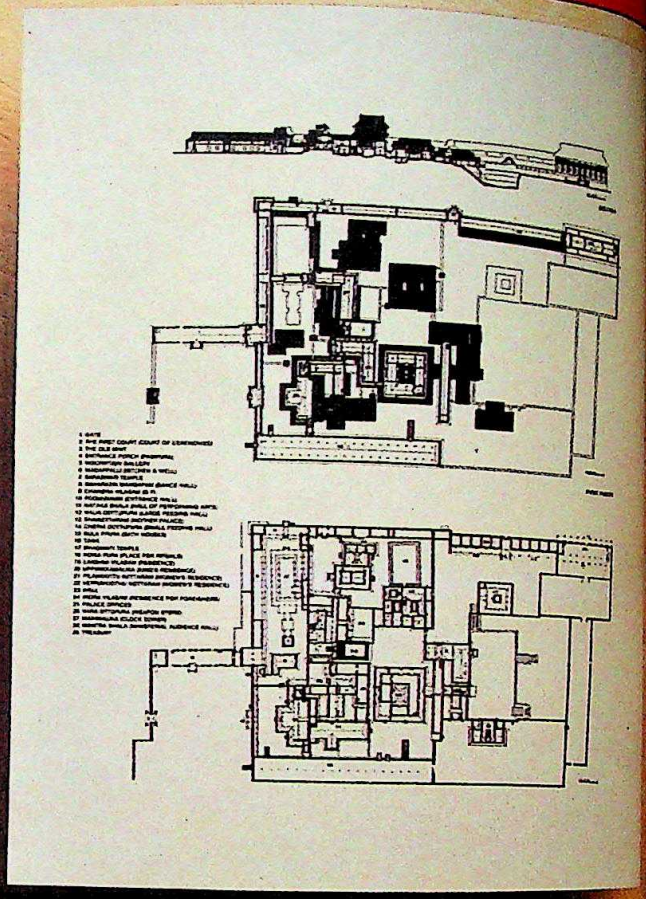

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evidence that a xerox copy of the evaluation report of one of these radars (BFSR) and letters pertaining to the other two, all being handled by Nerurkar, found their way to the Jajodias.

According to the complaint filed in court by the CBI, Diol too had gone out of his way to obtain a copy of the note on "operational requirement of utility helicopters for the army", prepared by the Directorate of Army Aviation. In the normal course, this note would not have come to the Directorate of Weapons and Equipment where Diol worked. But Diol pointedly asked Lt-Colonel S.K. Singh for the note on the helicopters and it was sent to him. Diol kept the note with him for about a month, from February 17, 1987, till March 20, 1987. On April 21, 1987 a copy of the same note was recovered by the CBI during a raid on Jajodia's house.

ON the note which had been sent to Diol, the Additional Director-General of Army Aviation, Brigadier Atma Singh, had made some handwritten notations. When the note was returned to Brigadier Atma Singh in June 1987, the notations were partially erased. Forensic experts told the CBI that the note found in Jajodia's house was a xerox copy of the one sent to Diol by Brigadier Atma Singh.

When the CBI subsequently searched Diol's house at NOIDA, it was looking for evidence that Diol was living beyond his means. What they found, instead, was a bunch of files, some dating back to the period Diol was military attache in Paris (1979 to 1983), and some to his stint in the Weapons and Equipment Directorate. A whole set of papers pertained to the 1982 Europe trip of General Sundarji, then deputy chief of army staff, to evaluate the now notorious Bofors 155mm Howitzer gun and its French and Austrian rivals. During that trip, Sundarji had handed over his set of evaluation papers to Diol. This Diol inexplicably retained, and they were found at his house by the CBI.

The bureau charged Diol under the Official Secrets Act, for allegedly leaking the utility helicopter note to the Jajodias, but has not till now charge-sheeted him in the case pertaining to the Sundarji papers. The CBI had, in fact, kept the recovery of the Sundarji papers very quiet, and not charge-sheeted Diol in this case.

But after Sundarji's interview (INDIA TODAY, September 15) which embarrassed the Government, a senior CBI official deliberately leaked to the press the news that Sundarji had been questioned for his carelessness in leaving his papers with Diol and not asking for their return subsequently.

The senior official is believed to have asked for the whole file on the Diol case to be put up to him and within a few days a front-page story appeared in a Delhi Sunday paper saying that the CBI would be questioning Sundarji again.

This was apparently done to warn Sundarji against making any more disclosures on *l'affaire* Bofors. Sundarji himself recognised this blatant warning. He said Diol was innocent of any wrongdoing as far as the Bofors gun papers were concerned. "Of course they are sending me a message," scoffed Sundarji. CBI and Home Ministry officials feel Sundarji had been remiss in leaving the papers with Diol and not inquiring about their fate later.

When they searched Diol's house, the CBI found 14 *tolas* of gold which he had brought back from France in 1983 without declaring them to the customs, and bonds worth Rs 1.8 lakh, bought with the money Diol had got by commuting his pension. Nerurkar's bank account too contained meagre savings.

As adviser (defence electronics), N.W. Nerurkar was privy to sensitive information about the equipment plans of all three services.

Though the CBI has charged Diol and Nerurkar with entering into a criminal conspiracy with the Jajodias, it has not yet been able to establish any connection between Diol and Nerurkar. The CBI's charge of a link between Jajodia and Nerurkar is based on a statement by Jajodia's driver that he used to take the Jajodias to the office of Nerurkar; and the presence of Nerurkar and Diol's residential phone numbers in the diary of Jajodia's telephone operator.

The Jajodia-Diol connection, alleged by the CBI, is also based on a statement by Jajodia's driver, Rakesh Kumar Singh. Singh said that on at least half a dozen occasions between the end of 1986 and early 1987 he picked up Diol from outside a five-star hotel and drove him to the Jajodias' house, and back after an hour. The driver's evidence will be crucial to the prosecution case. After the CBI raid, the Jajodias sent the driver back to his village; he sat at home for over a year and received his salary every month by money order. By spiriting away this crucial witness, the Jajodias unwittingly gave the game away.

This apart, the case has taken a strange turn. Prima facie, the strongest case appears to be against the Jajodias who were sending sensitive defence documents to a foreign country. Whether these documents actually came from Nerurkar and Diol can be proven conclusively only in the sessions court trial, which has yet to begin.

In the meantime, the Jajodias hired one of the best-known criminal lawyers in the country and obtained anticipatory bail from the high court. Seemingly unperturbed they have been travelling abroad frequently.

Nerurkar and Diol, on the other hand, are still in jail. Nerurkar's family finds it hard to pay for a lawyer, so Nerurkar argued his own case in the lower court. He has spent his time in prison studying law and the Official Secrets Act under which he has been charged. Diol's family too lacks the resources to hire a big name as lawyer.

This apparent injustice has united and angered the scientific community, which regards Nerurkar as a gifted scientist. When Nerurkar was arrested, his colleagues in the Department of Electronics met Professor M.G.K. Menon, science adviser to the prime minister, to plead that Nerurkar be given bail. Menon spoke to the then cabinet secretary, B.G. Deshmukh, who phoned CBI chief Mohan Katre, only to be told that this was a serious case. Nerurkar's colleagues are now collecting money to help him get legal aid when the trial begins in the sessions court.

Meanwhile, the trial looks like becoming a test case to challenge the antiquated Official Secrets Act, which, in the words of Dr Y.S. Chitale, president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, gives the Government "great potential to harass innocent persons, if it wants".

There is another side-light. The community of scientists is closely following the case. All of them regularly handle sensitive, secret documents. At the back of their minds is the worrying realisation: tomorrow it could happen to them.

—RAMINDAR SINGH

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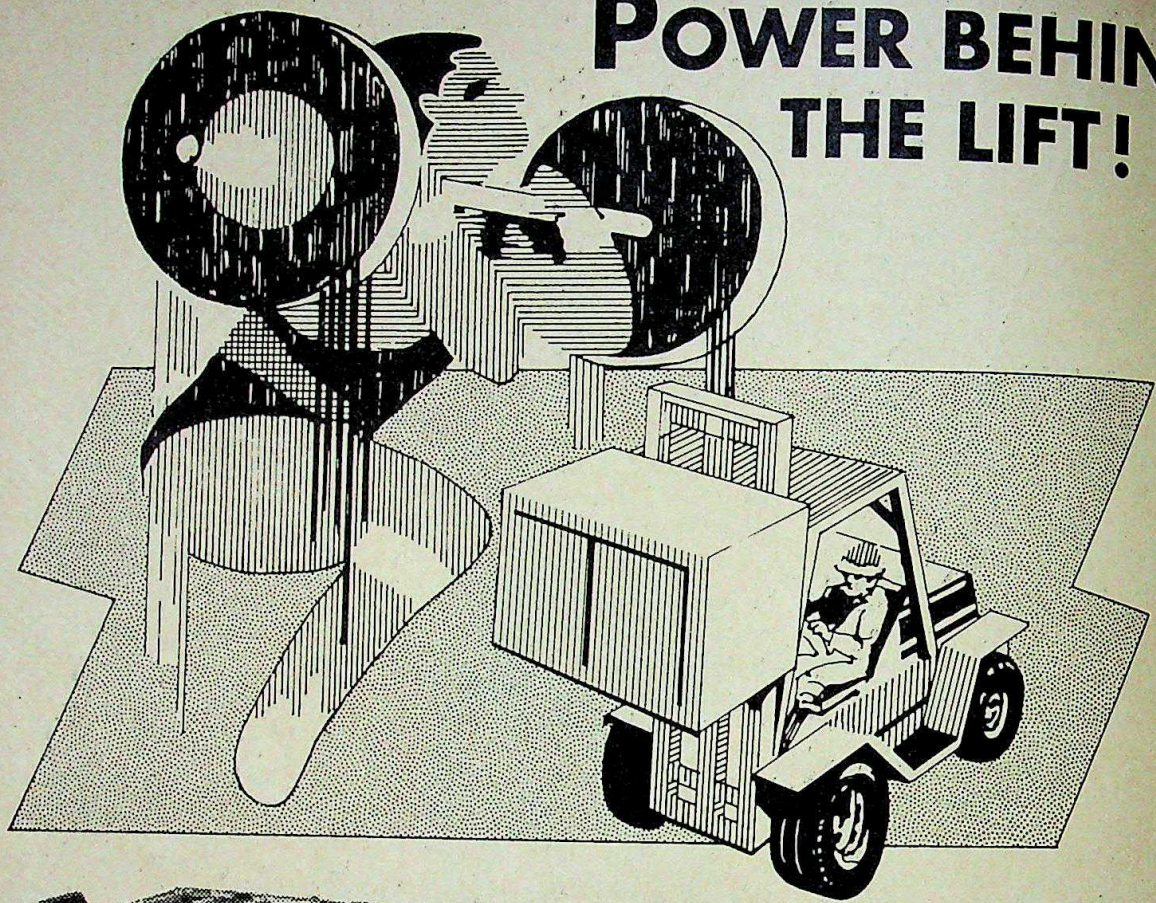

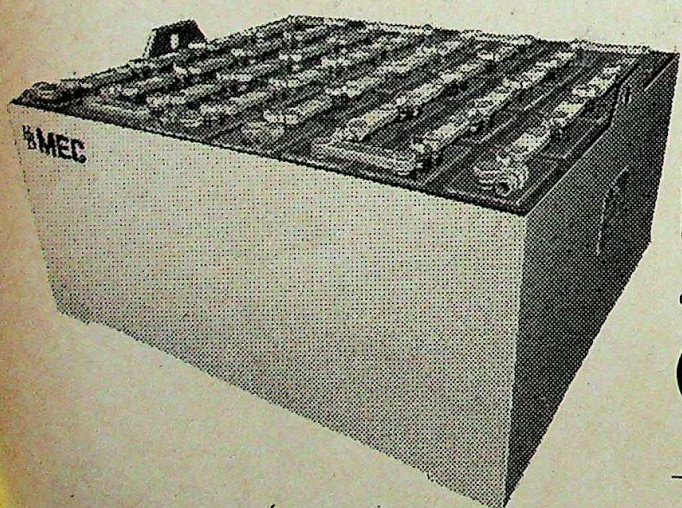

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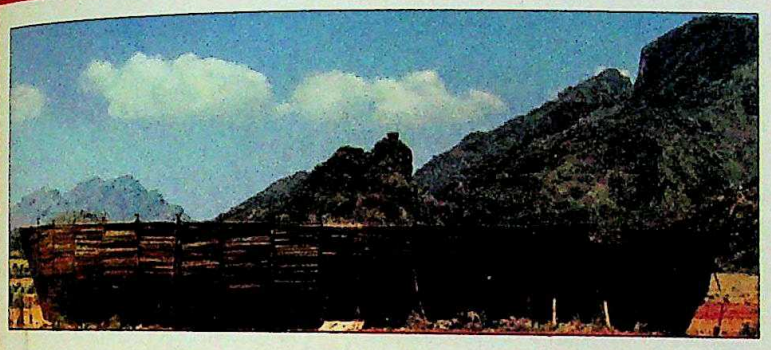
THE BIBLE

A New Testament

Another religious saga on the small screen

AFTER the epic success of the *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* on the small screen there's another religious saga in the offing—*Bible ki Kahaniyan*. Appropriately, the 39-episode teleserial is slated for telecast just before Christmas. The time slot: Sunday morning.

Undertaking the mammoth Rs 5-crore enterprise is the Ernakulam-based Navodaya Films, run by M.C. Punnose—better known as Appachan. Navodaya, a trail-blazer in the Malayalam film industry, has the country's first three-dimensional film, *My Dear Kuttichathan*, to its credit. The genesis of the serial lay in an 800-page proposal submitted to Mandi House, with intricate details on the visual treatment of each episode. The script, based on the King James version of the Bible, has been written by Bhushan Banmali of Bombay. The final seal of approval, however, was given by a 12-member panel of church leaders, prominent members of different communities and scholars. Thirty episodes of the serial are based on the Old Testament and nine on the New Testament.



The 225 ft Ark; Raza Murad as Noah; (below) Shammi Kapoor as Nimrod: electronic opiate

Shooting for the serial has begun at impressive sets erected for the Noah's Ark. Plans are afoot to use electronic gadgetry to simulate the flood scene inside a studio using a miniature Ark.

Last month, shooting began at impressive sets erected for the Noah's Ark—225 ft wide and 300 ft high—and the Tower of Babel at Tirunelveli, near Kanyakumari. The temptation scene was shot at Ponmudi, a picturesque hill resort near Trivandrum. Though most of the shooting for the film will be done in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, to give the serial a touch of authenticity, some scenes will be shot in Egypt and Jerusalem.

The indoor shooting too will be on a grand scale, though not literally. Plans are afoot to use electronic gadgetry to simulate the flood scene inside a studio, using a miniature Ark. Says Jijo, 32, Appachan's son and one of the directors of the serial: "Having modern production techniques is an advantage. They were not available during the making of the film, *Ten Commandments*."

What makes the teleserial unique is that each episode will have a different director. Says Jijo: "This will ensure freshness in every episode." Adds Appachan: "It will also introduce a spirit of competition among the directors." Not surprisingly, the young directors, among them Jijo, Fazil, Rajeev Kumar, Sibi Malayil and Pratap Pothen, are working overtime to exhibit their directorial and technical brilliance.

While the doyen of film music in south India, Ilayaraja, is composing the title music, a galaxy of stars from the film industry and television is being drafted for the serial. Shammi Kapoor has been roped in to play Nimrod, Raza Murad to play Noah, and Alok Nath to play Jacob.

But the question that is arousing a great deal of curiosity is: who will play Jesus Christ? And the makers are not telling. Adding to the sense of anticipation is the fact that Christ will only appear for the first time in the 31st episode.

Appachan fervently hopes that *Bible ki Kahaniyan* will become a greater national obsession than the *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat*, and in the process break religious barriers. Says he: "The Bible has a universal message. This serial will be remembered for a long time." Religion, it seems, will now be the electronic opium of the masses.

—RAMESH MENON

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NEHRU CUP

A Gruelling Battle

A tournament of upsets, heroics and swinging fortunes

WHILE India's Chetan Sharma was setting the Green Park Oval at Kanpur ablaze last week with a dazzling century, Micky Stewart, the English team manager, watched stoically from the pavilion. Soon after the match, which ended England's winning run in the preliminary rounds of the MRF-World Series for the Nehru Cup, he commented: "One-day cricket is so full of surprises that nothing surprises me any more."

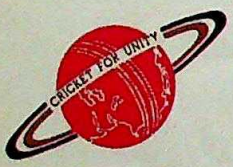
Indeed, the two-week battle for the Nehru Cup produced some of the most capricious cricket ever played. It saw the West Indies initially crash to two defeats and then come back strongly to romp into the finals. It made Australia, riding high after wresting the Ashes in summer, bite dust and fail to make it even to the semi-finals. It saw the talented Sri Lankan team humble the mighty West Indies and give India and Pakistan a severe fright before their inexperience let them down. And it saw the underrated English team fight its way to the semi-finals, only to lose to a gritty Pakistan.

The ridiculously tight schedule—18 matches being played in as many days and in 15 centres—resulted in plenty of mediocre cricket too. The six competing teams spent most of their times scurrying from city to city, catching late night flights or early morning trains. Even the air force was pressed into service for flying the Pakistan and West Indies team to Jalandhar. Most players were soon suffering from what one West Indian team member described as "cricket-lag". Grumbled Pakistan Captain Imran Khan: "It's been very unfair to players. Our performance is related to many factors including a good night's sleep."

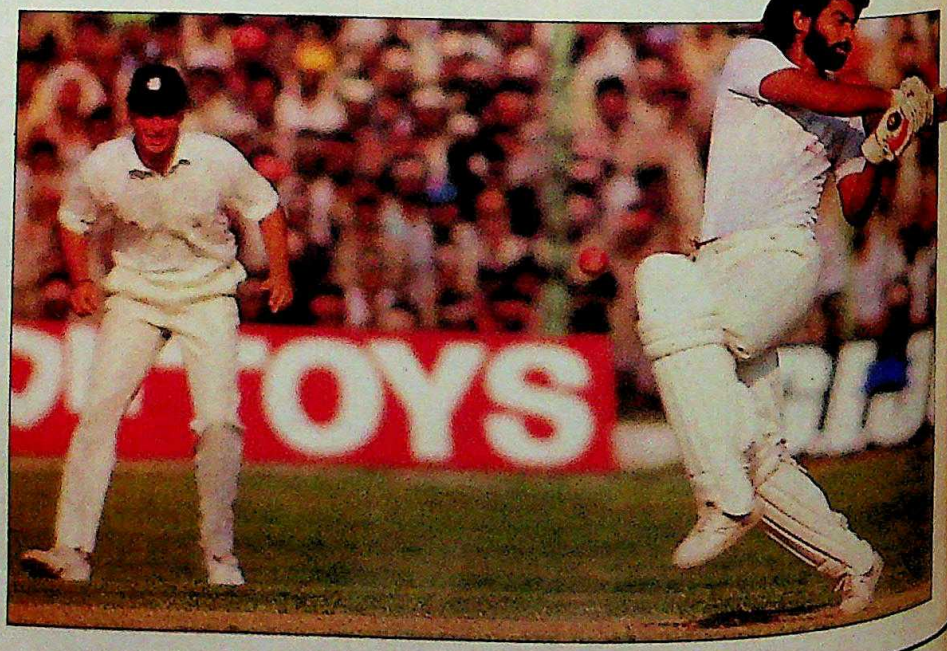
The result was that most of the teams were performing much below their peak levels. And fortunes fluctuated so dramatically that it was difficult to predict who would emerge the winner. In the initial matches, the formidable West Indies batting line-up seemed so brittle that a disgusted Viv Richards said: "I think we batters need a good kick up our butts for our performance so far." The English team began brilliantly, registering three straight wins to be the first to enter the semi-finals. But after that it looked a bedraggled side and crashed to three successive defeats. Australia, after their shock defeat against England in Hyderabad, registered convincing wins against West Indies and Sri Lanka but were soon on the mat losing to Pakistan and India.

For the Indian team the schedules were taxing. After their emphatic win against England in Kanpur, the hotel corridors smelt of pain balm as the team nursed its injuries. Mohammed Azharuddin, whose fielding was spectacular, held his injured left palm gingerly as crowds badgered him for autographs. And Kapil Dev was down on the ground in his briefs doing gentle push-ups to ease his aching body. Said he: "It's been really tough on us. And while our minds are willing to play, our bodies are certainly not."

Barring the matches in which the home team figured, crowds were



The Indian performance was patchy and the team surrendered tamely to the West Indies in the semi-finals.



Chetan tears England apart at Kanpur: new role

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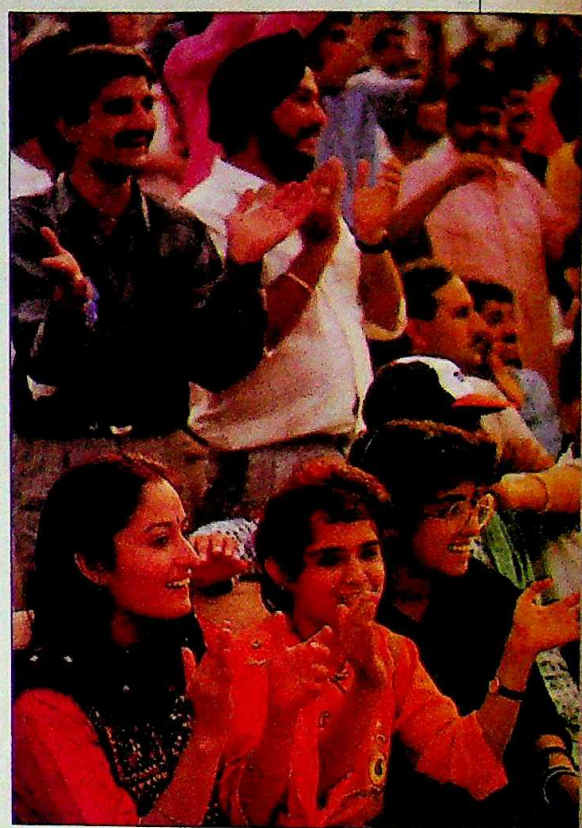
Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH



Robin Smith cools off; and (right) ecstatic crowds: tough schedule

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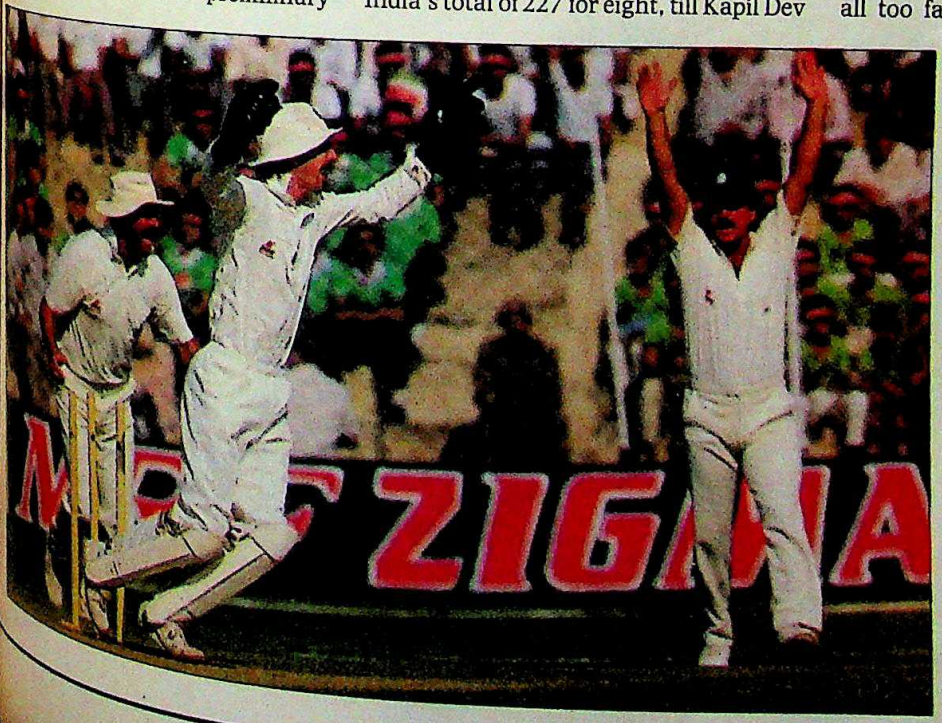
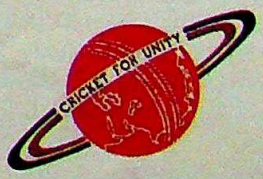
ourse in most centres. When England layed Sri Lanka in the opening match, for nstance, hardly 3,000 people witnessed t. And Doordarshan's sketchy telecast didn't help. It used the slow-motion replay camera so liberally that on one occasion, iewers had to watch Raman Lamba from three angles, inelegantly fending a ball away from his pads.

What saved the series from turning into a boring fiasco, however, was India's strong come-back in the preliminary matches that took the team into the semi-finals. Licking their wounds from Sharjah and riven by internal dissensions, the Indians at first played like zombies. Despite the strong batting line-up in the first match against Sri Lanka, they seemed as bogged down as the IPKF. The Sri Lankans came perilously close to overtaking India's total of 227 for eight, till Kapil Dev bowled a sensible last over to extract his country from the jaws of defeat.

Despite the lucky win, the Indians were still out of sorts in the next match against West Indies. Helped along by hazy conditions and a gentle breeze, the under-rated Indian pace attack restricted West Indies to a paltry 196. The crowd, sensing victory, raised banners of 'Mera Bharat Mahan' and one that read: 'Dearey, face the fury of Indian curry.' However, in an all too familiar sight, the middle order





The English initially played some gritty cricket, but lost their rhythm and succumbed to Pakistani might.

England in full cry: determined effort

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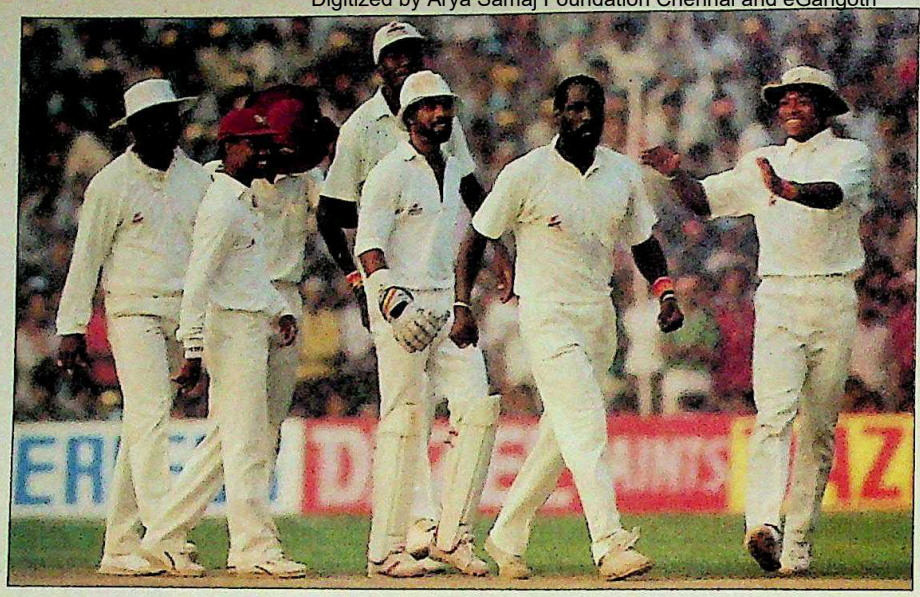


The West Indies began shakily, but they soon recovered and developed into a lethal force.

Richards being cheered by his men: super effort

caved in and it was the Indians who found themselves in a soup.

For the West Indies, the victory over India ended a disastrous run of five defeats that began from the Champions Trophy at Sharjah. Suddenly, they were batting with panache and their bowling got back its lethal edge. And they went on to demolish India in the semi-finals at Bombay. A jubilant Viv Richards said: "What's most important is that we are clicking as a team."

India too had started clicking. In the next match against England in Kanpur, the team showed glimpses of the brilliance that had brought home one World Cup. Before the start, Gooch had commented that a score of 250 plus was enough to win the match. And though his side rattled up 255 in 50 overs, they didn't calculate on a diminutive bundle of energy called Chetan Sharma. In a gamble, that makes one-day cricket so exciting, Srikkanth sent Sharma at the fall of the second wicket. The rest was explosive history.

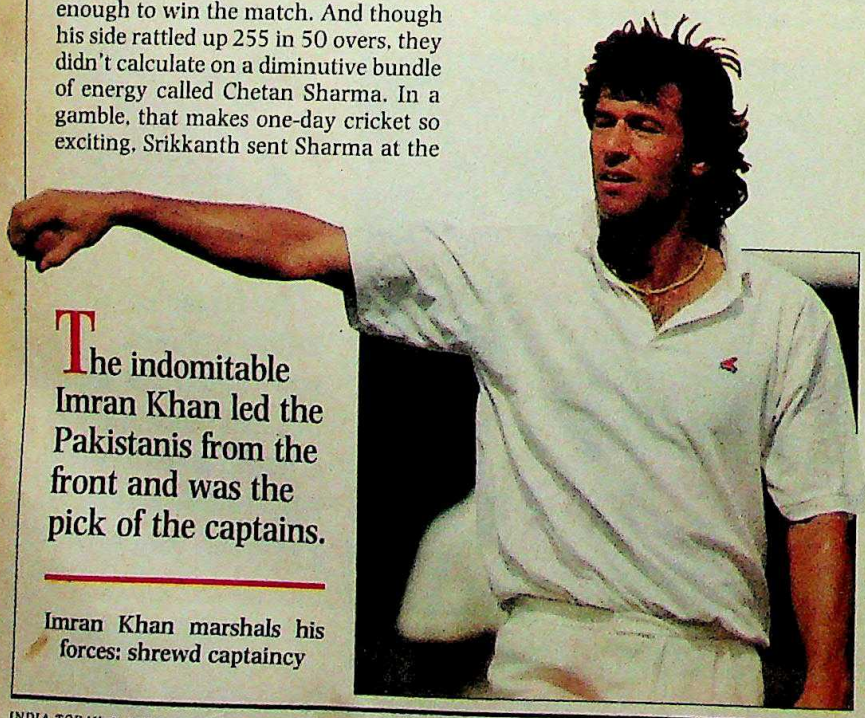
FOR the English, it was the first time in the series that they had to eat humble pie. Dismissed as the underdogs, especially after their disastrous summer season against Australia, the English had till then played cool, calculated and gritty cricket. And even if Gooch failed with the bat, there was Robin Smith, Larkins and the reliable Lamb to peg away and pile up big totals.

Australia, after being beaten by England in the first encounter, pulled themselves together to beat West Indies convincingly. Skipper Alan Border said happily: "We seem to be finally getting our act together." But two days later against Pakistan in Bombay, they succumbed tamely to Imran Khan's fierce pace and Abdul Quadir's mesmeric spin. And their challenge ended when they lost to India at Bangalore.

For India, that victory earned a semi-final berth. But their peformance only flattered to decieve. In the semi-finals against the Windies in Bombay, the team seemed strangely lethargic. After Srikkanth was run out foolishly, the Indian resistance seemed to give way. The middle order suffered its familiar collapse. And the West Indies contemptuously brushed aside its paltry 165.

The Indian performance was certainly far from satisfactory. Srikkanth's captaincy did see plenty of positive moves. But he tended to be impatient and was prone to emotional outbursts. His new role seemed initally to have cramped his batting style, but against Australia and Pakistan he regained his flamboyancy. With Raman Lamba batting well and Navjot Singh Sidhu striking a purple patch, the top order looked solid. But with Azharuddin, Dilip Vengsarkar, Ravi Shastri and Kapil Dev still searching for runs, the middle order was shaky. Though the bowlers did do better than expected, they lacked penetration and were at best restrictive. As team manager Chandu Borde said at Kanpur: "Our performance on the whole has been good only in patches."

Pakistan, India's arch rivals, initially looked anything but the Sharjah cup champions. They ran into all sorts of problems. Their run-machine, Javed Miandad, somehow could not strike his rhythm. And their bowlers seemed to



The indomitable Imran Khan led the Pakistanis from the front and was the pick of the captains.

Imran Khan marshals his forces: shrewd captaincy

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ENTRY FORM

YOUR VERDICT
ELECTION SPECIAL
CONTEST

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Fill in party code only. If you are making a prediction for say, AIADMK fill code 01 in the Party Box. The codes are given overleaf.
2. Mention number of seats in Arabic numerals only eg : write thirty five as 35 or five hundred and twenty nine as 529 etc.
3. All questions must be answered completely, otherwise your chances of winning are greatly reduced.

1 In the coming 1989 Lok Sabha poll 529 seats are being contested. Name the party which will win the largest number of seats in the new Lok Sabha and give the number of seats it will win.

Party code [ ][ ] No. of seats [ ][ ][ ]

2 How many seats will be won in the 1989 Lok Sabha elections by the following parties?

	BJP	CONGRESS (I)	CPI	CPM	DMK	JANATA DAL	TEL. DESAM
NO. OF SEATS WON							

3 Given in the grid below are the total number of Lok Sabha seats being contested from various states. Choose any three states and predict the party which will win the largest number of seats in those states in the 1989 Lok Sabha Elections and give the number of seats it will win. If you answer for more than three states your entry will be treated as invalid.

	01 ANDHRA PRADESH	02 BIHAR	03 GUJARAT	04 HARYANA	05 J&K	06 KARNATAKA	07 KERALA	08 MADHYA PRADESH	09 MAHARASHTRA	10 ORISSA	11 PUNJAB	12 RAJASTHAN	13 TAMIL NADU	14 UTTAR PRADESH	15 WEST BENGAL	DELHI
TOTAL NO. OF SEATS	42	54	26	10	6	28	20	40	48	21	13	25	39	85	42	7
PARTY CODE																
NO. OF SEATS																

Tie-Breaker:

In not more than 50 words, give reasons for your answer to Qs. 1

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YOUR VERDICT
ELECTION SPECIAL CONTEST

PERSONAL PARTICULARS

Instructions:

Write in block letters in ENGLISH only. This is necessary for Computer Evaluation.
Leave one space blank in between the various units in your name and address.

NAME _____ Surname _____ First Name

AGE (Years) ____ SEX (Tick one box) 1 Male 2 Female

ADDRESS _____

_____

CITY _____ Pin Code _____

The following particulars are required for research purposes. Please give us the following information to help us know you better.

Education: (Tick one box) Undergraduate 1 Graduate 2 Post Graduate 3 Professional 4 Others 5

Occupation: (Tick one box) Service 1 Business 2 Housewife 3 Student 4 Others 5

Monthly household Income: (Tick one box) 1500 or less 1 1501-2500 2 2501-3500 3 3501-4500 4 4500+ 5

YOU AND YOUR VOTE

This is not part of the contest and is purely optional. These details are meant for editorial and research purposes only, and will be kept confidential.

1. Which party do you intend to vote for in the Lok Sabha elections. ____
2. Which party did you vote for in the 1984 elections. ____
3. Which state are you a voter in: State Code. ____
   (In case your state code is not listed write 20)
4. Which part of the state are you in: (Tick one box)

North 1 East 2 West 3 South 4 Centre 5

CODES

State	Code	State	Code	Party	Code	Party	Code
Andhra Pradesh	01	Maharashtra	09	AIADMK	01	Janata Dal	08
Bihar	02	Orissa	10	AKALI DAL	02	National Conference	09
Gujarat	03	Punjab	11	B J P	03	Telugu Desam	10
Haryana	04	Rajasthan	12	CONGRESS (I)	04		
Jammu & Kashmir	05	Tamil Nadu	13	C P I	05	Asom Gana Parishad	11
Karnataka	06	Uttar Pradesh	14	C P M	06	Janata	12
Kerala	07	West Bengal	15	D M K	07	Others	13
Madhya Pradesh	08	Delhi	16				

INDIA TODAY
Keeps you ahead

Imran Khan marshals his forces: shrewd captaincy

Miandad, somehow could not strike his rhythm. And their bowlers seemed to

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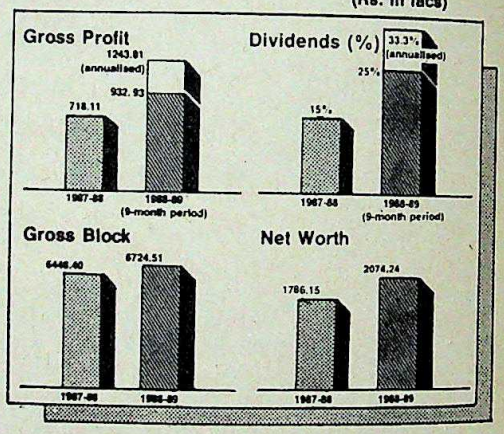
(Rs. in lacs)



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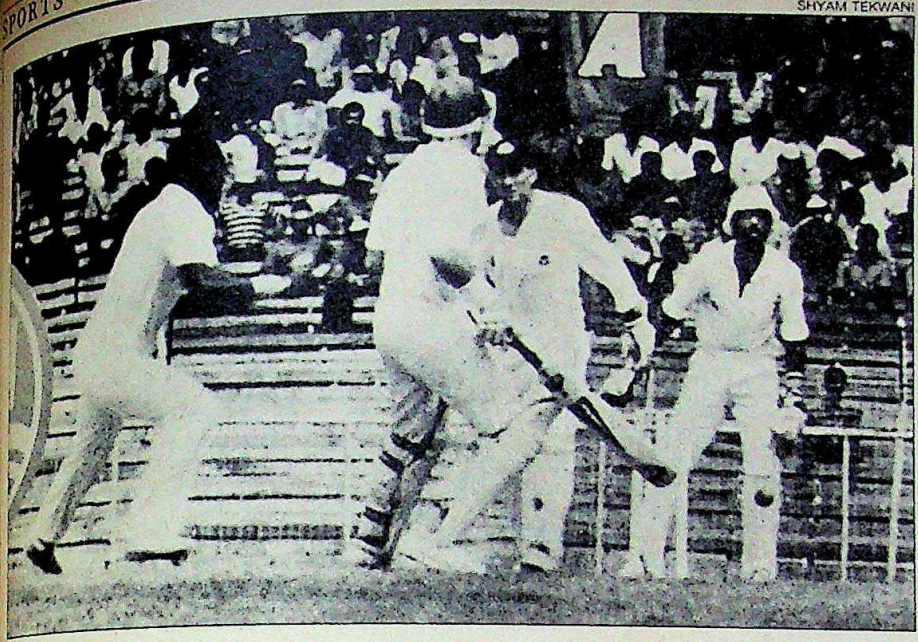
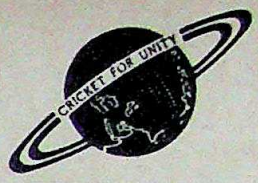
SHYAM TEKWANI





The Australians came as favourites, but seemed out of sorts, crashing out of the tournament ignominiously.

Australia plays West Indies at Madras: a futile victory

have lost much of his bite. But amidst the ruins, there was the indomitable Imran Khan who kept pulling Pakistan out of the woods either by intelligent bowling, attacking batting and some brilliant captaincy. In the semi-finals against England the team regained its class and notched up a convincing victory.

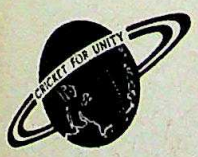
Off the field, Imran was the cynosure of all eyes wherever he went. He constantly fended off gossipy questions like whether he considered himself a sex symbol ("I don't see cricketers from that point of view") and whether he liked Indian women or Pakistani ("Both"). And despite his busy schedule, he took time off to publicise the magazine he edits, *Cricket Life International*, at a rumbustious function in Bombay.

Although all the teams complained of the tight schedule, none of them wanted to pull out. The simple reason: it was big money at stake. Each team was promised Rs 20.37 lakh as appearance money. The winners' purse was Rs 6.52 lakh, runners-up Rs 4.07 lakh, while semi-finalists got Rs 2.03 lakh each. And the man-of-the-match got Rs 19,650.

THE Nehru Cup too saw the subcontinent emerging as a contender for being the international cricketing capital. Suddenly, there are enough sponsors willing to spend money for cricket. Apart from MRF, the Madras-based tyre company which forked out Rs 3.5 crore for sponsoring the series, most of the stadia were filled with diverse advertisements for pan masalas, vacuum flasks, magazines and even for films. Says Ravi Mammen, MRF's bearded managing director: "Cricket's a national game and we have found that 90 per cent of our target audience also own scooters and cars. Naturally, it helps our sales to sponsor such events."

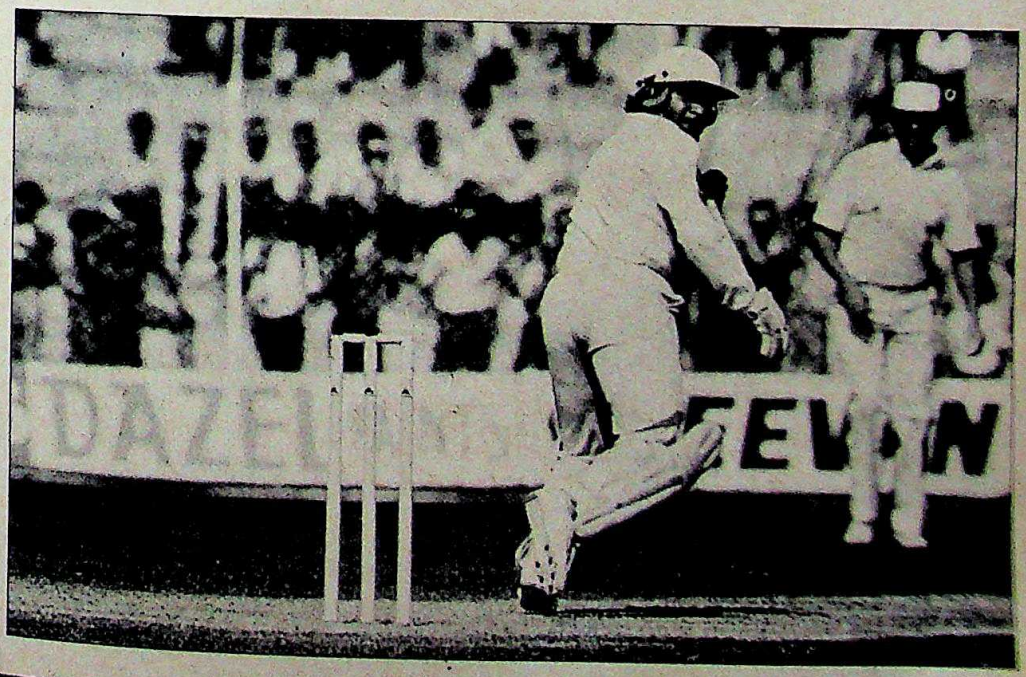
What helps too is the kind of adrenalin-pumping excitement that one-day cricket produces. With its built-in unpredictability, see-saw changes in fortunes and heroes being created and destroyed daily, instant cricket has instant appeal too. And as Border observed; "The beauty of one-day game is that any team can beat the other on a given day." His team, unfortunately, became among the first to learn the harsh truth of his words.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA in Kanpur, Delhi and Madras with SALIL TRIPATHI in Ahmedabad and Bombay



The talented Sri Lankans humbled the mighty West Indies. But their inexperience let them down.

Arjun Ranatunge: brilliant fight



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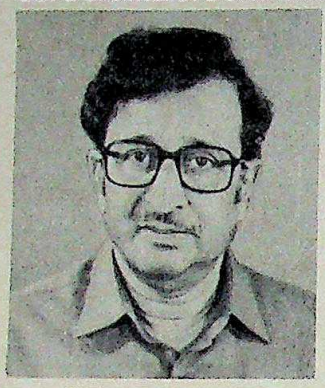
Regd. Office : P.O. Fertilizernagar - 391 750, Dist. Vadodara

GSFC CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT



Shri H.R. Patankar

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Government's Economic Policies based on growth, liberalisation, self-reliance and social justice have improved the overall economic environment in the country.**
- **The new retention price formula would have a serious impact on the viability of new plants including GSFC's Coastal DAP Plant at Sikka.**
- **GSFC attains new peaks of record turnover of over Rs. 675 crores, fertilizer capacity utilisation of 118%, sizeable contribution of industrial products and high financial track record.**
- **GSFC takes big strides in implementation of its corporate growth plan of around Rs. 1300 crores with a diverse product range of Fertilizers, Petrochemicals, Industrial Gases, Plastics, Fibre and self-sufficiency in Power Generation.**
- **GSFC continues to maintain its excellence by bagging National and International Awards in different fields.**
- **Betterment of farming and rural community, research and development and innovation of new applications continue to be the strength of GSFC in the field of social obligations.**

The following is the text of Statement made by Shri HR Patankar, Chairman, Gujarat State Fertilizers Company Limited at the Twenty-Seventh Annual General Meeting of the Company held on the 28th September 1989 at the Registered Office of the Company.

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Ladies & Gentlemen,

I take great pleasure in extending you a warm welcome at this 27th Annual General Meeting of our Company. The Annual Accounts and Directors' Report for the 15-month period are already with you and with your permission I take them as read.

ECONOMIC SCENARIO

The over-all economic environment in the country has been promising in more ways than one. A notable growth in agricultural and industrial sectors was noticed during the year 1988-89. The economic policies initiated by the Government based on growth, liberalisation, self-reliance and social justice have provided a new impetus to growth. Two successive good monsoons coupled with measures such as increased availability of credit, liberalisation in interest rate on crop loans and announcement of a new strategy for agricultural planning on the basis of agro-climatic zone will help in meeting the challenge of increasing food-grain production in the country. In this scenario, fertilizer production plays a key role in increasing food-grain production based on use of modern High Yielding Variety (HYV) technology supported by adequate irrigation facility. Concomitantly, there will be need to give a boost to fertilizer industry to produce more fertilizers in order to meet the increase in demand for food production. However the recent changes in basic parameters of depreciation and capacity utilisation adopted in the New Retention Price for the 5th Pricing period commencing from 1.4.1988 onwards are causing concern. An analysis of the revised retention price data shows that whereas old plants commissioned prior to 1982 are affected only marginally by changes in the basic parameters of pricing, the new plants commissioned in and after 1982 are more adversely affected due to lower coverage of depreciation charge only of 5% in the retention price based on the plant life of 20 years instead of 10 years' life span considered earlier. This would have a serious impact on the viability of new plants. So far as your Company is concerned, the new norms have an adverse impact only on the retention price of DAP produced in Sikka Plant where depreciation allowed in the retention price is only 5% as against 11% to be provided in the books of accounts.

During the last three years or so, the fertilizer industry has been subject to demands for excise duty on inputs and intermediates captively consumed in manufacturing fertilizers. Such demands have arisen out of a biased interpretation of the Central Excise Tariff Act, 1985. In this regard some reliefs have been granted by way of appropriate notifications to exempt a number of inputs and intermediates such as Reformed Gas, SO_2 and SO_3 from the levy of excise duty.

HIGHER PEAKS — YEARLY PERFORMANCE

It is a matter of pride that for the first time your Company crossed production of 10 lac tons of fertilizers at Baroda, which was a landmark in fertilizer operations. These plants achieved an enviable capacity utilisation of 118% producing 10,43,120 MTs during the 15-month period. With the addition of over 4 lac tons of DAP at Sikka Unit, the total production of fertilizers for all plants has achieved a new milestone of 14 lac tons during the period under review. Ammonia, Sulphuric Acid and Phosphoric Acid Plants performed very well with a capacity utilisation of 101, 105, 159 percent respectively. Urea production achieved the highest ever capacity utilisation for the 15-month period. In spite of plants being more than 20 years old, it is gratifying to note that efforts at all levels for excellent maintenance have made it possible to run the plants at a fairly high capacity.

The production of fertilizers would have been much more, had it not been for the stoppage of production at the DAP Unit at Sikka for four months on account of non-availability of Phosphoric Acid due to high international prices. Supplies of imported PA resumed only in July 1989. It is expected that with stability of prices, it should be possible to get higher allocations of Phosphoric Acid for production of more DAP for which the Sikka Unit is fully geared.

I am also happy to inform you that debottlenecking of Anone Section of the Caprolactam Plant coupled with excellent plant performance resulted in a record output of 26010 MTs of Caprolactam. Compared to the previous years' production, this is substantially higher. The Nylon-6 Plant registered a capacity utilisation of 137% with production of 6848 MTs. For the first time the Melamine Plant achieved 100% capacity utilisation during the 12-month period of 1988. In spite of a 19-day shut down in 1989, the overall capacity utilisation for the 15-month period worked out to 94.35% which is much higher than the production in 1987. There has also been substantial improvement in production and profitability of the Polyol Unit.

I take immense pleasure to inform you that your Company achieved a record turnover of Rs. 676 crores for the 15-month period as compared to Rs. 357 crores of the previous year of 12 months which in turn improved the profit of your Company. This brilliant performance is an indication of the good health of your Company.

For the period after 1st April 1989, the production of fertilizers and industrial products has exceeded the budgeted targets. The sales for the first six-month period are expected to be of the order of Rs. 300 crores. According to present indications and barring any unforeseen situation, it is hoped that your Company's current year's performance would be better.

AWARDS

I take pride that your Company has bagged the following prestigious awards :

1. FAI Award for the best performance

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OMPANY LIMITED

phatic Fertilizer Production for the year in succession.

National Productivity Council Award for excellent productivity performance.

CI Award for the best industrial relations performance. Your Company is the first organisation in Gujarat to receive this distinguished honour.

Award of Honour of National Safety Council of America for the best industrial safety performance.

National Safety Award of Ministry of Labour, Government of India for excellent safety performance.

"Padmaja"—Gujarat Governor's National Trophy for excellence in agriculture for the fourth year in succession.

AL OBLIGATIONS TOWARDS ING & RURAL COMMUNITY

Company has always kept the interest of and rural community uppermost in its You would have noticed for the last years that your Company is to help the farmers in as many possible so that in the larger interest they are able to produce more food feed the growing population. Your has established nearly 230 Farm Centres with the object of various promotional, extension activities in the rural areas and different agricultural inputs to the Based on the principle that "Seeing", your Company has organised on farmers' plots to convince the optimum use of fertilizers, quality seeds and other inputs. Company has also been operating soil testing laboratory for the benefit of These services are available to free of charge. Based on the analysis appropriate fertilizer dosages are To demonstrate efficient use your Company is constantly trials on farmers' fields. Neem Urea, Gypsum Coated Urea, Fertilizer Drills, Rice Garden and Biofertilizers are some of the efforts in agricultural research, and application of inputs.

Youth Training Programme, Sardar Harmye and the Reclamation of Soils are important activities aimed knowledge and skills of modern to the farming community. Forward Project in the tribal areas about upliftment of the adivasi Your Company has meaningfully to the National Watershed Programme launched by the of India. In association with Land Development Corporation, your implemented this programme from onwards and has taken block on the farmers' fields. The are encouraging.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT THRUST

As you are aware, your Company gives high priority to research and development in terms of developing new processes and products, augmenting productivity and promoting diversification activities. During the year, new Corrosion and Materials Testing facilities were set up with a view to providing a fillip to plant operations and maintenance. A collaborative programme for developing Biopesticides has been taken up with a US Company. Intensive R&D work on recovery of valuable products from Waste Streams has made considerable progress. In the Polymers area, a cost effective process for Nylon composites based on local minerals has been developed. It has given promising results and is likely to be profitable.

NEW PROJECTS

Caprolactam Expansion

While I am thankful to all of you for your splendid response to the Rights Issue of Secured Redeemable Convertible Debentures, I am happy to inform you that the Caprolactam Expansion Project is progressing as scheduled. Basic engineering work is almost over. Import Licences for major critical equipments have already been obtained. M/s. UHDE-India has commenced the detailed engineering work. All financial arrangements including foreign currency loans have been appropriately tied up.

Co-generation of Steam & Power Project

During the period under review, the first phase of the co-generation project costing Rs. 33 crores was commissioned. The second phase costing about Rs. 39 crores will be commissioned during the current year. This being an energy saving project, your Company will derive some tax benefits after commissioning. With the availability of additional steam and power from this project your Company's dependence on GEB will be considerably reduced.

Gujarat Industries Power Company Ltd.

As you know your Company is one of the major promoters of Gujarat Industries Power Company Ltd. (GIPCL). Your Company's contribution to equity capital of GIPCL will be about Rs. 9.7 crores. The first gas turbine of this project is expected to be commissioned in April 1990 and the remaining three turbines will be commissioned in a phased manner thereafter. At full capacity the generation of power in GIPCL will be 145 MW. Out of this, your Company's share is likely to be 37%. The availability of power from GIPCL would result in less drawal of power from GEB. It would then be possible for GEB to supply power to others in the interest of development of the Gujarat State.

Gujarat Nylons Ltd.

I am also happy to inform you that with your Company's financial, technical and managerial assistance to Gujarat Nylons Ltd. (GNL), it has been possible to complete the project. Two spinning lines have already commenced trial production of nylon yarn which has been well received in the market. The remaining three spinning lines and Polymerisation Section will be commissioned sometime next month. To broaden the shareholding base, your Company has been able to obtain requisite permission to make a public issue of Rs. 11.10 crores through GNL. Your Company has also obtained approval for reservation of 17.5 lac shares on preferential allotment to the existing shareholders. This is the maximum possible reservation under the extant guidelines. I am sure that GNL will prove to be a success story in the years to come.

EXPANSION/DIVERSIFICATION

As part of the strategy for planned growth, your Company is always on the lookout for expansion and diversification. Your Company has already received a Letter of Intent for expanding Melamine capacity from the present 5000 MTA to 15000 MTA. Preliminary work on setting up the expansion facility is expected to commence shortly. Your Company is also holding a Letter of Intent for Ammonia expansion which is under consideration. Your Company had the unpleasant experience of keeping the Sikka DAP Plant closed for over four months for want of imported Phosphoric Acid. In order to avoid repetition of this closure and also to meet the requirements stipulated by the Government in the Letter of Intent for the coastal DAP Plant at Sikka, your Company has decided to set up a Phosphoric Acid Plant at Sikka at an estimated cost of about Rs. 300 crores.

With a view to effecting savings in water consumption, your Company proposes to put up a facility for purifying sewage water and using it in plant operations. Work is already initiated in this direction and it is hoped that the scheme may be commissioned by the end of 1989. It is expected that there will be a saving of about 7 lac gallons of water per day, which could be utilised for other plants.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to conclude by recording my grateful thanks to the Government of India, Government of Gujarat, Indian Financial Institutions, IFC (W), Banks and other agencies who have willingly and whole heartedly supported your Company in fulfilling its objectives. I am also grateful to my colleagues on the Board for their guidance and contribution.

I will fail in my duty if I do not extend my sincere thanks to staff and officers of the Company at all levels for their deep sense of dedication, hard work and exemplary team spirit without which it would not have been possible to achieve the spectacular results achieved from year to year.

JAI HIND

Note : This does not purport to be a record of proceedings of the Twenty-Seventh Annual General Meeting of the Company.

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SYNDICATION

Excelling at Selling

A string of new firms are busily hawking columns by sports stars.

IT started as a trickle, turned into a flood and now threatens to engulf the sports pages with a new brand of commercialism. Suddenly, media coverage of major sporting events has been virtually taken over by a bevy of syndicates: Dev Features, Professional Management Group (PMG), Radiant Sports Management (RSM) and Playmakers.

The once drab sports pages are today dotted with glamorous bylines while sponsoring companies are laughing all the way to the nearest bank. The result: small and regional newspapers who had never dreamt of covering major national and international events are now featuring celebrity bylines, suddenly available at affordable costs.

The economics of sports coverage has turned topsy-turvy. A newspaper might spend up to Rs 1.5 lakh just to send a journalist to cover an India-West Indies Test series without the bonus of a celebrity byline. Kapil Dev's Rs 5 crore syndicated column agency, Dev Features, offered reports by Tony Lewis and Gary Sobers on the Indian cricket tour of the West Indies this year for diverse newspapers, including *Aajkal* of Calcutta and *Dainik Bhaskar* of Bhopal for a mere Rs 300-Rs 600 per piece. Even major newspapers like *The Times of India* have changed their game-plan, preferring to pay for syndicated columns that feature star bylines. Says Kapil Dev: "Companies like us are making sports much more paying than it was ever before. And it is the reader who benefits."

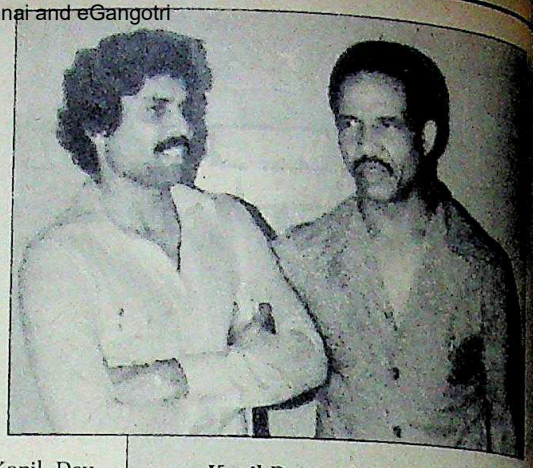
Last year, in the India-West Indies series, Sunil Gavaskar's PMG had Ravi Shastri and Gavaskar lend their literary talents to 21 newspaper editions, including regional newspapers like *Pratap* in Urdu and *Parvasi* in Gujarati. Former Indian hockey captain, M.M. Somayya, was roped in to write on the Champions Trophy hockey tournament in West Germany, an event that is beyond the financial boundaries of most news organisations. Even Geet Sethi and Michael Ferreira are potting in more than prize money through syndicated columns.

The syndication business made its debut four years ago, when cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar joined forces with advertising executive Sumedh Shah to launch PMG. Trying to endorse Swedish Davis Cup players, Mats Wilander and Stefan Edberg, PMG lost Rs 40,000 in its first year. Soon, they adopted the surer wicket, syndicating columns of cricket stars like Ravi Shastri and Bishen Singh Bedi.

The idea caught on. Kapil Dev partnered Lokesh Sharma to set up Dev Features in 1987. Sharma remembers: "We raised about Rs 60,000 to start the company by hawking Kapil's columns." Aushim Khetrapal—a junior national tennis champion—founded RSM intending to market tournaments and syndicate columns. Satish Dayal—a travel agent and biscuit manufacturer—started Playmakers to market tournaments. He underwrote the total cost—Rs 5 lakh—of the Indo-Pakistan benefit hockey match for Charles Cornelius.

Predictably, newspapers lap up columns of only a few star-names—Ravi Shastri, Vijay Amritraj, Tony Lewis, P.T. Usha are some major attractions. Says Shah: "Cricket columns were the most popular. We have tried very hard pushing other sports, but newspapers weren't willing." So PMG realised that Ravi Shastri's column from England on the county circuit had nearly twice the readership than columns about the Champions Trophy in Berlin.

Clearly, syndication is big business. It has, for one, increased the financial earnings of sports stars phenomenally. Test cricketers are paid Rs 7,500 per match—plus Rs 3,500 as pocket money. In contrast, they charge Rs 5,000-Rs 6,000 for a single article which is syndicated to a number of clients. Writers command



Kapil Dev with Garfield Sobers

Started by hawking Kapil's columns, Dev Features has become a Rs 5-crore agency.

Indians need to play more attacking cric

Gary Sobers writes from Barbados

QUITE frankly, I am surprised at the rather listless manner in which the Indian cricketers surrendered this opening match in the one-day series against the West Indies.

The Kensington Oval wicket here was one on which they had their best chance in the series of winning a match. But they muffed it. So easy-paced was the wicket that the West Indies bowlers could get absolutely nothing out of it, and I thought the Indian batsmen ought to have had few problems in going for the runs, notwithstanding the imposing target.

It was a good toss to win, for this seemed to be a wicket ideal for chasing a target. India-Windies in

Greenidge early, but that was more because the batsman played ... playing on off the inner

Indies score along any-which-way, did just that before Richards was out for a not-very impressive 40. But in one-day games, it is the

patience. If he is prepared ... more on this time, he ... start adjusting ... mean? realize that in ... quick-fire ... something ... wrong ...

'Mr backhand' Becker

'BOMBER' Becker he has been known since his sensational title triumph in 1985 as the booming service on grass courts. That epithet was for his serves can have another honorifica ... 'Mr backhand' Becker.

Against top seed and rule-hunter Ivan Lendl in the semi-final on Saturday, Becker was, as expected, at his bombing best with his service, a deadly weapon with which he demolished all his rivals in straight sets on way to the final. After having had problems with his service due to which he had some anxious moments in the earlier rounds, Lendl was also as his pounding best.

The two were equally balanced in the vital service department. What then tilted the scales in Becker's favour was his superb measured backhand returns, a trait which remind ... me of Ramanathan Krish ...

JAIDIP MUKERJEA COMMENTS

BURTON

CIGARETTE SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

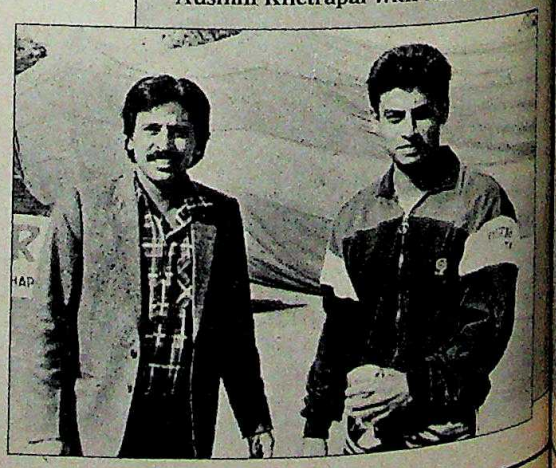
broken rack other. Becker-Lendl's serve ... and the No. 1 seed paying a back on his ... tie-breaker was the only way to break ... Wish Becker, caught in a sudden ... service, Lendl rushed to a 4-1 lead and ... incredible backhand returns to clinch the ... tie-break at 7-2.

Level at one-set all, on the powerful strength ... clean slate of Becker of having not conceded ... he has elephantine marks on the final. Lendl ... breaks of Becker. Till then a ... service, the young German became vulnerable ... service. A 6-3 win in the set, which was stopped ... more than one hour due to ... Wimbledon champion of 1978 has ... Wimbledon title, on a young ...

At Becker, let down by his double faults ... curiousness for the 31-year old winner of the 1985 and 1986 titles and runner up to Edberg last year ... passing through spasms of aggression. Becker ... bombed with two glorious passes ... well as the German ... stands stunned ...

RSM pays sportsmen like Ferreira and Amritraj whooping sums, yet makes large profits.

Aushim Khetrapal with Mark Ferreira



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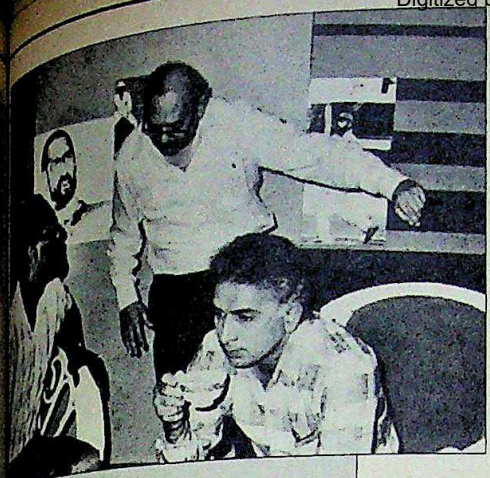
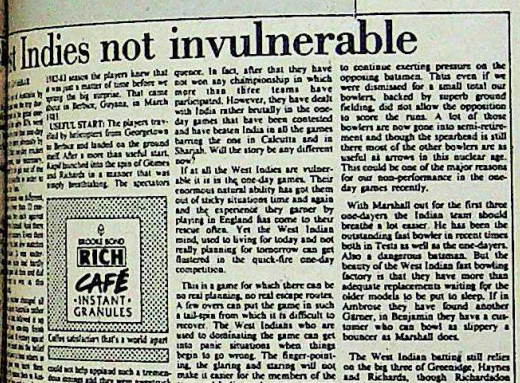


Richards and Gavaskar with Shah

Gavaskar's PMG hit the jackpot syndicating cricket columns, and is now into home video.



West Indies not invulnerable

(1982-83) senses the players knew that it was just a matter of time before we spring the big surprise. That came once in Berbice, Guyana, on March 19!

USEFUL START: The players travelled by helicopters from Georgetown to Berbice and landed on the ground itself. After a more than useful start, Kapil launched into the span of Gomes and Richards in a manner that was simply breathtaking. The spectators could not help applaud such a tremendous damage and they were awestruck by Kapil's Great hatting. They perhaps thought that only Richards or the 'Big Cat', Lloyd, were capable of such huge sixes. We were that game and later in England that West Indies twice in three games to win.

quence. In fact, after that they have not won any championship in which more than three teams have participated. However, they have dealt with India rather brutally in the one-day games that have been contested and have beaten India in all the games barring the one in Calcutta and in Sharjah. Will the story be any different now?

If at all the West Indies are vulnerable it is in the one-day games. Their enormous natural ability has got them out of sticky situations time and again and the experience they garner by playing in England has come to their rescue often. Yet the West Indian mind, used to living for today and not really planning for tomorrow can get flustered in the quick-fire one-day competition.

This is a game for which there can be no real planning, no real escape routes. A few overs can put the game in such a tail-spin from which it is difficult to recover. The West Indians who are used to dominating the game can get into panic situations when things begin to go wrong. The finger-pointing, the glaring and staring will not make it easier for the members of the team and India needs to put pressure on the West Indies to get them into such situations.

LOOKING BACK: If one has a look at the scorecards

to continue exerting pressure on the opposing batsmen. Thus even if we were dismissed for a small total our bowlers, backed by superb ground fielding, did not allow the opposition to score the runs. A lot of those bowlers are now gone into semi-retirement and though the spearhead is still there most of the other bowlers are as useful as arrows in this nuclear age. This could be one of the major reasons for our non-performance in the one-day games recently.

With Marshall out for the first three one-dayers the Indian team should breathe a lot easier. He has been the outstanding fast bowler in recent times both in Tests as well as the one-dayers. Also a dangerous batsman. But the beauty of the West Indian fast bowling factory is that they have more than adequate replacements waiting for the older models to be put to sleep. If in Ambrose they have found another Garner, in Benjamin they have a customer who can bowl as slippery a bouncer as Marshall does.

The West Indian batting still relies on the big three of Greenidge, Haynes and Richards, though Richardson and Logie have taken the load off their shoulders often with their dazzling strokeplay. And the West Indian fielding will be quicksilver.

thrown thudding

Playmakers put up Rs 40 lakh for the Indira Gandhi Gold Cup and recovered the entire money.

Satish Dayal with E.A.S. Prasanna

prices according to their marketability, receiving about 80 per cent of what the column sells for. Commenting on the lucrative business, Aushim Khetrapal of RSM says: "Profits on syndicated columns range from 20 to 25 per cent per article."

It's not just cricket stars who're benefiting. Chess champion S. Vishwanathan gets as much as Rs 2,500 for a column. Vijay Amritraj demands and gets Rs 20,000 a piece. And Michael Ferreira netted Rs 3.5 lakh from RSM in a single year.

Significantly, foreign writers are clearly on the inside track in the financial race. West Indian cricketer Gordon Greenidge raked in Rs 64,000 through his literary efforts during the recent India-West Indies series. Tony Lewis and Sobers earned a comparable amount while tennis sensation Boris Becker has entered into a three-year contract with Dev Features for pumping in his articles into India—for an undisclosed sum. But on an average, foreign stars get Rs 5,000 per piece while Indian players get around Rs 2,000.

Players who write well—like Tony Lewis, Gavaskar or Bedi—are a treasured species. Ferreira does not relish the idea of his copy being touched up. Lewis enjoys the reputation of being a flawless writer. In contrast, Kapil Dev, Ian Botham or Gary Sobers are not very readable. P.T. Usha expresses her views in Malayalam, which are then translated into English. So most use ghost writers, an increasingly important appendage in the syndicate game. Sumedh Shah of PMG says: "Ghosts have certain requirements; they shouldn't have ego hassles, they should find out what columnists have to say and put it in the way they speak."

The controversial edge of the business is being sharpened by sports bodies who have banned players for defying rules on writing. The Cricket Control Board banned Vengsarkar from playing for six months after last year's India-West Indies cricket series. His crime: penning columns.

But there is clearly a gold-mine to be tapped and the name of the new game is sponsorship: companies like Hindustan Lever, ITC, MRF or Reliance finance a star-column if the *quid pro quo* is the company logo boldly splashed on the sports page. When companies are generous, a large number of newspapers gain, including smaller newspapers. Earlier, a column could be pitched between Rs 5,000 and Rs 7,000—way beyond the financial reach of smaller newspapers. Today's sponsored column is offered at an affordable Rs 300.

Syndication companies are now branching out into other areas, sponsoring tournaments, producing television serials, buying television rights for international events and home videos. In 1987, RSM was content with a sponsorship of Rs 50,000 for its junior national-level tennis championships. Within just two years it made financial sense for Playmakers to underwrite the entire Rs 40 lakh expenditure of the 1988 Indira Gandhi Gold Cup hockey tournament. Their confidence was rewarded when they recovered all their money from the sponsors.

Now, private companies are asking syndicate agencies to develop sports tournament concepts. PGM, for instance, was asked by Hindustan Lever to design a tournament. Says Shah: "I recommended hockey. The Indian Hockey Federation has okayed the proposal and it is on the tournament calendar." For this, the company is happy to pay Rs 3.5 lakh.

The next stop on the sports business front is: TV and video. Dev Features bought television rights from the West Indies Cricket Board to telecast highlights of the India-West Indies cricket series—the first time matches in the West Indies were telecast in India. The company lost Rs 1 crore, but Kapil says: "It was worth the effort and a great achievement."

PMG has forayed into the mushrooming home video market to produce a two-part series called the 'Best of Sharjah'—featuring the top four matches—to be simultaneously released in India, Pakistan, Sharjah and England.

The sports promotion business currently has a turnover of around Rs 10 crore but has the potential to blossom into a serious money-maker. Meanwhile, the professional achievement of Indian sportsmen seems to be increasingly recorded on financial score-boards rather than the ones on the actual playing fields.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA with SALIL TRIPATHI

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GARWARE SHIPPING CORPORATION LTD.

Registered Office: Express Towers, 5th Floor,
Nariman Point, Bombay 400 021.

Chairman's Speech
Twelfth Annual General Meeting

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have great pleasure in extending to you a warm and cordial welcome to this Twelfth Annual General Meeting of the Company.

During the year, the founder of the Garware Group and Chairman of the Company, Padma Bhushan Dr. B.D. Garware, tendered his resignation from the Board of Directors of the Company. Dr. B.D. Garware has been a guiding force behind the Company, and it is on account of his wise counsel and guidance that the Company has grown to its present stature.

The Annual Report, together with the audited statement of accounts and Directors' report which has been with you for sometime now, pertains to the working of the Company for the year ended 31st March, 1989. With your permission I would like to take them as read.

The previous year's period of operation was for 18 months and, therefore, the working results for the year under review are not comparable with those for the previous period. The Company earned a Gross Profit of Rs. 7.01 crores (subject to interest and depreciation) for the year ended 31st March, 1989 as against Rs. 10.73 crores for the previous period of 18 months. The freight market the world over has shown a firm trend during the year under review, and the overall scenario for the industry appears to be encouraging.

The Company's vessels operated satisfactorily during the year, and your Board thought it appropriate to expand the activity by acquisition of more vessels. Accordingly, necessary approvals were obtained from Directorate General of Shipping to acquire three general cargo vessels.

Shri Ashok Garware

I am happy to inform you that the Company has already acquired two vessels. The first vessel was renamed 'm.v. Raigad' and has been given on time charter. The second vessel, re-named as 'm.v. Pratapgad' is presently being repositioned to the S.E. Asian region. The third vessel will be acquired shortly.

The Company's Rights Convertible Debenture Issue is open, and I am pleased to inform you that it has received good response, which shows the confidence reposed by the shareholders in the Company.

The Government of India has announced certain reliefs to the shipping industry under the Income-Tax Act. It is a welcome step towards the growth of the industry. However, the long awaited request of the shipping industry for recognition as a deemed foreign exchange earner/saver is still to be granted.

The charter hire contract with ONGC for five off-shore supply vessels expired during the year under review. The Company's supply vessels continue to be used by ONGC, for off-shore services, and a contract for their operation is being worked out with ONGC, and the Ministries of Petroleum and Surface Transport, through the Indian National Shipowners' Association.

You will be happy to note that the performance of the Company during the current year is encouraging. The Company has earned Rs. 4.68 crores on charter hire during the first five months of the current year against Rs. 4.00 crores during the corresponding period in the previous year.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Company's bankers – State Bank of India, Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank – officials of Oil and Natural Gas Commission, Oil India Limited, The Shipping Credit & Investment Company of India Limited, Directorate General of Shipping, Ministries of Finance, Petroleum and Transport, for their continued and active support.

Before I conclude, I wish to place on record my deep appreciation of the whole-hearted support and valuable guidance given by my colleagues on the Board. I would also like to express my appreciation of the conscientious work and contribution made by the Company's Executive Director, Mr. A.P. Inamdar, supported by the very able team of executives of the Company, and of the services rendered by the Company's officers and staff, both on-shore and afloat.

Thank you,

ASHOK GARWARE
(Chairman)

Bombay
29th September, 1989.

Note. This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the meeting

Concept

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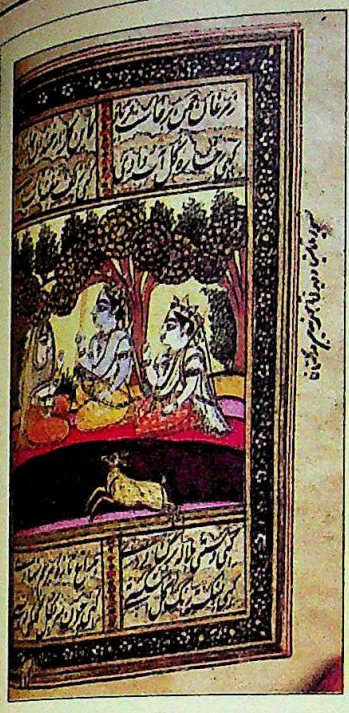
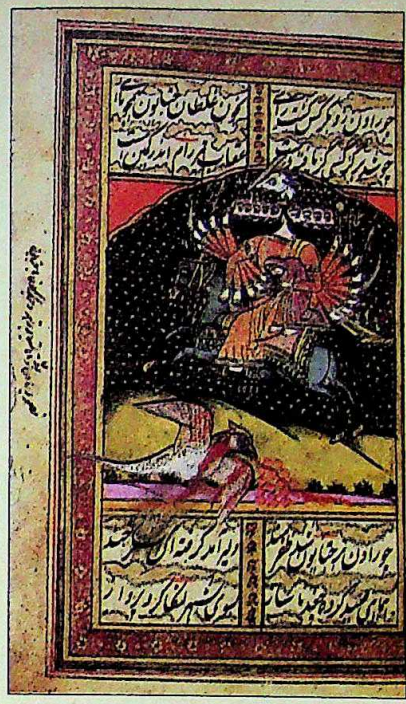
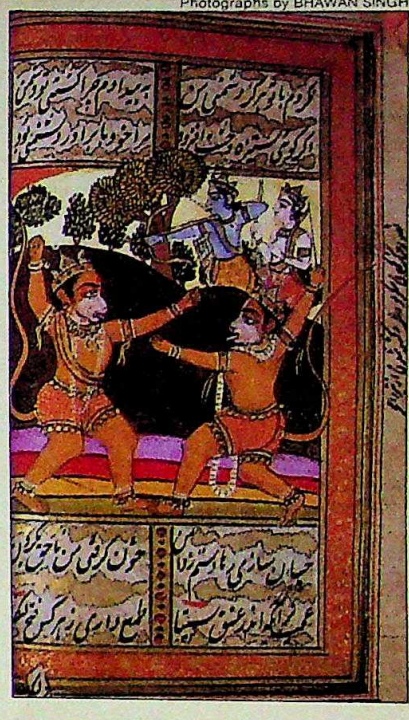
Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH

In Panchvati; abduction of Sita; Bali-Sugreev battle: illustrations from the manuscript

PERSIAN RAMAYAN

Secular Treasure

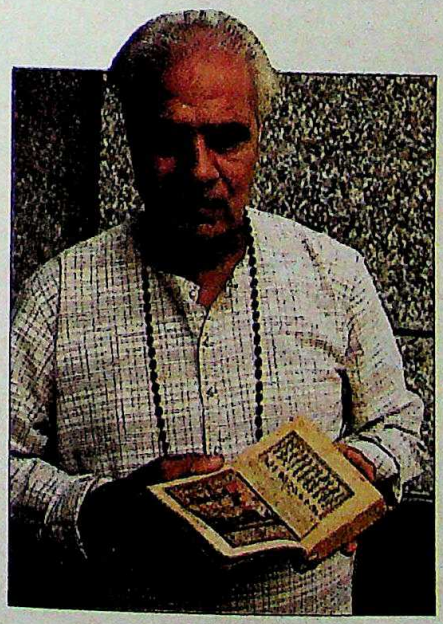
An antique religious tract surfaces in Delhi

WHILE Hindus and Muslims were crossing swords over the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy, a south Delhi resident, Chiranjit Lal Sehgal, 64, provided some secular relief by disclosing that his family possessed a 16th century Ramayan written in poetic Persian. Interestingly, it has pictures displaying Ram, Sita and Ravan attired in Muslim clothes.

Sehgal, a retired employee of the Delhi State Co-operative Bank, was casually discussing the book at a local temple and was overheard by a PTI reporter. He released it as a small news-item that was later telecast by Doordarshan. And Sehgal woke up to its valuable nature.

The handwritten manuscript is embellished with 13 illustrations of familiar scenes: the Sita *swayamvar*, the Bali and Sugreev confrontation, Luv-Kush fighting Lakshman and the abduction of Sita by the ten-headed Ravan, looking every inch a Mughal, complete with a beard.

Sehgal claims the volume was written by Abul Fazal, the famed poet in Akbar's court. He says: "My ancestors worked in Emperor Akbar's court, defending his territory against invaders at Darakhaiber Pass between India and Kabul. They received this precious, original manuscript as a reward." Sehgal, who inherited it from his father when he died in 1974, has a letter written by his father saying the book has been passed down the last 12 generations.



Sehgal with book: prized heirloom

The antiquity department of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which examined the book, found it to be about 200 years old. The ASI, however, is not sure it can be attributed to Akbar's days. After conducting tests on the state of the manuscript, the ASI has registered the Persian Ramayan under the Antiquity and Art and Treasures Act. Says L.K. Srinivasan, director, antiquity, ASI: "It is an important document from the literary point of view."

Meanwhile, Sehgal has safely tucked it away in a locker, and wants to get the manuscript, written in old Persian script—*zind parzind*—translated into Hindi and English, before passing it on to the National Archives which has the facilities to preserve it. The pages of the book are fraying at the sides, but the paintings—with gold dust, mother of pearl, nectar of flowers and fruit juices—are still as good as new.

People queue up outside Sehgal's house, some curious to see the Persian Ramayan and some wanting to buy it. But, Sehgal is reluctant to part with the book. Explains he: "Though I am getting a lot of very tempting offers—some up to Rs 5 lakh—I don't want to invite the curse of my ancestors by selling this religious document. We lost everything during Partition but brought this book with us from Pakistan."

—HARINDER BAWEJA

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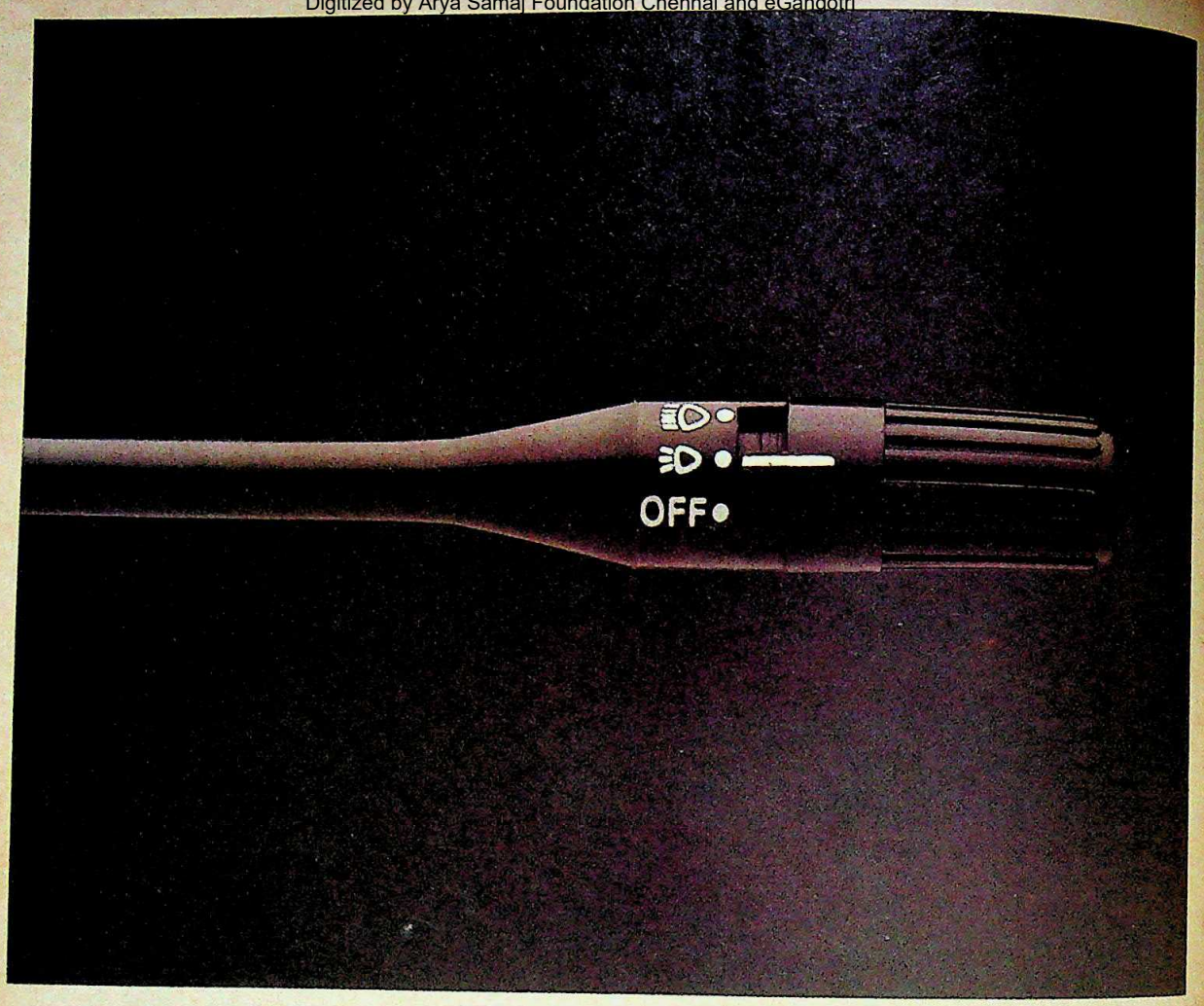

The new multi-point light switch
of the Premier Padmini.

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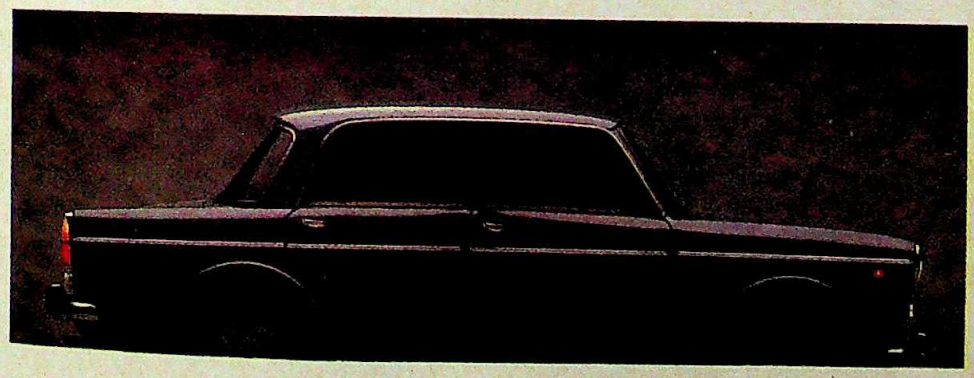

PREMIER PADMINI

The Premier Automobiles Ltd.

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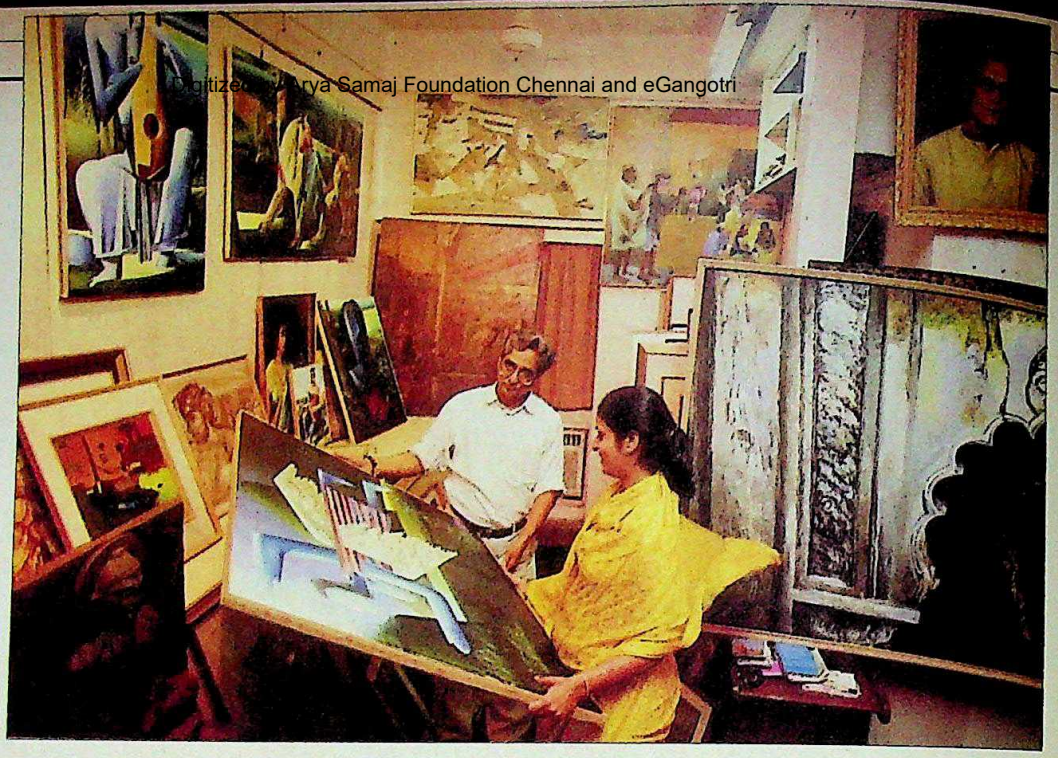

BENGAL PAINTERS

A Brush with Bounty

Recognition, though late in the day, has given star status to the painters of Calcutta and a kiss of life to the city's art market. An exciting renaissance is on.

SUDDENLY, it's Oh, Calcutta!—for art. It was slow, the transformation from wall flower of the art scene to belle of the ball. But Calcutta painters now have heads turning. Gallerywallahs from Delhi and Bombay come flocking there with long lists and exhibition dates. Collectors from other cities come and go, talking about Ganesh Pyne in hushed, reverent tones.

Midas has at long last visited Calcutta's almost-comatose art market—which has come alive with spanking new art galleries and doing brisk business. Last month, 45 minutes after the exhibition of Bikash Bhattacharjee's pastel drawings of women began, Gallerie 88 (which opened last summer) had sold his 14 works.

The city's annual art turnover—valued at just a few lakhs a few years ago—has now shot to over Rs 1 crore, according to water colour maestro Shyamal Datta Ray. Last month Rekha Mody, who owns Genesis Gallery in Calcutta, opened a new gallery in New Delhi, Habiart, which will highlight Bengal painters. And in November this year, Chanakya, a Delhi gallery will mount a big exhibition of painters from the state.

Calcutta is the new vogue-city of the business of art. But far more important is the fact that something exciting is happening to art in the city which will soon turn 300. Clearly, there is a renaissance on. "The best work is being done here," says M.F. Husain. "The Calcutta painters have a feeling for human drama. Painters from cities like Bombay and Baroda are pseudo. Much of their narrative is in the Hockney style and it looks borrowed, whereas these painters give you their own, felt experience."

It was, in fact, the peripatetic Husain who had first gushed in print about Calcutta and the painter-son the city is most proud of: Ganesh Pyne. Some years ago Husain put the shy, hermit-like painter on top of his list of the 10 best artists in the country. Pyne, with his masterful and highly structured renderings of myths and fantasies, and Bhattacharjee with his near-perfect brush strokes and idiosyncratic eye, are the two stars.

But there are other painters too who have made significant contributions to the Calcutta renaissance: Shyamal Datta Ray, Paritosh Sen, Amitabh Banerjee, Sunil Das, Ganesh Haloi, Veena Bhargav, to name just a few. Fresh breezes of inspiration are also coming from a revivified Santiniketan with stalwarts like Jogen Choudhury, Suhas Roy, Lalu Prasad Shaw, Somnath

Photographs by SAIBAL DAS

Painting by Pyne: still the favourite of collectors

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...R. Khejriwal in his gallery: popularising Bengal art

...here. Moreover, there is a gal-...y of over 400 artists—...which includes a host of young ...ters like Pradeep Moitra, ...ava Basak, Samir Aich, ...shree Chakravorty, ...Chal Majumdar, who are ...ly being critically ac-...med. "The new lot is dyna-...," says Paritosh Sen, the ...ence grise of painters.

But the recognition—in-...ing star-status for some—...gh welcome, comes a bit ...e in the day. "We worked ...ly and for a long time ...ding to our beliefs. The Delhi-based ...ts considered us backward at that ...," says a somewhat cynical Bhatta-...jee. Bhattacharjee is today "booked" ...the coming year: barely does he put ...t to canvas than buyers place their ...ers. But it was not always so. For 30 ...g years he had to struggle while paint-...in other parts of the country ...ished.

Pyne's does only about five or six ...era paintings a year, but industri-...s almost knock each other over to get ...latest Pyne. Collectors from Switzer-...d and the US have also gravitated to ...narrow, little green and pink house on ...raj Street where Pyne lives. But he too ...ed in relative anonymity for years. ...Datta Ray—before they became, as ...says, "glamorous like movie stars". ...Ray's studio is empty: his works are ...sold, in museums, or now in Bom-...for a show at the Chemould.

Why Calcutta? Why now? One of the ...s which sets most Cal-...a painters apart is their ...sive concern with the ...n condition. There are ...abstract painters. Expres-...ism has taken root in the ...al landscape, but it has ...indigenised and deals in-...ly with human values ...concerns. "The work of ...ath and Pyne may be ex-...ionist on the surface with ...that fantasy and imagery. ...it is saying something ...ely about the human ...," says Paritosh Sen. ...example Pyne paints ...s. But the ribs of the boat ...the human ribs."

Calcutta artists are proud ...they have never strayed ...human concerns. "The-...ically we have more social content. On the face of the paintings you might not see this because we interiorise it," says Amitabh Banerjee, painter and print-maker.

Perhaps this overriding concern with man and his problems has something to do with the city itself. "Calcutta is the only real city. The problems here are singularly our own: we live with them and solve them in an Indian, Bengali way," says actor Victor Banerjee who started the Calcutta Art Gallery in 1980 when existing commercial art galleries closed down. The city for him is the vanguard of any evolution of art. Adds Husain: "Calcutta itself is such a place. The Calcutta painters have so much turmoil, so much pain. You can smell the stink, the human misery here."

> "We worked slowly and according to our beliefs. We were considered backward."
> BIKASH BHATTACHARJEE

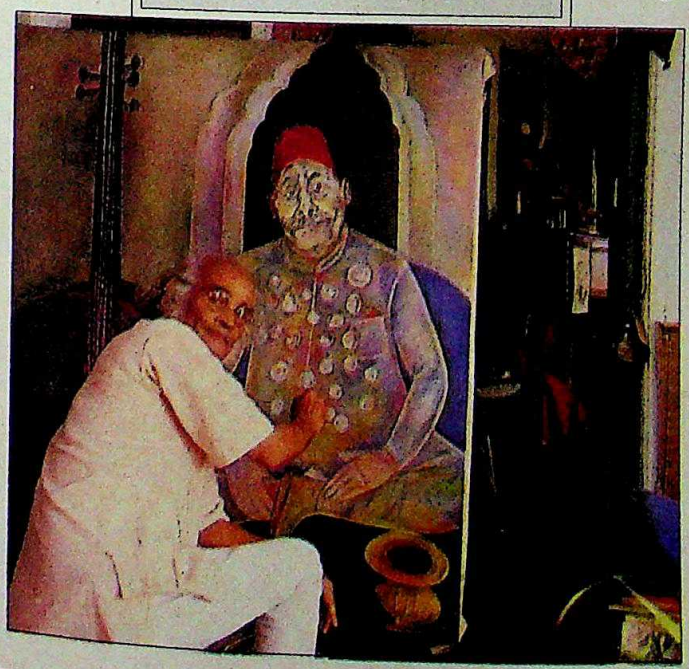
> "Bikash and Pyne may be expressionist on the surface, but say something about the human condition."
> PARITOSH SEN

Another distinguishing feature of the Bengal painters is their resistance to fashionable trends. The winds of change coming in from the West did blow through Bengal, but blew right out again. Counteracting them were equally strong breezes from the Far East: Rabindranath Tagore had brought many painters from China to Santiniketan.

"We are a little orthodox. We don't accept foreign influences without indigenising them," explains Datta Ray. "We have never been very strong for abstract or pop art. No fads, no fashions; art is a part of our lives."

What Calcutta painters also have going for them is the old Bengal School and other traditions of Bengali art. Ironically enough, it was the legacy of this very school—dominated by Abanindranath and Gajendranath Tagore, Nanda Lal Bose, Ram Kinkar among others—which erroneously branded Calcutta painters as old-fashioned country cousins with rather fey, native floweriness in comparison with the Progressive Artists Group from Bombay. Says Amitabh Banerjee: "We are coming back. Not quite to the Bengal School, but there is a smell of Bengal painting."

The other smells coming strongly are from the two *paths* according to Dr R. Khejriwal, an art collector who started the Chitrakoot Gallery a few years ago and has played a crucial role in popularising Bengal painters. Bengal, he



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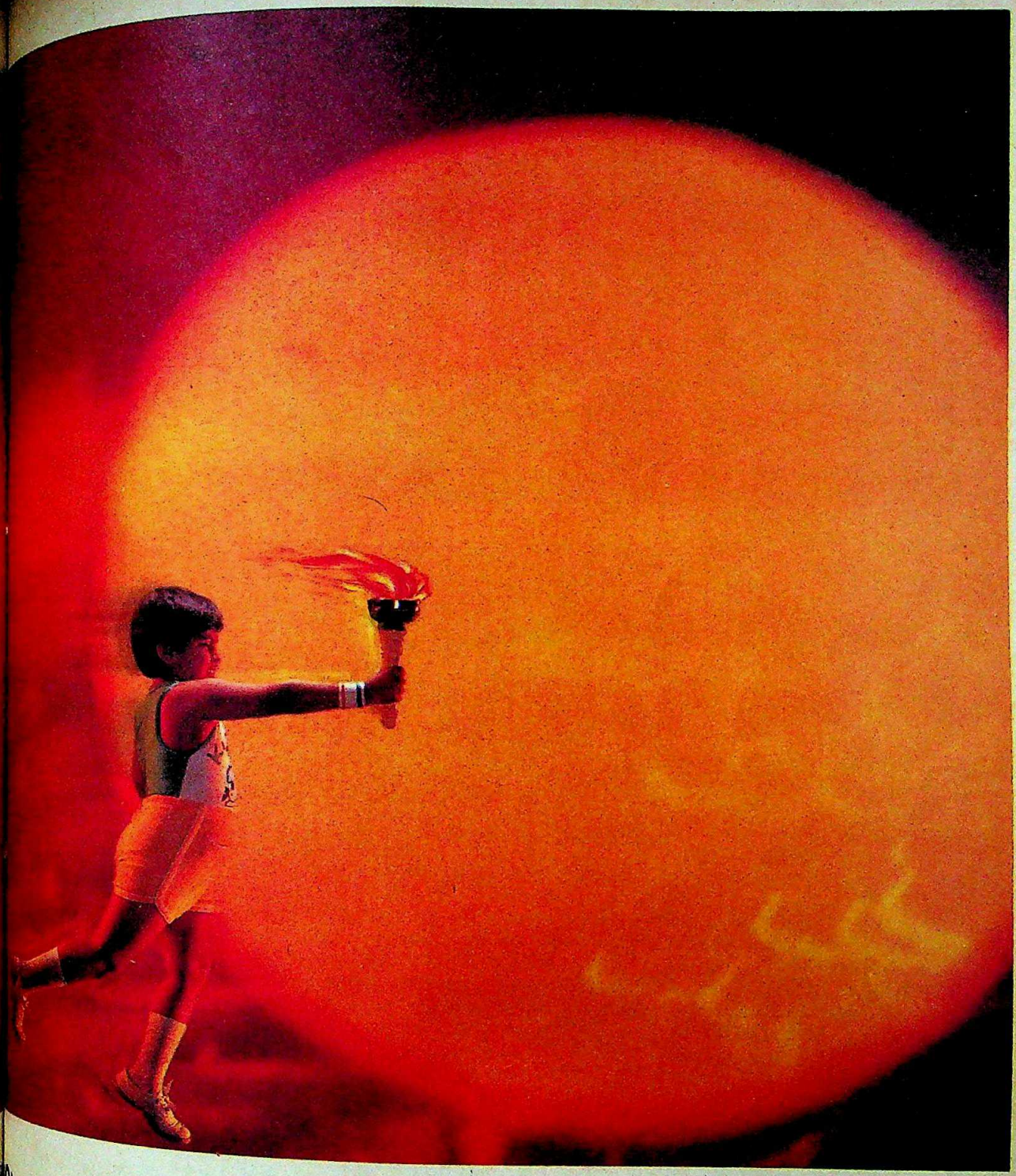

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– Jawaharlal Nehru

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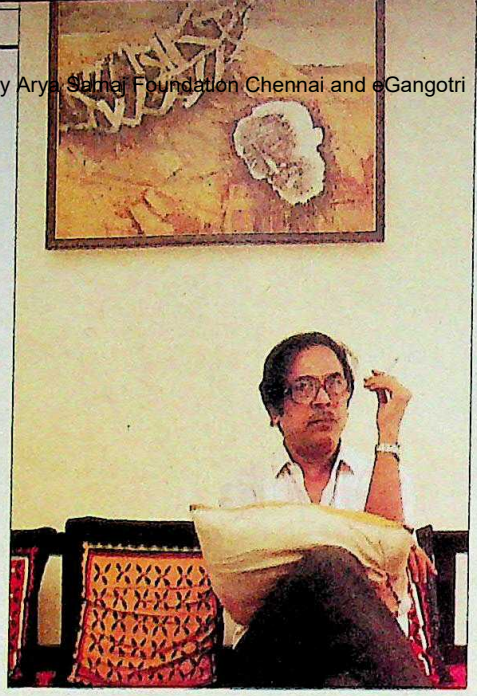
explains, has had three waves: Kalighat *path*; Jamini Roy and the Bankura *path*; and the Bengal School which was influenced by miniatures and Chinese painting. "Present-day art is an amalgam of these and the western. From here they moved on to what they want to say."

Water colours, a medium which has always been a forte of the Bengal painters and especially of the Bengal School, is gaining currency again—it is used by maestros like Datta Ray to debutants like Pradeep Moitra. Says Datta Ray: "We now use water colours compositionally. Earlier, artists were influenced by Europe and England and they used to do landscapes and sketches."

The '70s was the lost decade. Serious work went on quietly. But Bengal went through a post-Naxal blues which affected all spheres of the arts, believes Paritosh Sen. Adds Bhattacharjee: "After Naxalism



Datta Ray: significant contribution

there was demoralisation, a cut-off." Khejriwal, however, believes that the turning point was the '80s when the painters lost hope and realised that politics would not change anything. "Change they realised would have to come from elsewhere. So they stopped painting all the cripples and beggars."

There is another change in the Bengal landscape. Slowly, and a bit hesitantly, the spirit of Tagore—the painter, not the poet—seems to be hovering over some of the younger artists. Those strangely luminiscent forms emerging from other worlds are beginning to be seen again. Bengal painting, then, has had its kiss of life. Like the forms emerging from semi-darkness that characterise Tagore's works, Bengal painters are coming out of the shadows.

—MADHU JAIN in Calcutta

DELHI

On the Art Map

DELHI has become India's gallery-city. At last count there were 17 art galleries; about twice as many as last year. In October alone, six opened their doors to swanky designer or rustic-chic interiors.

The list is long—the Gallery Espace flagged off by Renu Modi and Rashda Siddiqui with an autobiographical show of M.F. Husain; the Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA), which opened last month with Krishen Khanna's *Bandwallahs*; Habiart, a joint venture by HUDCO and Rekha Mody opened last fortnight; and the exquisite Display Gallery, opened by Hema Bawa. There's also Dolly Narang's quaint Village Gallery in Hauz Khas Village. And Ashok and Manju Batra have transformed their home into a storehouse of paintings shown "by appointment". With a growing middle class and a multiplying tribe of millionaires, there's certainly more wall space in India now.

There's money too. In the new age of art auctions, the law of supply and demand is spilling into the world of art. And the

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Dolly Narang at the Village Gallery

painter is suddenly persona most grata. But money is not the only reason: a leg up the social ladder is. Says Khanna: "People who've made lots of money now want entree into interesting social circles." The fever infects all groups: real estate dealers, industrialist's wives, engineers. Have wall, will exhibit, in other words.

There is also renewed interest abroad in contemporary Indian art.

Renu Modi, Siddiqui at Gallery Espace

Says CCA's Sadhvi Khullar, 21: "Galleries in Europe and America are showing a lot of interest in our artists." Most of the paintings in the Village Gallery's show of self-portraits were snapped up by foreigners.

The Government too is promoting promising artists. The CMC Gallery has held significant shows in the past two years and now HUDCO has jumped onto the art bandwagon. Foreign governments are also exhibiting Indian painters. Indian Eclectics, an exhibition of 16 young painters, was put up by the French Government and Sanskriti Pratishthan last month. Three have been chosen to work in Paris.

Says Jatin Das: "India has become an exhibitionist country.... Today they are not even out of art schools and they want to hold one-man shows."

Is this a freak boom? Roshan Elkazi, who runs Art Heritage, is happy about the crop of galleries, but hopes "they'll have staying power". Some hope to make their galleries more than just walls to hang paintings on. Display Gallery plans to provide a meeting place for artists and Habiart and Village Gallery plan seminars and workshops.

All roads on the art map now lead to Delhi. But it might in the end prove to be too much of a good thing.

—MADHU JAIN

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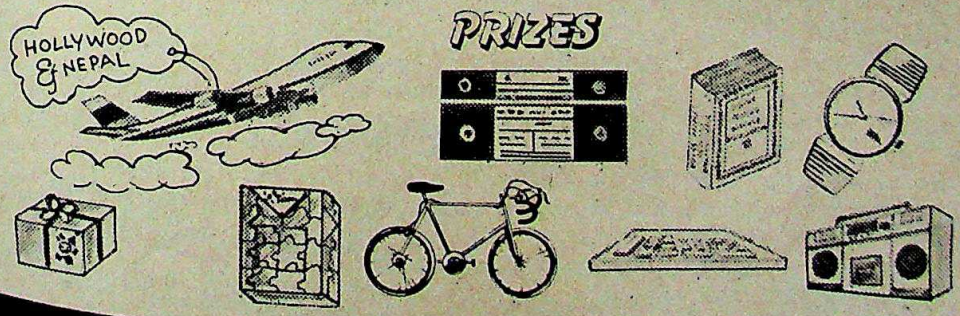

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MEDICINE

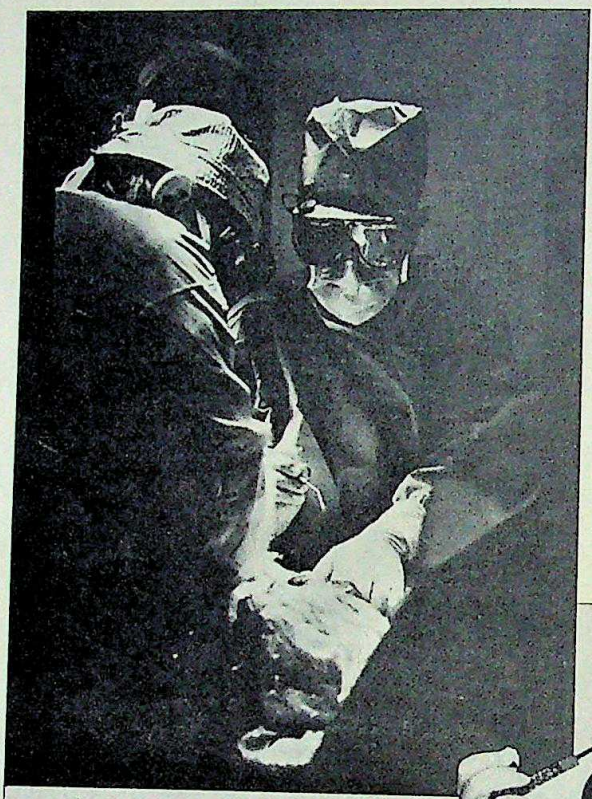
The Wonder Beam

The first contact ND-YAG laser arrives in India

IT is a super-versatile surgical tool. Ophthalmologists use it to weld detached retinas. Neurosurgeons use its intense heat to vaporise tumours on the brain. Dermatologists use it to bleach unsightly blotches on the skin. And oncologists use it to kill cancerous cells.

Yet in India, the laser has been out of reach of specialists in other areas like cardiology. Now that may be changing with the arrival of the first contact ND-YAG (Neodymium-Yttrium Aluminium Garnet) laser. Last month, the dazzling state-of-the-art device was introduced to Indian surgeons at the C.D. Reddy Hospital in Hyderabad by Dr M.Y. Sankar of the University of Cincinnati Medical Centre in the US. Says Sankar, one of a three-man international team which developed the probes and scalpels, for the laser: "It is a multi-disciplinary and multi-speciality machine."

That's hardly an exaggeration, considering the range of uses to which the ND-YAG laser can be put. But the operation of the laser is remarkably simple. Like a magnifying glass, it converts light into heat at the spot where the beam comes in contact with tissue.



Surgeons remove cancerous tumour with the laser; and Dr Sankar: pathbreaker

The laser cuts tissues, seals off blood vessels, vaporises tumours, kills cancerous cells.

But there the comparison ends. For the ND-YAG laser is an amazingly sophisticated tool, permitting the surgeon to control the depth of penetration of tissue by varying the wavelength of light used and the power. And while it cuts tissue during operations, it also seals off blood vessels so that bleeding is reduced.

The earliest medical laser—the carbon dioxide laser—was a comparatively crude affair, used mainly for treating surface lesions. With a handpiece that enabled focusing, it became a handy aid for ophthalmologists. But the use of lasers as surgical scalpels had to await the development of a more sophisticated laser—the Auth knife. This too had drawbacks though—the beam was diffuse, and it caused needless damage to tissue surrounding the operated part.

The contact ND-YAG laser is far more advanced than earlier carbon dioxide or argon lasers. While it cuts as well as the earlier generation of carbon dioxide lasers, it produces far less smoke, so saving surgeons the bother of frequently venting the area being operated. More important, penetration is deeper and lateral tissue damage minimal. And it can both cut and weld tissue. Says Sankar: "All that the surgeon must do is to decide the actual density of the beam and the time for which it should be trained at the target."

The laser's use is not confined to the body surface. Internal organs too can be operated—using endoscopic instruments. These are basically optical fibres which deliver the laser beam to practically any part of the body. For instance, to operate on the stomach, a tube of optical fibres is pushed in through the mouth. The surgeon can see the internal anatomy through another system of optical fibres and after aiming the laser, operate.

For the patient, laser surgery offers several advantages over conventional surgery. It is less traumatic and involves little loss of blood. So, hospital stay is cut down drastically. Still, Sankar cautions: "The wonder-beam is not a cure-all."

It also comes expensive. Together with the scalpels and probes, the laser machine costs about Rs 25 lakh, so putting it out of reach of almost all surgeons and most hospitals. One way of cutting investment costs, Sankar suggests, is to set up exclusive laser surgery centres which can be used by different specialists. Dr C.D. Reddy, chairman of CDR Hospitals, concurs: "Hi-tech systems cannot be bought by individual surgeons but corporate set-ups can make it available to a pool of specialists."

But purchasing a laser machine is not the end of the story. A specialist takes about six weeks to get accustomed to working with the new machine. Nurses too have to be trained in its use and biomedical engineers taught to maintain it. For while the laser is a wonderful healer, it can also wreak deadly damage in untrained hands.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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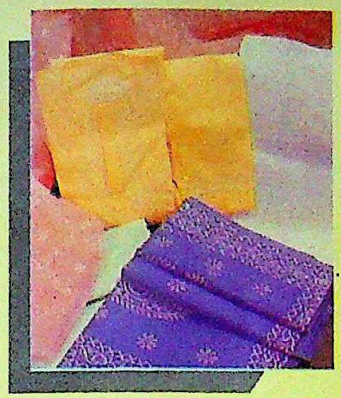

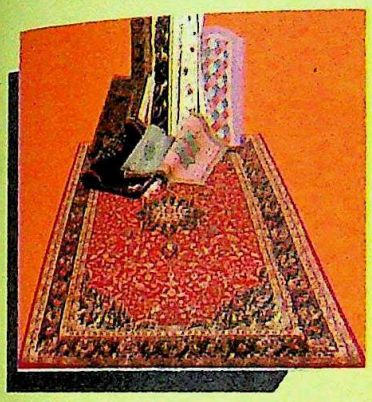

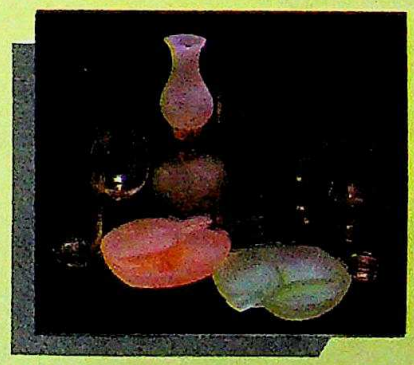
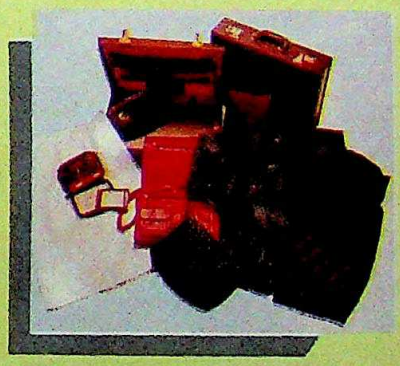
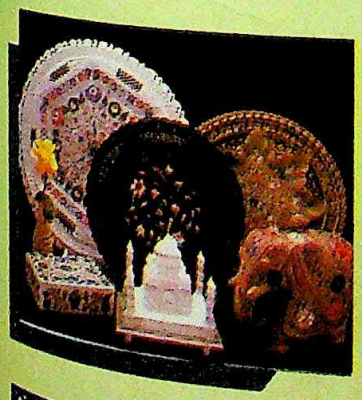
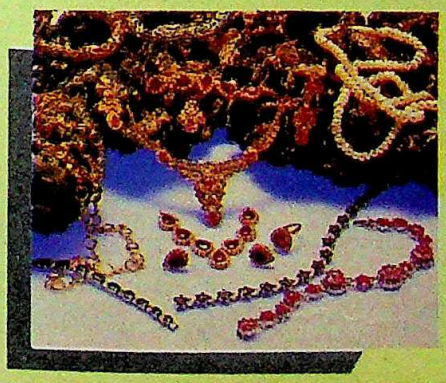

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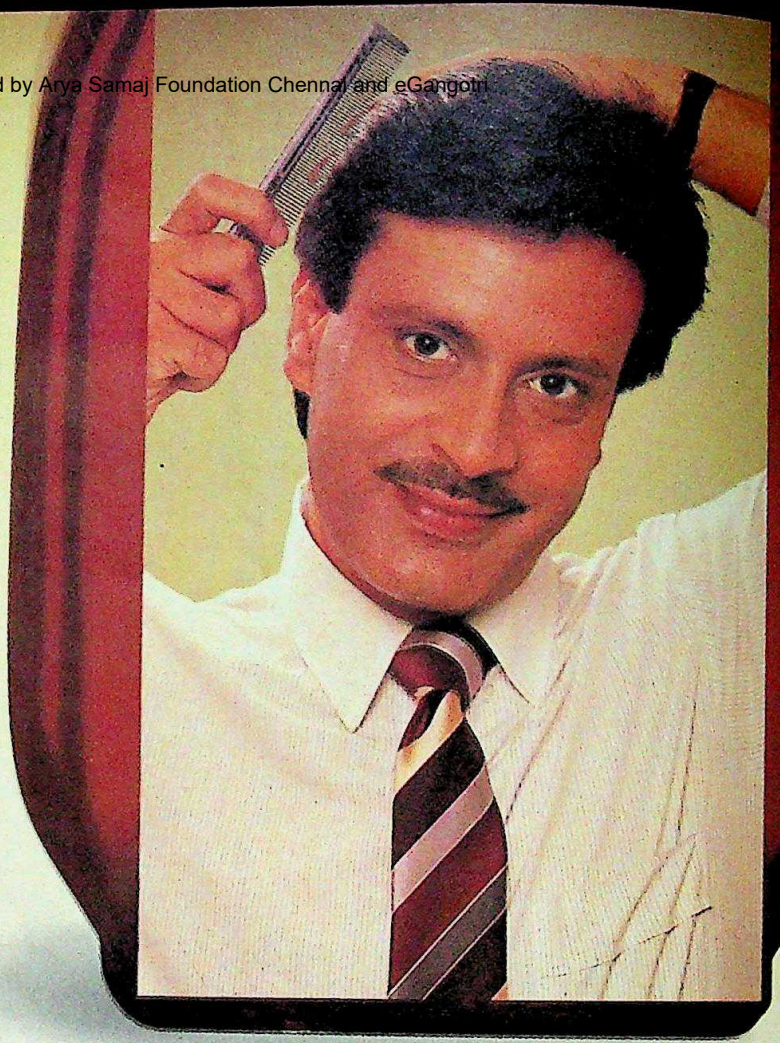

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BY K. NATWAR SINGH

Nehru's Life and Letters

ON November 14, 1989, India and the world will pay homage to Jawaharlal Nehru. How do his life and work stand up to critical scrutiny 25 years after his death? Over the past year I have been asking myself this question. Let me confess that I am partial to Nehru. My generation owes him its intellectual, political and moral awakening. That is why I am sickened by the torrent of empty words that has all but drowned the majesty of his life and achievement. Nehru's balance sheet is impressive indeed.

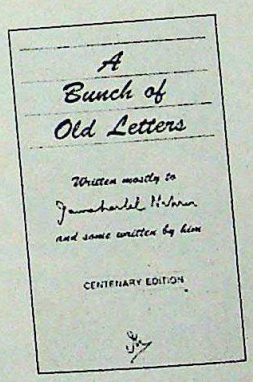
He was a great man. How do I define greatness? My criteria is—did the individual change the world for the better or not? Nehru passes this test with distinction. If we leave out saints, holy men and Gandhiji, then Nehru is among the three greatest Indians of all time. The other two, Ashok and Akbar were emperors. They lived in less turbulent times. Creating a democracy and presiding over it with compassion and courage, foresight and wisdom was infinitely more demanding than being emperor in the 3rd century B.C. or 16th century A.D. Hence, Nehru's achievement is greater because his task was tougher.

Nehru belongs to that very small band of sagacious and incorruptible men who have founded nations. Woe betide those who destroy his vision of India—civilised, democratic, secular, strong, united.

Recently four of Pandit Nehru's books have been re-issued: *An Autobiography*, *Glimpses of World History* and the *Discovery of India* are well known. The fourth, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, is not often mentioned. It deserves to be. It was first published in 1958. Nehru in his foreword wrote: "It was my intention to first publish only Mahatma Gandhi's letters to me. Gradually others were added and even some letters written by me...." Of the 368 letters, 105 are from Mahatma Gandhi. The rest are from Motilal Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore, M.A. Jinnah, Abul Kalam Azad, Vallabhbhai Patel, Sarojini Naidu, Harold Laski, Bertrand Russell, Mohamed Iqbal, Edward Thompson, Stafford Cripps, Subhas Chandra Bose, Madam Sun-Yat-Sen, Gobind Ballabh Pant and many other prominent persons. I have selected letters from only three out of this eminent list: Mahatma Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose and George Bernard Shaw.

Gandhiji to Nehru on October 5, 1945: "The first thing I want to write about is the difference of outlook between us. If the difference is fundamental, then I feel the public should also be made aware of it. It would be detrimental to our work for Swaraj to keep them in the dark. I have said that I still stand by the system of government envisaged in *Hind Swaraj*." Nehru replied on October 9, 1945: "It is many years ago since I read *Hind Swaraj* and I have only a vague picture in my mind. But even when I read it 20 or more years ago it seemed to me completely unreal ....the Congress has never considered that picture, much less adopted it." Observe the level of the dialogue—it is centred on issues, programmes, principles. Nothing personal or petty.

Nehru with Mahatma Gandhi



The letters deal with sombre and grave matters. Nehru's lighter side is nowhere in sight.

Two letters exchanged between Subhas Bose and Nehru take 34 pages. Bose made a blistering attack on Nehru's ideas and attitudes on March 28, 1939. Nehru met all Subhas Babu's arguments. He ended his reply thus: "Are we all such integrated human beings that we can define ourselves precisely in a word or phrase.... But I am a dull subject to discuss, especially at the tail end of an inordinately long letter. Let us leave it at this that I am an unsatisfactory human being who is dissatisfied with himself and the world, and whom the petty world he lives in does not particularly like." What disarming self-deprecation.

On September 4, 1948, prime minister Nehru wrote what amounts to a fan letter to George Bernard Shaw: "Forty years ago, when I was 18 and an undergraduate at Cambridge, I heard you address a meeting there. I have not seen you again since then, nor have I ever written to you. But like many of my generation, we have grown up in company with your writings and books. I suppose a part of myself, such as I am today, has been moulded by that reading. I do not know if that would do you any credit." Nehru asked to see Shaw, while he was in London for the 1948 CHOGM. Shaw's reply reached Nehru after he left London. It caught him in Paris. Nehru wrote to Shaw from Paris: "It is a matter of deep regret to me that I missed this opportunity of paying my respects to you." The two finally met in 1949. A year later, Shaw died.

These letters deal with sombre and grave matters. Nehru's lighter side is nowhere in evidence here. For that one should turn to Verrrier Elwin's autobiography. Elwin was an unusual Englishman who made India his home after coming down from Oxford in the late '20s. Here is a gem from Elwin's book: "I had just published *India's North-East Frontier in the 19th Century* and my friends insisted I present a copy to Mr Nehru.... On the following day I presented it to him. He turned over a few pages, grunted a little, looked at me and said: 'What do you think of *Lolita*?'"

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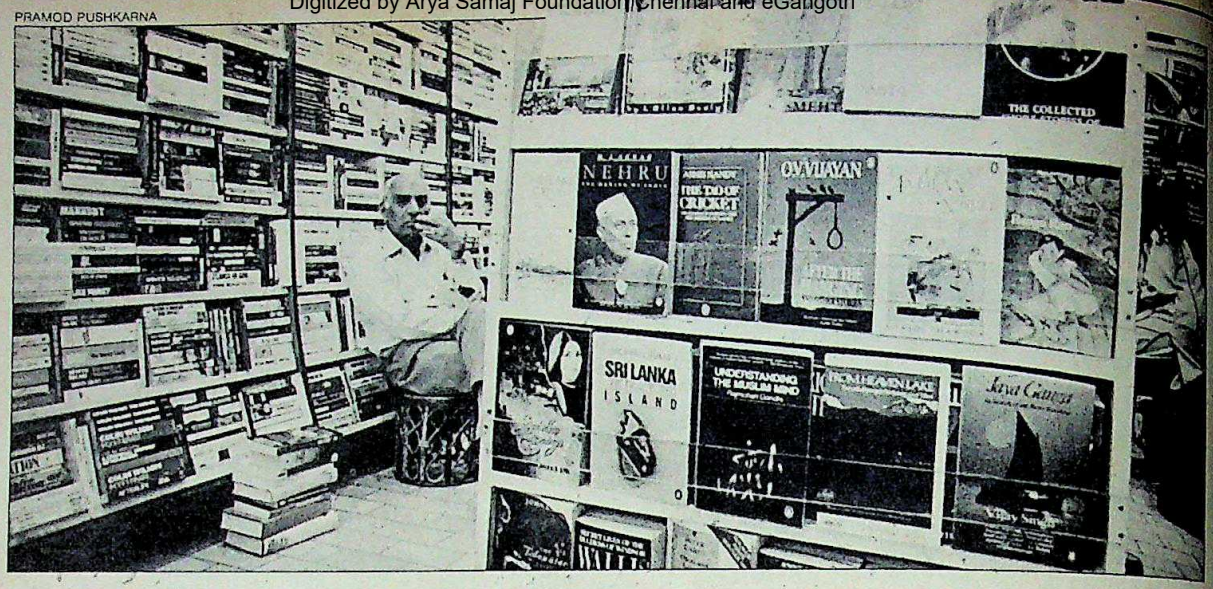

INDIAN WRITING

Finding a Firm Niche

Indian books flood the market

SUDDENLY, the Indian writer appears to have come into his own. Almost overnight Indian bookstores have acquired an Indian look. No longer are the display windows brimming with the same old Forsters, Jhabvalas, and Kayes. There is now a new breed of Indian novelists, biographers, political commentators and poets being increasingly picked up by prestigious imprints like Penguin, Faber, Chatto and Windus, and Oxford.

And though they may not have quite stormed the international literary scene—V.S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie, if you can call them Indian, being the only real giants—they are fetching adequate literary notice, and being published with a hype and quality hitherto only associated with the West. Says Khushwant Singh about Vikram Seth, Allan Sealy and Amitav Ghosh; "They're much better than the old guard, to which I belong. They handle the language a damn sight better."

But it's not only this talented threesome; with obvious literary proclivities, that is finding the fancy foreign jackets. Indians from all walks of life are giving it a go. As David Davidar, editor-publisher of Penguin India, says: "I'm receiving manuscripts from every kind of person across the compass." And though he may be rejecting "75 per cent" of those that he receives, and others abroad junking even more, there is no denying the numbers that are being accepted, being published and being sold. Consequently, the notion of the bestseller in India has also changed: from 2,500-3,000 to 5,000-10,000. Poet Adil Jussawala sums up this new movement when he says: "Many drawers in offices will probably have manuscripts ready to be published."

It was Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* that pushed ajar the door that led into the propah world of English literature. He demonstrated it was possible for Indians to write English after their own idiom and be taken seriously. He also demonstrated that it was possible for such books to sell. *Midnight's Children* was an unqualified bestseller, as was *Satanic Verses*. Vikram Seth did very well too: his Pushkin-inspired *The Golden Gate*, sold over 50,000 copies in the US and Britain, and about 10,000 in India.

Today, the door Rushdie stepped in through has been rammed wide open. International imprints are looking seriously at India. Penguin has set up shop and revolutionised the way paperbacks are perceived. Others like Fontana and Picador have worked out special arrangements with publishers like Rupa. Media interest has risen dramatically: no self-respecting newspaper devotes less than a page every week to reviews. A new book is a literary event, with interviews, extracts and profiles. *The Economic Times* week-end section has regular columns devoted to publishing. Says an editor: "Books page is now the staple."

It is because there are writers and readers to service it. The fiction band-

The door Rushdie edged in through has now been rammed wide open. Today, more Indians are writing and are being accepted.

wagon in particular is overloaded, with both the young and the old trying their hand at it. There's Shashi Tharoor, the Geneva-based UN official who's just put out *The Great Indian Novel*, a contemporary Mahabharata. Political commentator S. Nihal Singh has written a novel, *The Ambassador's Journey*, to be published by Arnold Heinemann. Pepita Noble-Seth has been commissioned for a novel set in Kerala by Penguin-India. Scientist Jayant Narlikar last year published a sci-fi, *Return of Vaman*. And Proctor and Gamble's Managing Director Gurcharan Das' novel, *A Fine Family*, is scheduled for release in January. The former editor of *Business India* and *Debonair*, Dilip Thakore, has written a corporate novel. Meantime, Shobha De's *Socialite Evenings* has been selling well. Explains Jussawala: "All journalism is ephemeral: one sometimes wants to leave behind books which are more substantial."

The bedrock for this onrush of publishing activity was set in the mid-'80s by Amitav Ghosh (*Circle of Reason* and *Shadowlines*), Vikram Seth (*The Golden Gate*), Allan Sealy (*Trotternama*), and then last year, Upamanyu Chatterjee (*English, August: An Indian Story*). Picked up by major imprints abroad, and then critically lauded, they awakened an

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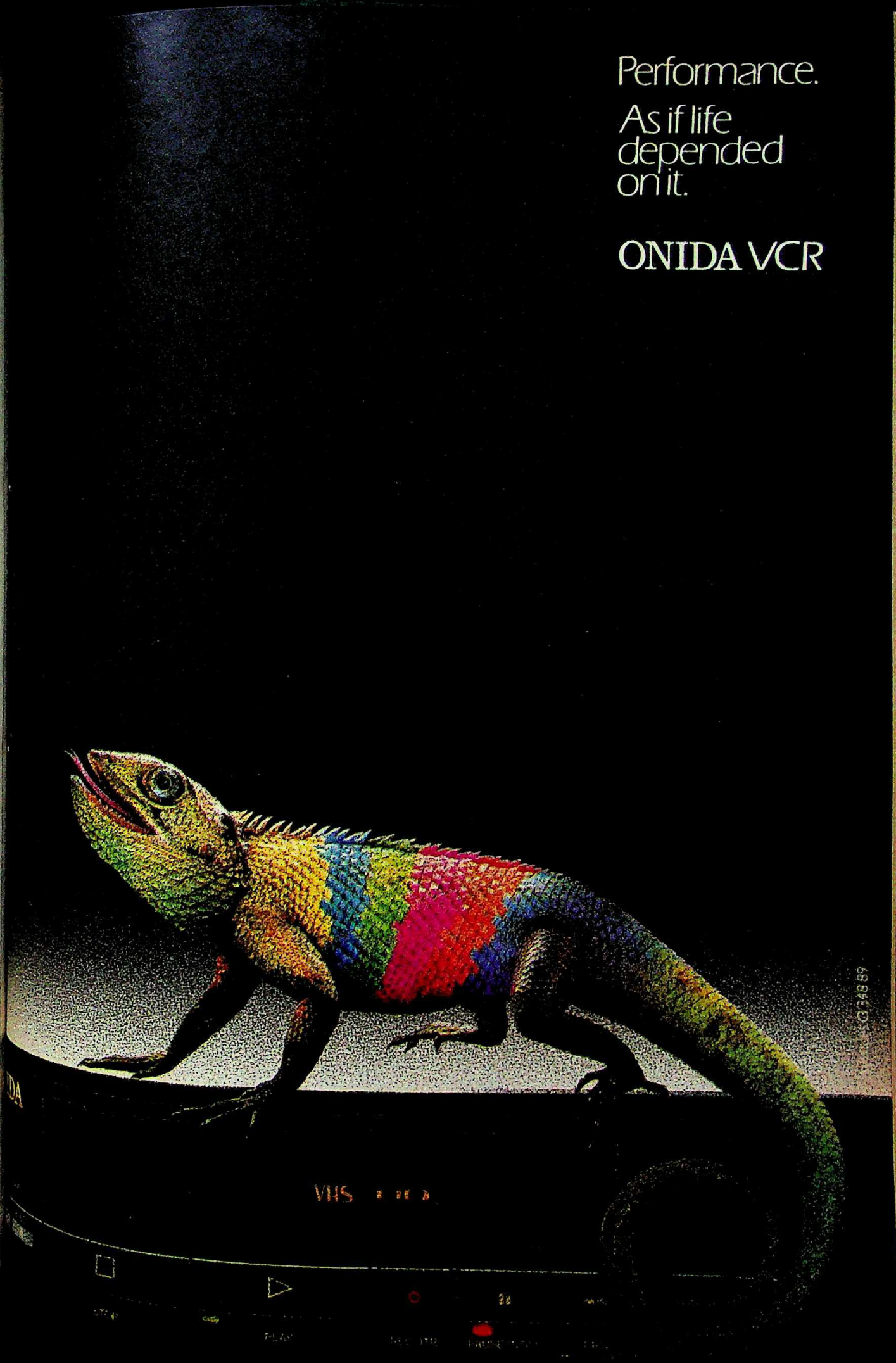

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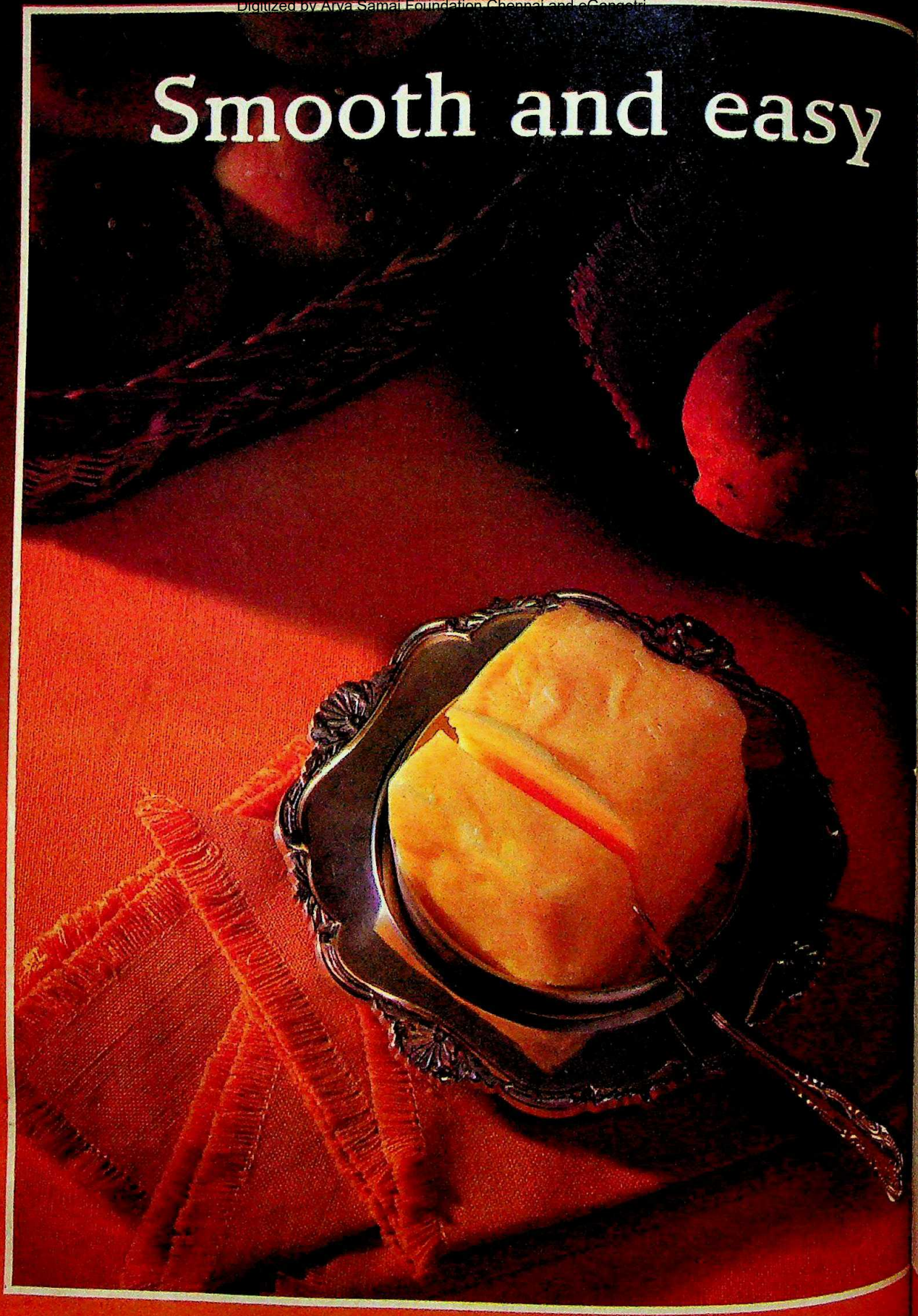

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Emirates

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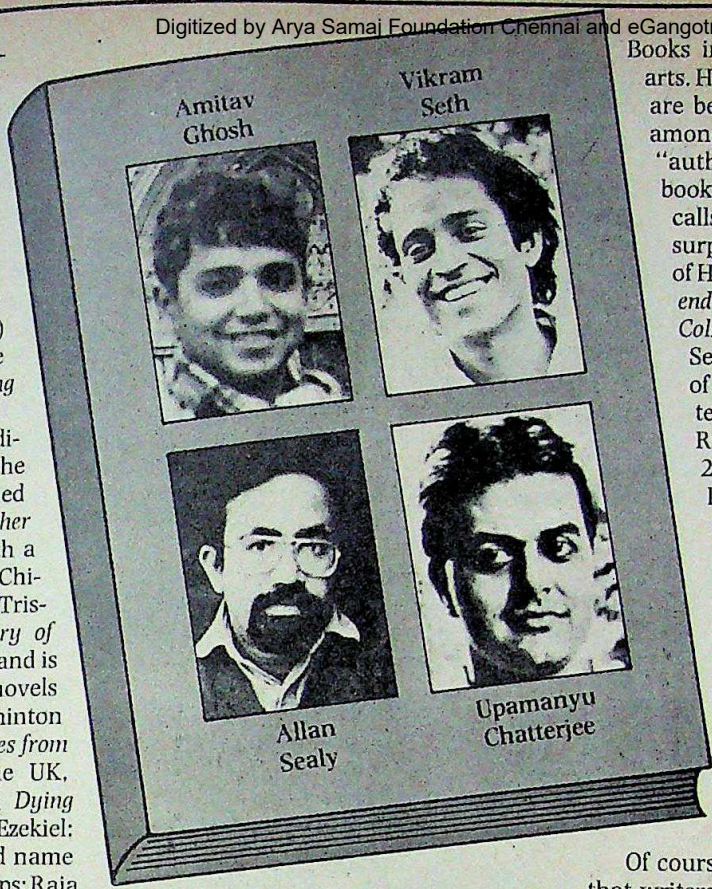
enormous interest in the Indian writer. The fillip they gave was evident in the fact that the older writers too delivered more accomplished works in this period. Both Anita Desai (*Clear Light of Day*, *In Custody*, *Baumgartner's Bombay*) and Nayantara Sahgal (*Rich Like Us*, *Plans for Departure*, *Mistaken Identity*) matured, while others like Shashi Deshpande (*That Long Silence*) found an audience.

Meantime, immigrant Indians were flowering abroad. In the US, Bharati Mukherjee stunned with *The Middleman and Other Stories* and followed it up with a lesser work, *Jasmine*. From Chicago, Boman Desai wrote a Tristram Shandy-like *The Memory of Elephants*. In Tokyo, Meira Chand is an established seller with four novels out already. In Canada, Rohinton Mistry has impressed with *Tales from Firozsha Bagh*, while in the UK, Farrokh Dhondy is finishing *Dying Egypt Dying*. Says Nissim Ezekiel: "Only a decade ago you could name Indian authors on your fingertips: Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan. This has changed." But Ezekiel also puts the new writer in perspective, saying: "All the new writers are not novelists; some write novels."

In a sense, the publishing revolution was waiting to happen. With a burgeoning middle class, fluent in English, it was only a matter of time before the market began to move. Penguin's entry into India in 1985 was a turning point. Says Ansari: "Its arrival has been a tremendous boom—I couldn't have written in vacuum and peddled my manuscript." But Rajeet Mukherjee, formerly of Orient Longman, cautions: "Penguin has given an impetus, but its greatest failing is its inability to discover any significant talent."

That is a critical charge several make, but it hasn't hampered growth. Says Oxford Senior Editor Rukun Advani: "There is definitely a boom." And, interestingly, it is not restricted to fiction. Despite its forbidding price, M.J. Akbar's *Nehru: The Making of India* has sold as many as 18,000-odd hardback copies globally. In India, S. Gopal's biography of Radhakrishnan and G. Venkataraman's biography of C.V. Raman have done well. Other non-fiction titles like *India's Struggle for Independence*, *Sri Lanka: The Fractured Island* by Mohan Raman, *The Earth Mother* by Pupul Jayakar from Penguin and refurbished Oxford titles like Corbett's man-eater series, Sudhir Kakar's *The Inner World* and Stanley Wolpert's *Jinnah*, underscore the fact that more and more Indians are interested in reading about India.



The interest in the Indian writer started after major imprints abroad picked up works of Ghosh, Seth, Sealy and Chatterjee.

Pricing has played a crucial role in this boom. With the dollar and pound waging strong, books produced in India have become a vastly more attractive proposition. Says Zamir Ansari, marketing chief of Penguin Overseas and India: "The Indian reader is both quality and price conscious." The ideal pricing most people in the trade feel is between Rs 45 and Rs 60. And that is the price Penguin is mostly providing at. Smaller publishers too are in the arena. In fact, Ravi Dayal, formerly of Oxford University Press, has been able to successfully carry out an interesting venture. He is publishing single-handedly, high quality hardbacks at paperback prices, from Rs 45 to Rs 90. Kali for Women is producing essentially feminist titles, while Seagull Books in Calcutta focuses on the arts. High quality coffee-tables too are being printed by Roli Books among others. That there is an "authentic movement" in the books business, as Mukherjee calls it, is borne out by the surprisingly good performance of H.M. Seerval's scholarly *Legend and Reality* and Ezekiel's *Collected Poems*. While Seervai's book fetched orders of over 1,000 in its first quarter, the Ezekiel hardback at Rs 225 had a print-run of 2,000, and is doing well. De's *Socialite Evenings* has a claimed print-run of 15,000. More impressively, last year *English August* sold 3,000 copies at a hardback price of about Rs 200. Most writers, like O.V. Vijayan and Chatterjee, in fact claim to be more than pleased with the sales of their books. So do publishers like Davidar, Dayal and Advani.

Of course, Advani laments the fact that writers are yet far from becoming objects of adoration and cult worship like sportsmen and film stars. Given time that too may come about, for literary activities have also received a boost. Book-signing sessions are packed affairs, and poetry and play readings attract audiences. There are those who feel there is also a slot for a magazine on the lines of *The New York Times Review of Books*.

But all is not optimistic. The fear that the bubble may burst is ever at hand. Says Ansari: "Really wonder how long this impetus will last—rising paper costs are making books prohibitive, and one hears there is another hike in the offing." The other fear is the depth of the wellsprings of Indian talent. Most publishers, and Khushwant Singh, feel that first-rate manuscripts, especially literary, will pose a problem in the future. The media coverage that books get is also seen as eccentric and inadequate. Says Dayal: "Bad books get wide coverage, good books get buried, most reviewers are unqualified to review."

These, however, seem to be merely teething problems of the book boom. Growing literacy, burgeoning awareness and increasingly talented writers are bound to iron them out. Indians, it is obvious, can no longer be denied the glory of the written, and the published, word.

—TARUN J. TEJPAL
with SALIL TRIPATHI in Bombay

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A Significant Study

Indira Gandhi's biography is worth a perusal

INDIRA GANDHI: A personal and political biography
by INDER MALHOTRA
Hodder and Stoughton
Price: Rs 375; Pages: 363

BY any yardstick, Indira Gandhi is a fascinating subject for a biography. Born into the modern Indian equivalent of royalty, she had a lonely childhood, with her father totally wrapped up in the freedom struggle when he was not in jail. Her mother was a misfit in the imperious Nehru household and died young. Indira's own marriage was less than successful. Yet here was a woman who started shakily in her prime ministerial innings and went on to rout her opponents in the party. She displayed superb generalship in the Bangladesh war, but later imposed the Emergency on India. She doted on her younger son Sanjay and returned to power after many had written her off, and she died tragically.

Yet Indira was a very private person. There were few persons she trusted entirely and she felt the need to strike up postures as the occasion demanded. Underneath her confident exterior, she suffered from insecurity and a feeling of intellectual inadequacy brought into sharper focus by the towering and wide-ranging mind of her father. The latter she sought to make up by her insistence on meeting "intellectuals" on her trips abroad.

Indira Gandhi's biography has yet to be written for the simple reason that we are too near her often tempestuous times and the process of separating wheat from chaff in her case presents insuperable difficulties. Contradictions abound. Indira Gandhi was an intellectual mediocrity who, after initial bumbling, proved to be a master politician and a worthy successor of Chanakya in the practice of foreign policy.

There are two ways of writing a biography of Indira Gandhi: in the narrative style or conceptually, presenting her in her life and times against the background of Indian history and mores. Inder Malhotra has chosen the first option, underlining it by describing it as a personal and political biography.

There is much to commend the study. Malhotra had a ringside seat during Indira's days of power and ready access to her, before she dispensed with young journalists or political advisers, then known by the pejorative phrase 'kitchen cabinet'.

We are taken through her early days fluently although some of the explanatory details, unavoidable in a book meant for an international readership, are grating on the Indian reader. Later, we are plunged into the drama of her intra-party struggles, ending with the baneful influence of her son Sanjay.

The author tries to be fair to her. He acknowledges her paranoia and sense of insecurity, her constant dissimulation. He talks about her blind spot, Sanjay, and relates her dilatoriness in taking decisions after his untimely death to the grievous hurt she had to live with. But, in a somewhat unnecessary summing up of his assessment, the author writes: "I, for one, believed her though I knew that she was not a stickler for the truth and never hesitated to dissimulate whenever it suited her. Even so, I felt, as did many others, that having been expelled from Parliament for making false statements, among other things, she was unlikely to mislead the House a second time."

Indeed, one often feels that the demands of writing an objective biography often rebel against the author's unbounded admiration for the subject. More than once, he refers to her striking figure and turn-out. She was, of course, a handsome woman and dressed with taste, except on occasions when she wished to make a political point. But to describe her as pretty, as the author chooses to, is to do violence to the word.

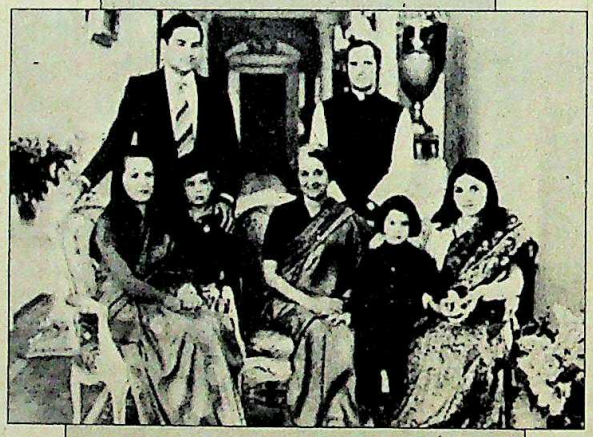
One of the book's most enjoyable aspects are the nuggets of intimate details the author weaves into his narrative, revealing his unerring eye for what is newsworthy. And Malhotra's summing up of the Punjab problem is superb.

Perhaps it is in the nature of the narrative form the author has chosen that we often get the feeling that we are submerged in well-known political details, with the subject of the biography merely bobbing up from time to time. Here, of course, the conceptual form would have been more satisfying, with more attention to an analysis of the significance of the major events shaping her and being shaped by her.

With all that, the book is well worth a perusal. It is an invaluable personal account of a significant period of independent India's history and source material for the definitive biography of Indira Gandhi when it comes to be written.

—S. NIHAL SINGH

Indira with family: private person



EXCERPTS

Indira's marriage took place on March 26th, 1942....Sir Stafford Cripps was greatly amused when, at the dinner table, a nervous Indira pressed him: 'Do have some potato cripps, Sir Stafford.'

❖

There is nothing more to be said about Brahmachari, Dinesh Singh or Mathai. The only question is: what does all that has been said and pieced together amount to? Certainly not a confirmation of a succession of torrid romances on the part of Indira....The utter lack of 'that most wonderful thing in life, having a complete relationship with another human being', of which she had complained, was the price she had to pay for the absolute power she cherished no less.

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SOUTHERN REGION : Hope (India), 8, Vasu Street, Behind Ega Theatre, Madras 600010 (Thermoware), **Biswanath Metal & Alloys,** 272, Mount Road, Madras 600018 (Dinner Sets, Kitchenware).

CONTAD 189

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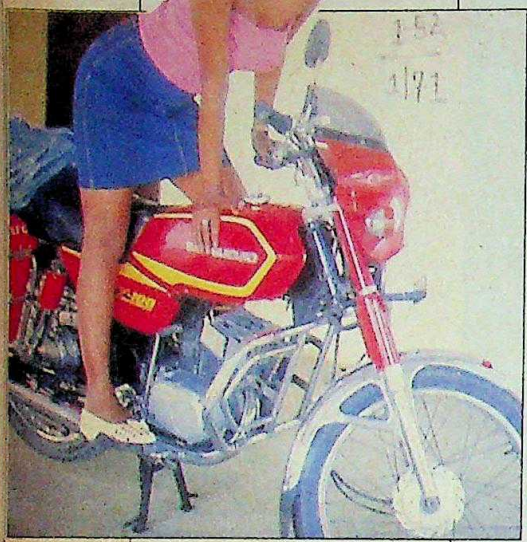


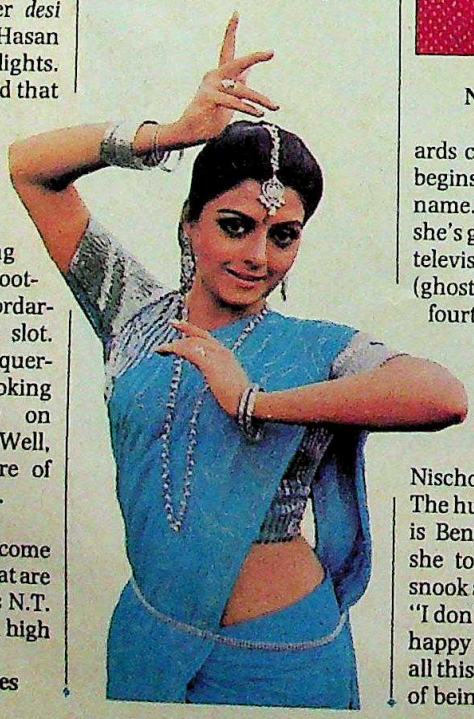
SANJAY SAYANI

Parvati: pop princess

◆ Mehdi Hasan and Parvati Khan at a show together. Sounds fine. Both the names evoke an aura of ghazals. But **Parvati Khan**, 24, is certainly not doing what Hasan is. She is crooning, she is rocking, she is popping. And she has a legion of fans lapping it all up. At a recent joint performance in Lucknow, around one lakh fans clamoured for her *desi* pop, while ghazal king Hasan was relegated to the sidelights. The cassette she released that day, *Dil Diwana Ho Gaya*, has already sold out two editions, and Weston is now releasing the third. The Bombay singer is storming other places too. She's shooting for a pop show on Doordarshan's 9 p.m. Sunday slot. And is confident of conquering the medium. "I am looking for a real *hungama* on television," she exults. Well, that ought to take care of Sunday evening tedium.

◆ The Vishwamitras come easy; it is the Menakas that are hard to find. First it was N.T. Rama Rao conducting a high and low search for his special temptress, finally settling on Meenakshi Seshadhri. Then it was Desari Narayan Rao's turn. In a seeming wink of an eyelid, he picked Mukesh Khanna to play the rishi in his mythological. But again, Menaka proved elusive. Now, the choice has been made. **Bhanupriya** has beaten out the other frontrunner, Sridevi, and is preparing to seduce Khanna. But the sexy siren from the Telugu screen, with about 70 films to her credit, including eight in Hindi, has other ambitions too in mind. Says she: "I want to do an award-winning role. It will give me fulfilment." That must be the rishi rubbing off on her.

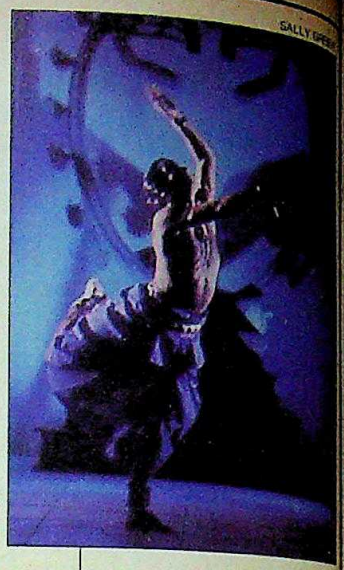
◆ There's magic in his music; the twang of success on his fingers. And at an active 69, he's employing the two to focus on the menace of drugs. But for **Ravi Shankar**, more novel than the theme is the form. The maestro premiered *Ghanashyam*, a musical theatre—a combination of mime, opera and ballet—to high acclaim at London's glamorous South Bank last fortnight. The central character is Ghanashyam, a kathak dancer (played by Durga Lal) who gets addicted to drugs. It's drawing large audiences in the UK and is set to travel to the US and other European countries. Says Shankar: "I am overwhelmed by the response of the people of Britain." Even after four decades of rave accolades?



Bhanupriya: rishi rites

Durga Lal: dancing against drugs

SALLY ERE



◆ It's time the lady was given a break. But then she does have a knack for inviting innuendo. Comes Viv Richards cricketing and the press begins to hum **Neena Gupta**'s name. Now the news that she's going to appear in a new television serial *Bhooth Nath* (ghost-husband) has got fourth estate gossip-mongers going again. Based on the classic by Babu Devakinandan Khatri, the serial features Ashok Kumar, Navin Nischol and Natasha Sinha. The husband who is not there is Benjamin Gilani. Asked if she took the role to cock a snook at the press, Neena said: "I don't hate anyone. I'm just happy being off the press." But all this seems like the best way of being in it.

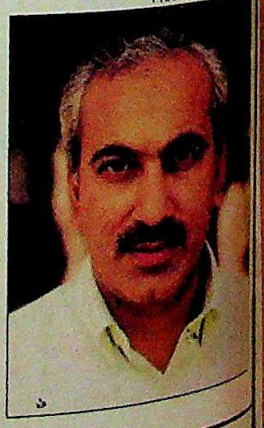
DHANAJAYA

Neena: ghost space

◆ So now it all begins to add up. If he was unabashedly pro-Congress(I), it was simply because that was where he was headed. But **M.J. Akbar**, 38, the dynamic editor of *The Telegraph*, insists it's the central passion of his life—the question of communalism—that has driven him to contest from the Kishanganj Lok Sabha constituency in Bihar. The choice of rival seems to bear this out: pitted against him is Syed Shahabuddin. It's the siege within that has moved to the stage without. Says Akbar: "Just as we watched a paradise called Sri Lanka descend into hell, we could, if we're not careful, see the Shahabuddins and Thackerays drag our country into a swamp of communal hatred." But Akbar is hoping "my pen survives my job". It better, he may just need it.

Akbar: new role

PRAMOD PUSHKARN



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THERE is no experience as educative as travelling around the country during a general election. In that rare moment, one is truly in touch with the soul of India, experiencing the greatness of a democracy suddenly coming alive. Each election, I make it a point to spend a few days in the field to taste the flavour of the campaigning. This time too I came away with the same feeling of exhilaration as in the past.

It is a time when the normal equations are turned inside out. It is a time when villagers abuse the most powerful in the land without fear; it is a time when political giants are reduced to begging for a new lease of life from the poorest of the land. It is a moment, however fleeting, for the ordinary citizen to play God. It is when I watch the bedraggled Indian voter preparing to cast his vote that I get the true feeling of Mèra Bharat Mahan, *that laudable sentiment which has been so trivialised by crass commercialism.*

Indian elections must rank as one of the greatest shows on earth. The catchy songs, the ingenious slogans, the high-tech video raths, the imaginative graffiti and scores of other new gimmicks all add up to make India not only the world's largest democracy but also the most boisterous one. To capture all this colour, it was decided to devote the entire magazine to the elections. For this special issue, a team of 18 correspondents and editors tracked campaigning over 30,000 km while seven photographers shot a total of 10,000 frames. Along with drawing a picture from the heat and dust of the election, INDIA TODAY *took a look at some hard figures with its regular election forecast put together by psephology partners, Prannoy Roy and* MARG, *who have successfully forecast the previous two general elections. As campaigning started late this time, it was felt appropriate to conduct the opinion poll at a later date; this has resulted in the issue being delayed by a few days.*

ELECTIONS are a time when politicians are most accessible to the press. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the prime minister whose praetorian guard has kept the independent media removed from his campaign trail. Requests to travel with him, to judge first-hand the appeal of a man who puts himself up to lead the country once again, have been turned down. There has been a tendency among those who rule to underestimate the power of the printed word. The cynicism which exists in urban India about the press has not yet percolated down to the masses, who illiterate though they may be, are not ignorant. There is always someone to tell them what's said in the papers. Ask any villager how he knows about corruption and there is a stock answer: it was printed in the papers. This election will decide many important issues and one among them will be whether the pen is mightier than Doordarshan, that abomination of disinformation, which has been inflicted on the Indian people.

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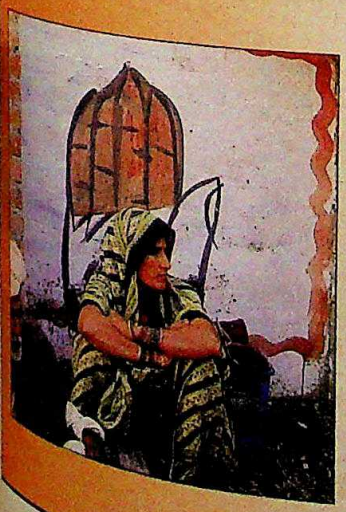

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Cover photographs by RAGHU RAI

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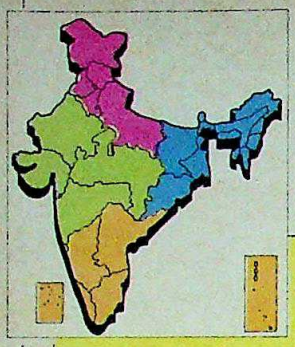

A Vote for Change

The results of the poll indicate that the Congress(I) will fall well below the required majority, and there is a clear possibility of a hung Parliament.

CONGRESS(I) STRENGTH IN LOK SABHA

	126 Seats THE NORTH	132 Seats THE SOUTH	128 Seats THE EAST	143 Seats THE WEST	Total Congress(I) Seats	Total Lok Sabha Seats	% of Seats
1989 FORECAST	28	80	24	63	195	529*	36.9
1984	114	71	96	134	415	542	76.6
1980	80	95	60	118	353	527	66.98
1977	3	94	23	34	154	542	28.41

*Excluding Assam (14 seats) where elections are not being held.

Tables by RAJEEV MADAN

INDIA TODAY *commissioned* MARG *(Marketing and Research Group) to conduct a poll in 37 Lok Sabha constituencies. The constituencies were selected by well-known psephologist Prannoy Roy to ensure that they accurately reflect the national mood in the country's various swing zones. This was done by taking into account the electoral swings in the past.*

More than 200 MARG *interviewers covered 250 locations and interviewed 10,710 voters between November 12 and 16. Of these, 8,224 (77 per cent) were rural voters. The respondents were asked which party they would vote for if an election were held tomorrow. They were given ballot papers which listed the names of the major parties contesting in that particular constituency. The party symbols were given alongside. The electors were asked to mark their choice and place the ballot paper in a portable ballot box (7.2 per cent of the respondents refused to mark the ballot paper, while 5.4 per cent indicated no preference). This exercise was managed by Jyoti Singh and Sumita Venkatraman of* MARG.

The results of the MARG *poll were fed into a computer by Prannoy Roy. The computer calculated the current swing in each of the 37 constituencies. These swings were then projected onto each constituency in the respective swing zones to calculate the number of seats likely to be won by the ruling party. In this exercise, research assistance was provided by Namrata Harish.*

The poll indicated a considerable amount of 'churn' still in existence in various states which may alter the final outcome. The poll findings have been reported by Prannoy Roy and MARG.

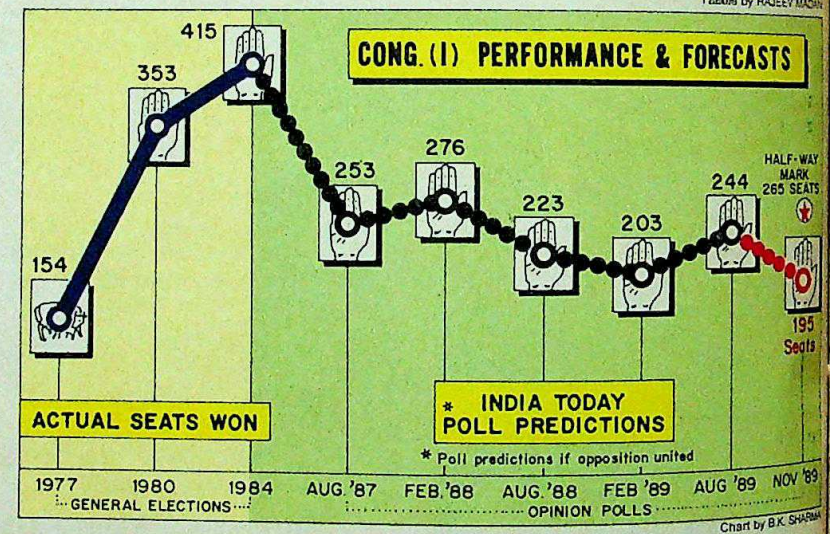

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

IF the general elections had been held between November 12 and 16, when the opinion poll was conducted, the strength of the Congress(I) in the Lok Sabha would have been slashed by more than half—from 415 seats to about 195—well below the 265 needed for a majority. The poll was a snapshot taken at a time of great flux in voting intentions. With around 200 seats, the Congress(I) would remain the largest single party but the combined tally of the National Front could be about the same. Based on these figures, a hung Parliament seems to be an inevitable outcome with the next government needing the support of either the BJP or the CPI-M (or both) to form a government. There is, of course, another possible scenario—the engineering of large-scale defections.

A small percentage swing in votes before polling day will be crucial. Even a one per cent swing can affect 15 to 20 seats.

Out of the ruling party's loss of 220 seats in the INDIA TODAY-MARG poll, the loss of as many as 160 seats would be because of the 8 to 9 per cent swing away from the ruling party. But the other 60-odd seats have been garnered as a 'bonus' by the Opposition as the result

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KEY FACTORS AFFECTING THE ELECTION

FOR CONGRESS(I) — **FOR OPPOSITION**

CORRUPTION: This has always been an issue, but so far has not affected voting decisions. Now, for the first time, it is a voting issue as

V.P. Singh has succeeded in projecting one side as more capable of controlling corruption.

OPPOSITION UNITY: The biggest factor that may still result in a late swing against the Opposition come polling day is

that around two-thirds of the electorate is strongly convinced that if the Opposition does form a government, it would collapse sooner or later.

PANCHAYATI RAJ: The Panchayati Raj issue is a winner for the Congress-I (over 65 per cent are in favour of the bill).

However, a fair proportion of the rural voters are still unaware of the scheme and because of the limited time available, the Congress(I) has been unable to exploit it to the full.

PRICES: The recent increase in prices of essential commodities has contributed to the overall negative mood in the electorate towards the Congress(I). However, the Opposi-

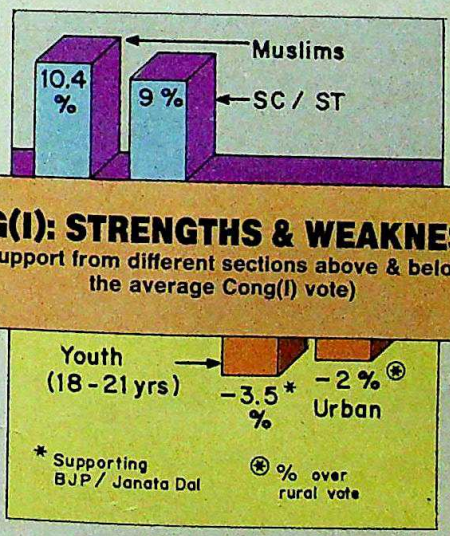
tion has not been able to convince the voter that it can handle the problem any better than the ruling party.

COMMUNALISM: It is being most vigorously—though at times surreptitiously—exploited by all parties. This is the

issue that is causing the greatest 'churn' and could easily result in a last-minute change in voter preference.

CONG(I): STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

(Support from different sections above & below the average Cong(I) vote)



The Congress(I) would lose 160 seats due to the 8 to 9 per cent swing away from it; the Opposition would garner another 60 for being united.

representing a united front (the overall index of opposition unity (IOU) is likely to be around 85 per cent versus 74 per cent in 1984 and the all-time high of 90 per cent in 1971. The benefits of unity are most prominent in the north—where disunity was the greatest in 1984. In the south, where the Opposition was already united in 1984, it is unlikely to make gains on this account. If anything, there is less opposition unity in the south this time with many multi-cornered fights in Karnataka.

An analysis of the last five general elections shows that the Congress has benefited greatly from opposition disunity. Had the Opposition been united to the same level as in 1977 (an IOU level of 70), the Congress would have lost the 1977 and the 1980 general elections. In 1977, for instance, the Congress would have won just 118 seats if the Opposition had been united—as opposed to the 283 it won. Had the Opposition been united the Congress would have been out of power for 11 out of the last 22 years.

The sharp slump in the Congress(I)'s popularity is not spread evenly. It seems to be heading for substantial gains in Andhra Pradesh and is unlikely to lose many seats elsewhere in the south.

But it is in the 'Hindi belt', which the Congress(I) swept in 1984, that it is likely to face major reverses. In Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh the prospects for the Congress(I) are bleak. It is from these states that the BJP is likely to be resurrected in the next Lok Sabha.

In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh too, there is likely to be a sharp drop in support for the Congress(I). The increase in the strength of the Opposition in the Hindi belt can perhaps be explained by the emergence—for the first time since Independence—of an Opposition leader from the northern belt (V.P. Singh) who is seen as an alternative prime minister.

The key issue on which the Congress(I) has lost support is corruption. While corruption has always been an important factor in the voters' mind, it has so far not been an issue affecting their voting behaviour; all parties have been regarded as equally corrupt. This time, the voter clearly sees one side—and particularly one leader, V.P. Singh—as more capable of controlling corruption.

As for the Opposition, the one factor that will haunt their prospects right up to polling day is the widespread belief that if they were to form a government, it would eventually collapse. This belief could result in floating or undecided voters veering to the Congress(I) on election day. Significantly, if even 1 per cent of the votes switch before polling day, about 15 to 20 seats are likely to change hands. A change in voting preferences between this poll and election day, as well as inherent sampling errors, could quite easily be around 3 per cent. This would alter the result by 45 to 60 seats in either direction and could even produce a majority government.

Surprisingly, and despite the November 9 developments in Ayodhya, a much greater proportion of Muslims (10.4 per cent more than the average Congress(I) vote) support the ruling party. This is also true of the Congress(I) vote bank among the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, among whom support for the Congress(I) is 9 per cent above the average. However, the newly enfranchised voters (18-21 year-olds) have not gravitated to the Congress(I) in such large numbers. In this group, the BJP and the Janata Dal have a clear advantage (3.5 per cent above their average support). In addition, this time the Congress(I) has lost its traditional advantage among women. The support for the Opposition is 2 per cent higher in the urban areas than in the rural areas.

The Indian electorate is voting for change. The poll suggests that over 60 per

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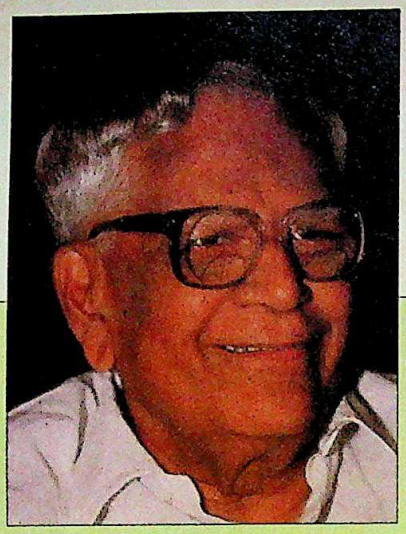
cent of the electorate wants a change. Rajiv has obviously miscalculated in renominating 80 per cent of sitting MPs, signalling continuity when the mood is for change. The 8 to 9 per cent of the voters who have moved away from the ruling party are evidently switching from party to party in search of an effective, and acceptable, alternative. With each election, the increasing volatility of the Indian voter is a warning to any new government—that it will be assessed more critically than ever before.

If this poll is a good indicator of the final outcome, it is not clear who will form the next government. Decisive swings usually produce decisive results and clear majorities. This time, however, it is likely to produce weeks of political and constitutional uncertainty.



"According to the Constitution, a prime minister has to command the support of the Lok Sabha and not that of the party."
—President R. Venkataraman to INDIA TODAY after his selection as the presidential candidate in July 1987.

THE PRESIDENT

Crucial Role

FOR 75-year-old Ramaswamy Venkataraman the hour of reckoning may well be at hand. This fortnight, his actions are likely to decide the future course of Indian politics. As the prospects of a hung Parliament (where no party or group has a clear majority) increased last fortnight, all eyes were on Rashtrapati Bhawan. The last time it had been in such limelight was in July 1979 after President Sanjeeva Reddy's controversial decision to appoint Charan Singh prime minister. Charan Singh eventually became the first prime minister to quit office without facing Parliament even once.

Once again much will rest on the discretion of the President. This is because the Constitution is unclear about the powers of the country's first citizen. All it says is that the President will invite the leader who commands majority support in the Lok Sabha to form the Government.

This question has assumed significance because for the first time the alternative to the Congress(I) is not any single party, as for example in 1977, but the five-party National Front comprising the Janata Dal, Telugu Desam, DMK, AGP, and the Congress(S). In case both the Congress(I) and the National Front fail to get a majority, the President will be caught in a bind. This looks likely for the National Front is contesting only 347 seats, with the Janata Dal contesting 238. Those who could tilt the scales in a close result are the BJP (contesting 195) and the CPI-M (contesting 66). Large-scale defections are unlikely because of the anti-defection law, which prohibits party-hopping unless one-third of the party, or more, switches.

The scenarios that could emerge:

Scenario One: The National Front emerges as the single largest group and the Janata Dal gets more seats than the Congress(I). Then the President has no choice but to call the leader of the National Front or the Janata Dal to form the Government.

Scenario Two: The Congress(I) does not get absolute majority, but emerges as the single largest party, geting more seats than the Janata Dal but less than the National Front. This can pose a tricky problem as there are conflicting precedents. The President can still invite the leader of the Congress(I) to form the Government. It was done by Sanjeeva Reddy in 1979 when he called Y.B. Chavan, leader of the second largest party, after the collapse of the Janata Party majority. In the case of Haryana, Governor G.D. Tapase chose to invite Bhajan Lal, leader of the Congress(I) Legislature Party, to form the Government because the Congress(I) won 36 seats in the house of 90 whereas the Lok Dal had 31. He ignored the claim of the Lok Dal-BJP front, which had not only fought the election together but also won one seat more than the Congress(I). Tapase refused to recognise the Lok Dal-BJP combine as one political group. But political fronts have been recognised as one group too. For example, in Karnataka in the 1983 assembly elections, the Congress(I) won 81 seats emerging as the single largest party. But it was the Janata Party-Kranti Ranga group, with 95 of the 224 seats, which was invited to form the Government. The Janata Party's own tally was only 63.

Scenario Three: If very few seats separate the Front and the Congress(I)—say, National Front 220 and Congress(I) 210—then the President's discretion will again come into play. He will have to decide which party is in a position to provide a stable government. It is likely he may receive representations from the BJP (say with 50 seats) that it would support the Janata Dal taking the Front's total to 270, and from the CPI(M) and others (with 60 members or so) that they would support the Congress(I). It was such a situation, presenting several options, that faced Sanjeeva Reddy in 1979, with the Congress party first supporting Charan Singh, then withdrawing the support, and later some MPs pledging support to Jagjivan Ram.

So Venkataraman has his work cut out for him. To his credit, so far no controversy has marred his track record. He is a stickler for rules and keeps his options close to his chest. And surely, he has been thinking about all these likely scenarios. Some of them came up for discussion during his recent meeting with BJP President L.K. Advani. The BJP chief did some groundwork for a possible opposition coalition by quoting to the President the examples of the front governments in West Bengal and Kerala. Earlier Union ministers P. Chidambaram and P. Shiv Shanker had also met the President and sought to extract his opinion on how he would deal with a situation where no party has a majority. So far the President has been giving each group a patient hearing. But soon he may be called upon to decide who rules India and when he does that he will have the burden not just of being fair but also of being seen to be fair.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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POLITICAL VACUUM

Political parties are becoming increasingly irrelevant ("The Promise That Failed", November 15). Parties are supposed to be a collection of individuals with a common ideology and conviction. But our political parties have become platforms for petty-minded people working for personal gain. What India needs today is a leader with the vision and charisma of Nehru and the conviction and dedication of the Mahatma.

Bangalore — BALACHANDRA DESHPANDE

FINE ANALYSIS

■ The analysis of the poll prospects and the issues involved in the coming general elections was superb ("Clear choices", November 15). Of particular importance was the observation: "No matter what the campaign rhetoric and ad campaigns, unless they match reality on the ground, the Indian voter has repeatedly cast his lot against corruption, against the mismanagement of his mandate, for stability, and does not hesitate to take a chance on a new face." It is clear that the next elections will determine the future of the country.

Delhi — V. SAGAR

■ In the last five years, the nation has witnessed the reduction of Parliament to a state that reminds one of the famous lines from *Julius Caesar*: "O, what a fall was there my countrymen; then I, and you and all of us fell down." The voters have to ensure that such a situation does not arise again.

Sonepat — K. GOPAKUMAR MENON

■ Communal elements are on the rampage and caste and religion will certainly play a vital role in these elections, thereby weakening the secular tenets of our country further.

Delhi — PUNAM RIJHWANI

COMMUNAL CAULDRON

It is evident from your report on communalism ("Dangerous Dimensions", October 31) that if the Centre does not stop backing the minorities, the country will become another Lebanon.

Bhopal — RAJEEV AGARKAR

■ On the one hand, the Indian Constitution guarantees secularism. On the other, the Government gives privileges to certain groups on the basis of religion or caste. I fail to see the logic in it.

Hazaribag — AJAY KUMAR UPADHYAY

■ The term secularism, like socialism, has lost its original meaning in our country because of the doublespeak our politicians indulge in.

Kodaikanal — M.K. SUBRAMANIAM

■ It is unfortunate that in a communally-sensitive country such as ours, trouble-makers have created an atmosphere of hatred and rivalry over the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue. It is time fundamentalist forces were thwarted. Peace and goodwill must reign supreme.

Meerut — SHASHANK SHEKHAR

■ Though your article attacked the BJP-RSS-VHP for their communal postures, Nayab Imam, Syed Shahabuddin, Haji Mastan and Sulaiman Sait have escaped the sharp edge of your sword. And you have distorted the issue by making communal violence out to be a 'majority' phenomenon.

New Delhi — APOORV PANDEY

■ It seems to have become the fashion to club anything connected with Hindu causes as communal and to pamper the minorities even when they indulge in anti-national activities.

Srirangam — L. NARASIMHAMURTHY

■ The analysis of the escalating communal violence came at the appropriate moment. It is time political parties realised the grave consequences of appeasing communities with the aim of getting votes. They should be aware of the repercussions of their attitude. Only then can they prevent history from repeating itself.

Chandigarh — DEEPIKA GURDEV

APOSTLE OF PEACE

By selecting the Dalai Lama for this year's Nobel Peace Prize ("Politics of Peace", October 31), the Nobel committee has honoured him as an embodiment of dedication and tolerance. With the Dalai Lama himself having been forced to live in exile in India, the task of keeping the focus on the suffering of six million Tibetans has been daunting. But with quiet dignity and perseverance, he has enlisted world sympathy and support.

Kurnool — P. SIVA RAM PRASAD

■ The Dalai Lama has been working tirelessly for a peaceful solution of Tibet. The award has aroused fresh hopes for him and his people.

Trivandrum — A. JACOB SAHAYAM

■ The Dalai Lama's speeches and writings show his deep concern for bringing about and consolidating world peace and for shaping "the whole world into one family, a family which doesn't have internal frictions".

Faridabad — B.N. KOHLI

■ The Dalai Lama has followed the path of *ahimsa* shown by Buddha and Gandhiji.

Bangalore — C.R. NAIDU

TOTAL PACKAGE

In your report ("New Look", October 15), it has been mentioned that Karishma Advertising is an agency that deals in recruitment ads. Karishma Advertising creates and executes advertising and promotion plans on a national scale for major advertisers. Recruitment advertisements happen to be a very small part of the total package we offer our clients.

Bombay — NOSHIR DESAI
general manager, Karishma Advertising Ltd.

DAMAGING DISCLOSURES

Now that N. Ram has had a showdown with G. Kasturi, ("Controversy and Cover-up", October 31), Ram should investigate who exerted pressure on the editor to stop publication of the remaining part of the Bofors report in *The Hindu*, which later appeared in certain dailies.

Bangalore — K.A. KALPANA

■ Continuing exposes by Ram on the Bofors Howitzer deal have shown his dedication to his profession.

London — S. NADARAJAH

■ The controversy about the Howitzer deal has cast serious aspersions on the Rajiv Government. With elections round the corner, this is going to be used extensively by the Opposition during its campaign.

Rohtak — RAKESH BHARADWAJ

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DELAY DRAMA

☐ AFTER the well-publicised drama over V.P. Singh's delayed flight, Indian Airlines passengers are a jittery lot these days. Especially when they spot an opposition leader waiting to catch the same flight. So, it was hardly surprising that passengers at the Delhi airport, who had already boarded a Bombay-bound flight, suspected that the presence of BJP President L.K. Advani had something to do with the announcement that clearance for take-off had not been given.

When the delay stretched to over an hour, the agitated passengers approached Advani and requested him to personally ask the pilot what the problem was. An amused Advani reached the cockpit and was told that the delay was not because of him, but because of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Rajiv was scheduled to take off on an election tour, and all flights had been put on hold till he left. That enraged the passengers further. It is fortunate that the former Indian Airlines pilot wasn't around to hear the reactions when the plane finally took off; a cheer broke out and a group of them shouted in chorus: "The PM is finally off to Italy."

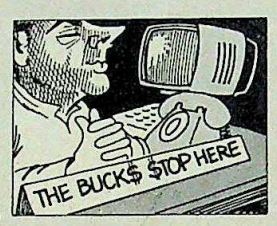
HIGH-VOLTAGE RHETORIC

☐ IN the heat of electioneering, Haryana's villagers seem to have little use for logic, which allows Devi Lal to get away with the most absurd of statements.

At one meeting in rural Haryana, the chief minister was waxing eloquent on a locally emotive issue—supply of water for irrigation to farmers. Striking a dramatic pose, he declared with a straight face: "This government at the Centre is so corrupt that even the water which you get in your fields, is supplied after electricity has been taken out of it." He added: "When I acquire power at the Centre, I will make sure that you get 'electrified' water supply. And then see, the crop yield will double." The grizzled farmers nodded wisely.

POLL TALK

Plaque on the US President's desk:
The buck stops here.
Plaque on Rajiv Gandhi's desk:
The bucks stop here.



Joke doing the rounds in Bangalore

- The situation is so negative *yaar*. Almost everything in the country is negative *yaar*.

Congress(I)'s publicity convener, VISHWAJIT PRITHVIJIT SINGH, on why his party's election propaganda is so negative

- I'm fighting against feudal lordship in Amethi and slum leadership in Delhi.

KANSHI RAM, leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party

- It is a black zero with a spot in the centre.

RAJIV GANDHI on the Janata Dal election symbol

- We have noted that he, Rajmohan Gandhi, is contesting from Amethi.

ANAND SHARMA, official spokesman of the Congress(I), at a briefing

A HILARIOUS COINCIDENCE

☐ THE daily press briefings by the ruling party's official spokesman, Anand Sharma, are the hottest act in town. However, the fact that Sharma is new to the role is only too apparent. The result: Sharma's embarrassment over having to amend his statements on the Bofors revelations is often compounded by other *faux pas*, often inadvertent but telling enough.

One example: after being quizzed by journalists over constituency number 420 in the party list, a puzzled Sharma started going through the list. Even he found it difficult to suppress a grin when he came to the name of the candidate—constituency number 420 is the constituency of Z.R. Ansari, Union minister for environment, who is currently in the news for allegedly molesting a girl in his office. The coincidence was striking—and all Sharma could manage was a weak defence: "Don't read too much into coincidences."

GROUNDED AMBITIONS

☐ ELECTION Commission rules can be a pain. Two political stalwarts who will testify to that are Home Minister Buta Singh and Rajasthan Chief Minister Shiv Charan Mathur. Originally, Vayudoot was meant to add Sirohi to its map—to provide convenient access to two key constituencies: Singh's Jalore and Mathur's Bhilwara.

The airstrip was hurriedly readied for inauguration in December. But Rajiv's call for an early poll nipped the flight

plan in the bud. Election Commission rules are that no politician can inaugurate airports once elections are announced. Mathur and Singh now have to travel at least 200 km along dusty tracks to reach their constituencies.

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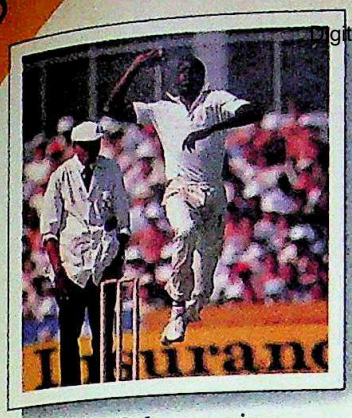
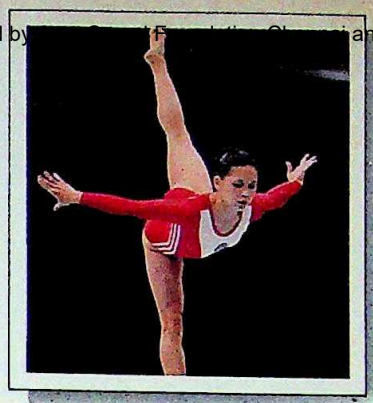
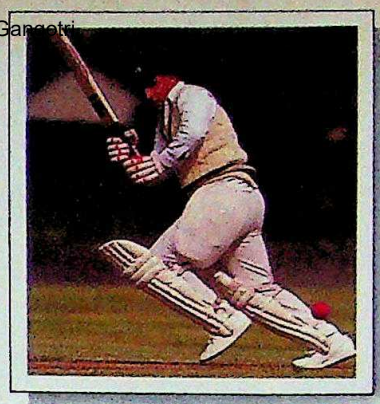


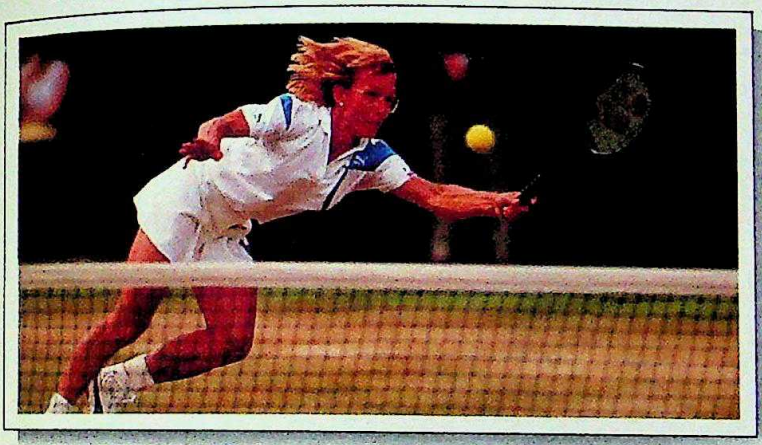
Unbridled aggression...



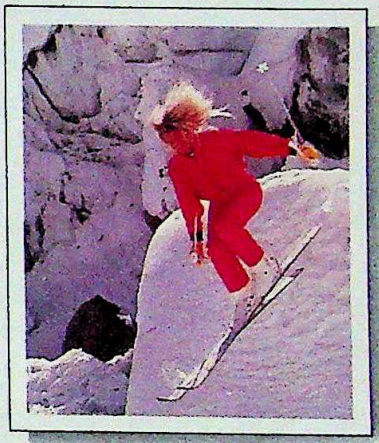
Exquisite grace...



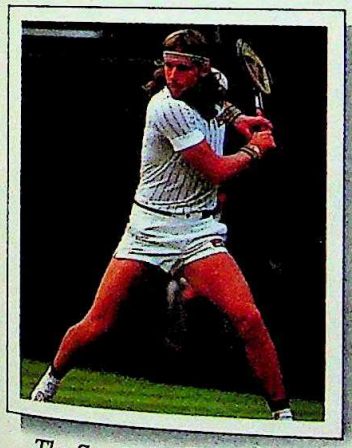
Delicate touch...



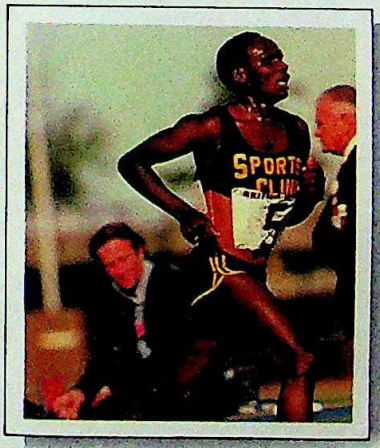
Sheer power...



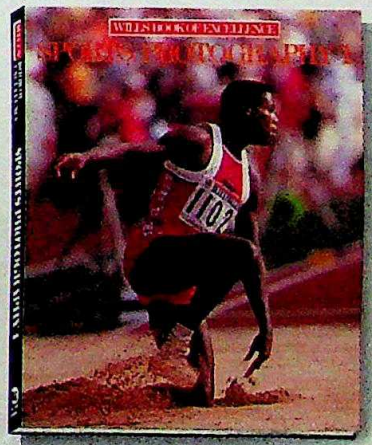
The speed of skiing...



The Swedish revolution...



The African antelopes...



WILLS BOOK OF EXCELLENCE

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Magic lenses recapture the milestones and legends of sport

Relive sports' greatest moments. Captured by the world's top photographers. Pictorial gems from Patrick Eagar, Sports Illustrated and others. Over 200 captivating photographs in colour and black & white. Any sports collection is incomplete without it.

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— *Carl Lewis*

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WILLS

Promoting excellence in sport

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When IFFCO needed...

... to set up a massive, Rs. 665 crore-gas based fertilizer plant...

... to produce 1350 MTD of Ammonia & 1220 MTD of Urea, using Snamprogetti & Halder Topsoe technology...

... they required a state-of-the-art Distributed Process Control system, that had proven itself in Indian conditions...

... that could optimize plant efficiency, minimize energy consumption and have an on-line training simulator...

... to achieve over 100% capacity utilization in the very first year of operation...

...all to save over 100 million need for fert

TAYLOR·UNEQUALLED EXPERIENCE

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When IFFCO required process control for one of India's largest fertilizer plants, they banked on the resources of Taylor India, for two reasons—proven expertise and unequalled experience.

Expertise—to successfully adapt the latest international technology, to the most trying Indian conditions. Using technology that stems out of its association with Combustion Engineering, USA (one of the world leaders in Process Control.)

And Experience—of 25 successful years in the Indian Process Control industry, right from its inception. Satisfying every need. Every demand. Which is why, Taylor offers the most comprehensive range of 4,500 products in Pneumatic, Analog, Electronic and Digital Microprocessor based systems.

Thus, whatever your process control need, Taylor India can help design it, equip it, build it, operate it and maintain it at peak efficiency.

Perhaps that's why, Taylor's clients include KRIBHCO, SPIC, IndoGulf Fertilizers, GSFC, ICI, GNFC, Nagarjuna Fertilizers and of course IFFCO! In fact over the past 25 years nearly all fertilizer companies in the country have featured in Taylor's exhaustive client list. Maybe that's why, when it comes to process control, the Indian industry banks on the expertise and experience of only one name...Taylor.

...all to satisfy over 100 million farmers' need for fertilizers...

...Only Taylor had 25 years of trusted expertise to take on the task.

PROCESS CONTROL

TAYLOR INDIA

WE MAKE INDUSTRY HAPPEN

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Living with a velvet touch

Luxurious living that's as smooth as velvet.
Rooms lined with velvet. Lined with the luxury of Velvet Touch, the unique wall finish that glows with the lustre and delicate sheen of the perfect pearl. In 23 elegant shades plus 6 soft whites with just a hint of colour to give you the perfect finishing touch that your lifestyle demands. The Velvet Touch!

ICI Dulux

Velvet Touch

For those who have everything, something more.

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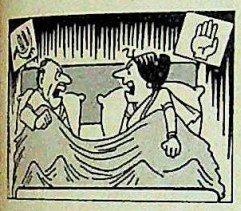
POLL WOES

☐ BEHIND every successful man there is a woman. Or so it is said. But Narayan Choubey, CPI leader from West Bengal, would probably beg to disagree. Choubey has retained the Midnapore seat since 1980 but was denied the ticket this time because his wife Gauri had defected to the Congress(I) and had been given a ticket. Politically, he has to campaign against his wife. But her electoral loss will add to his woes; Gauri quit her government job for politics, depriving the five-member family of their regular income.



RESTRAINED ADVERTISING

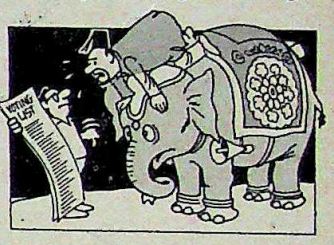
☐ IN contrast to the secrecy that had shrouded the Congress(I)'s rather sensational advertising campaign, the National Front went about its media publicity without too much fuss and fanfare.

Last fortnight, at its New Delhi headquarters, as visitors, including journalists, kept dropping in unchecked, members of the front's co-ordinating committee were being shown a series of artworks by a local advertising agency.

To portray rising violence, the agency had a poster splattered with blood, with places like Indore, Badaun and Bhagalpur marked on it. The Telugu Desam's P. Upendra, a committee member, noticing that Sri Lanka was mentioned, told the agency executives: "Knock that out. We have enough internal violence. Why do you want to add foreign violence too?" The members also objected to using the word *loot-maar* as the headline of the main poster. Their suggestion: make it more subtle. The result: the National Front's advertising campaign is a portrait of restraint compared to the ruling party's.

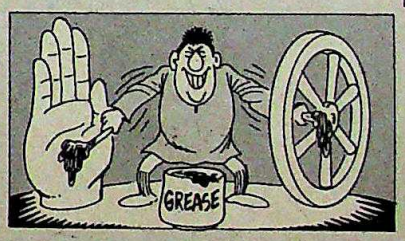
ROYAL REBUFF

☐ THE higher you are, the harder the fall. That was the rude message awaiting Mahmood Pardiwala when he lumbered up to file his nomination papers in Surat. Pardiwala had planned to arrive at the nomination centre in regal style, seated on a gaily-caparisoned elephant and accompanied by cheering



supporters. But when the royal procession reached the collector's office, Pardiwala faced an elephantine problem; his name didn't figure on the voters' list. Tusk, tusk.

POLL TALK



- What's common to the symbols of the Congress(I) and Janata Dal? Both need to be greased to get them working.

Election joke in Bombay

- *"Tum meri Dilli ki seeti baja do, main yahan se Mathura ki seeti bajwa doonga"* (If you give me a green signal to Parliament, I will give a green signal to a train to Mathura).

RAJESH PILOT, surface transport minister, to the electorate of Bharatpur

- *Ek jalebi, do samosa; Jakhar tera kya bharosa.*

Opposition slogan in Sikar

LACK OF RESOURCES

☐ SWITCHING political horses for electoral gain is all very well. But only if one has mastered the art. Former Andhra Pradesh Assembly Speaker G. Narayan Rao, who quit the Telugu Desam last month, obviously hasn't.

When he sought a Congress(I) ticket to fight from his electoral citadel—the Maharajgunj constituency—his chief lobbyist, Industry Minister J. Vengal Rao, came to his aid. Narayan Rao was awarded the ticket. But that's when his troubles began. As Speaker of the Andhra Pradesh Assembly, he had been responsible for slinging a number of Pradesh Youth Congress(I) members in jail when they had stormed the Assembly in protest against anti-Rajiv remarks.

High command or no high command, the youth leaders were in no mood to forgive or forget. Narayan Rao returned to Hyderabad with the party ticket in his pocket only to face a hunger strike by crowds of Youth Congress workers demanding the withdrawal of his nomination.

To add to his woes, state Youth Congress(I) President P. Sudhir Kumar also has a powerful lobbyist at the Centre—his father, Human Resource Minister P. Shiv Shanker. Narayan Rao may have set the record for the shortest nomination period; his ticket was withdrawn and given to a little known city Corporator, D. Mukesh, instead. Moral of the story: human resources count for more than industry.

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HOW TO KEEP SMILING WITH YOUR FEET UP.

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Premium per annum	Hospitalisation	Domiciliary Hospitalisation
Rs	Rs	Rs
200	10,500	3,100
250	17,600	—
350	25,500	—
600*	37,750	5,250
840*	52,750	7,400
1300*	82,500	11,500

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Digital EPABXs manufactured with technical assistance from Oki of Japan, the world leaders in the fields of telecommunication and information processing.

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A future that's going to be exciting. Because Tata Telecom is committed to take you there.

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RED ART

☐ IF the voting age had been lowered to include schoolchildren, the CPI(M) would almost certainly have lost the elections in Calcutta. For several months, the city has been enthusiastically involved in a 'Cleaner Calcutta' campaign. The most enthusiastic have been schoolchildren. The students of some public schools sacrificed their Puja holidays to painstakingly draw artistic murals on the boundary walls of their schools. But by the time classes reopened, they were in for a rude shock; elections had been announced and CPI(M) workers had plastered the walls with election graffiti. For the disgusted students, it has been an educational experience—in the art of politics.

CLEAN KARANTH

☐ A new chapter was added to electoral history by Dhareshwar, an independent candidate for the Karwar Lok Sabha constituency in Karnataka. He asked the returning officer to disqualify another independent candidate, Kannada litterateur Dr Shivarama Karanth. Reason: Karanth has penned an autobiography titled *The Ten Faces of a Mad Mind*. Dhareshwar argued that this proved the author was a self-confessed lunatic. His plea was dismissed as frivolous.

POLL TALK

● *If a movie were made on Rajiv, what would it be titled?*
Gone with the Win. *Joke in Delhi Press Club*

● *Devi Lal jab lift seh chhat par aata hai toh aisa lagta hai ki apne kabar seh nikal kar phir kabar mein ja raha hoh* (When Devi Lal emerges on his lift, it seems he is as if emerging from his grave and returning to it). *BHAJAN LAL*

● *They now talk of Ram Rajya after running Dhan Rajya (rule of money) for five years.*
V.P. SINGH in election speech

● I have no personal ill-will towards Rajiv Gandhi, only a great objection to his deeds.
RAJMOHAN GANDHI

● *Ek do teen, char panch che saat aath*
nau das gyara, bara tera,
too hai mere pyare vatan ki bahaar,
aa jaa Congress(I) sarkar.
Congress(I) campaign song set to the tune of Ek Do Teen

● Earlier it was the great Mahatma Gandhi and now there is Rajiv Gandhi. Sardar Patel has been replaced by Sardar Buta. Earlier there was Maulana Azad and now they have Ghulam Nabi Azad. Lala Lajpat Rai, poor chap, has been replaced by Lala Kalpnath Rai. *DEVI LAL*

● I am the wheel of time, all consuming time, out to destroy the Congress(I) in Orissa. The all powerful *kaal chakra* will kill the corrupt Congress(I) Government. *BIJU PATNAIK*

● *Lok-shakti ki yahi pukar, Rajiv Gandhi phir ek baar.* *Congress(I) slogan*

GIANT JELLY

☐ PROSPECTIVE giant-killers can be reduced to nervous wrecks when confronted with the giant in question. One example: Sreepathi Rajeswar, Telugu Desam candidate in Sanathnagar, Hyderabad. Rajeswar was a minister in the state Government. Yet, while filling his nomination form, he was reduced to quivering jelly, making mistakes even a political tyro would have avoided. The reason: right behind him was his electoral rival, APCC(I) President Dr M. Chenna Reddy. Admitted Rajeswar somewhat sheepishly: "Doctor saheb's presence made me feel nervous."

A STAR TURN

☐ AS film plots go, this one must rank as a classic. The Gujarat film industry is in financial doldrums. Enter film actress Snehlata. She announces that she has filed her papers as an independent from Saurashtra's Surendranagar and Bhavnagar constituencies.

Congress(I) leaders panic because Snehlata is almost a goddess in rural Saurashtra. They plead with her to withdraw. Snehlata obliges on one condition: a commitment to tackle the problems of the Gujarati film industry. That is called star presence-of-mind.

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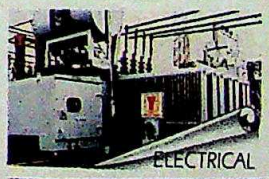
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Is your her
an Edmund Hillary, a Mithu
a Jane Fond

HERO HAWK

The Racer's Edge!

If you have the drive and fire to win, here's the fastest racer for you. With the speed and swiftness of a Hawk. The power of imported falcon gears — in single, 5 or 10 speeds.

And the body of a top-class athlete for sure victory!

HERO Ranger

The lure of adventure!

If you dare to go where no other bike has been before, India's only all-terrain bike is for you. Equipped with balloon tyres, to smoothen the roughest terrain.

A straight handlebar for perfect balance against the fury of the wind. Die-cast brakes to stop you on the steepest incline...

Go discover places!

HERO HANSA

Pure cycling pleasure!

For fun lovers, there's Hero Hansa — light, breezy, romantic! A real good-looker!

This star performer offers you the sheer comfort of a deluxe saddle. A well-designed chain cover. And a choice of exciting colours.

Now go for the fun that cycling was meant to be.

HERO HANSA (Ladies' bike)

She's a winner!

She's fleet-footed and graceful. Lightweight yet sturdy. She's the winning champion who's India's pride.

The Hero Hansa offers you the sheer luxury of soft finger grips. A deluxe saddle.

And effortless performance, no matter what the track!

Hero gives you the largest range of cycles in India including the Hero Jet and Hero Royal — two of India's toughest bikes. In our range of bikes, each one is a hero. To find out more about our range, contact your nearest dealer for a free catalogue. And just in case you want to gift a friend a Hero, remember Hero offers cycles in special presentation packages.

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Carl Lewis, Chakraborty, a Shiny Abraham, a Superman?

ANSA (Ladies' bike)

ed and
ight yet sturdy
champion
e.
offers you the
t finger grips.

erformance, no
track!

HERO FITKIT

Oh what a body!

She's fit, active and shapely. And she'll show you the keep-fit way. With no diet restrictions. Because Hero Fitkit (Hero's exercise bike) offers you 10 muscles to work on, with a free-pedalling wheel. A height-adjustable seat and handle bar... for the Jane Fonda look!

Skipper

For super adventure!

Kids, get ready for the thrills. Here comes your super hero — the Hero Skipper.

It'll take you to the world of adventure and fun. And grow as you grow, with its height-adjustable seat. Now take home your own super hero.

Rough Rider

The tough one!

For tough kids there's a hero too. Strong, tough and hard to beat.

With the body of an ace-champion — an all-steel welded frame. Balloon tyres for a strong grip on every terrain. And the perfect handlebar for better balance.

No.1 World-wide
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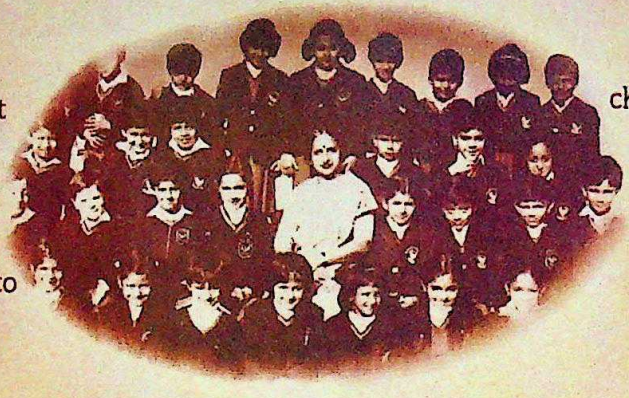
WHEN YOU GROW UP WITH THE BEST YOU STAY WITH IT.

Lal Imli Dhariwal. Suitings that have remained classics through the years.

Yet, contemporary too! Keeping with to-day's fashion trends they offer you a range to choose from. Tweeds, Worsteds, Blazer Material, Woollies, Blankets, Cosy Shawls, Knitting Yarn. And more.

Lal Imli Dhariwal. Always in style. Never out of fashion.



THE ORIGINAL DRESS CIRCLE!

Lal Imli Dhariwal

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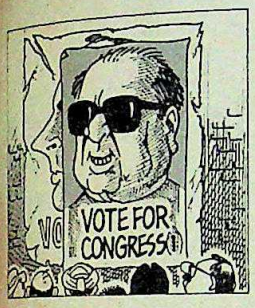
NO, RAJIV

☐ RAJIV'S image as a vote-catcher has certainly taken a severe battering since the last elections. Nothing symbolises that more than the privately-expressed fear among the stronger ruling party candidates that Rajiv may visit their constituencies and thereby undermine their electoral chances.

Even in Delhi, the trend is discernible. The



plethora of Congress(I) posters that have sprouted in the city, are mostly of individual candidates like Hari Krishan Lal Bhagat, Jagdish Tytler and even Mohini Giri. Posters of Rajiv are few and far between.

One prominent royal family candidate from Rajasthan summed up the general mood. "If Rajiv stays away from my constituency, I will win hands down. If he comes here, I could be in royal trouble," he quipped.

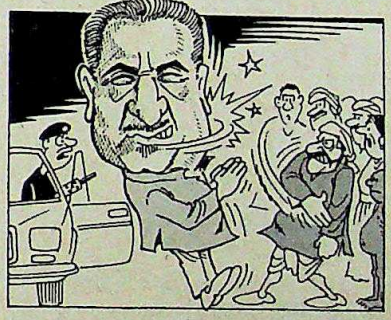
COLD DISCOMFORT

☐ THE polling station at Hikkim in Himachal Pradesh is unpopular among counting officers. It is situated at a staggering 15,000 ft above sea level, making it the highest polling station for the coming elections. Located in the middle of the world's highest cold desert in Spiti, the area has other problems of electoral accessibility. The Election Commission had to set up a polling station for the Kangra constituency in the village of Bir, 75 km away, after they discovered that the population migrates there during the winter months. Another problem polling station is Paddar, a remote village in the Dadra-Kawar area of Shimla. Polling officials have to trek 50-odd km to get there and also hire mules to transport election material.

But officials still rank Hikkim as the least popular. The reason: the arduous journey is hardly worth the effort. Hikkim's total population is just 52. And those eligible to vote, even less.

DOOR SE DARSHAN

☐ K.K. TEWARY, the irrepressible Union minister of state for information and broadcasting, has been given a resounding slap in the face—by the people of his Buxar constituency in Bihar. Tewary's bombast may be good material for the press, but it cuts little ice in Buxar.



Everywhere he goes, he faces abuse and derision. But his most humiliating moment was when his car was stopped by a roadside crowd. Tewary emerged smiling and with folded hands, but was completely taken aback when one member of the crowd stepped forward and gave him a hard slap. Taking the cue, the crowd advanced menacingly and Tewary was forced to beat a retreat. But he learnt one hard lesson: the man who slapped him had been thrown out of the minister's residence in Delhi, when he had gone to meet Tewary.

CAMPAIGN CALL

☐ IN numbers, they form an alluring enough vote bank. An estimated 1.8 million of them spread over 12 of the largest states in the country. They are, however, a different

breed—prostitutes inhabiting the red light areas in the major cities. During election time, politicians will not touch them with the proverbial barge pole. But that hasn't deterred Khaitri Lal Bhola, president of the Akhil Bharatiya Uddhar Sabha. Bhola is currently spearheading a rather riotous campaign to have a representative of the country's call girl community in the Rajya Sabha. Prostitutes, he argues, have nobody other than the Government to turn to for aid. Hence the need for a representative in Parliament. In other words, a sitting member.

POLL TALK

- *Nehru topi wala, chehra bhola bhala, naani yaad aane lagi hai, kursi ab jaane lagi hai.* *Janata Dal campaign cassette set to the tune of* Oye, Oye

- *People will no longer accept a prime minister who is preceded by battalions and followed by Italians.*
  CHATURANAN MISHRA, CPI member of the Rajya Sabha, at Hazaribagh

- *I am a one-man employment agency and I have given employment to thousands of people from my constituency.*
  TAPESHWAR SINGH, Congress(I) candidate from Vikramganj

- *They take the name of Ram and Sita, but they treated me worse than Draupadi; they tried to strip me of my standing as a social worker.*
  MOHINI GIRI, Congress(I) candidate from New Delhi, on the BJP's criticism of her candidacy

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COIN CONTEST

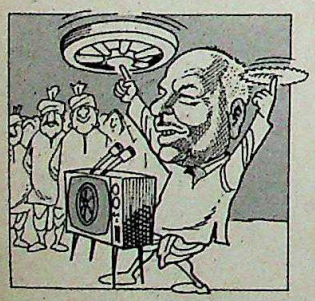
☐ THE trend of weighing candidates in coins seems to have become an established practice in the elections. And it is no small change either. Specially for candidates who are on the weighty side. While slim-look politicians like Jagdish Tytler lose out in the coin game, heavyweights like Devi Lal are having a field day, not just coining slogans but counting coins as well.

By his own admission, Devi Lal collects up to Rs 2 lakh daily at election meetings. A bulky 105 kg, Devi Lal's weight totals Rs 12,800 against coins. But for Devi Lal, the richest joke is that his arch rival Bhajan Lal, gets a mere Rs 6,800 for his 85 kilos. That's one-upmanship.

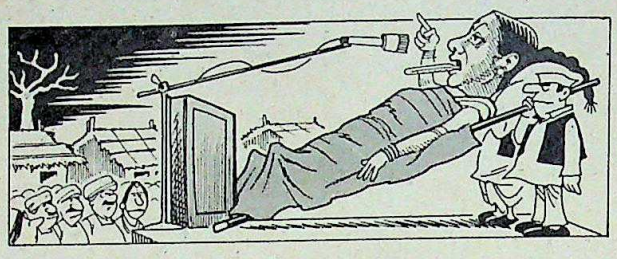
MAHABHARAT MESSAGE

☐ JOURNALISTS covering the 1989 elections have something to be thankful for; they can look forward to waking up late on Sunday mornings. The reason is of course the *Mahabharat* epic on Doordarshan. By now, politicians on the campaign trail have discovered, much to their dismay, that hardly anybody turns up for Sunday morning public meetings. Om Prakash Chautala learnt that lesson as well. The Haryana leader had to postpone his 9 a.m. meeting at Dighal by two hours.

But now, Chautala is using the reason to score electoral points. His Sunday morning campaign starts with the words: "I have deliberately come late because *Mahabharat* is the only worthwhile programme on Rajiv's Doordarshan." He then



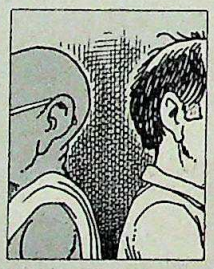
adds: "The serial begins with the *chakra* which is also our election symbol. In *Mahabharat*, Lord Krishna was born first and the *Sudershan chakra* given to him later. In today's *Mahabharat*, you all already have the *chakra* and Krishna will be born on November 22."



STRETCHER CASE

☐ TO call her the sitting Congress (I) MP from Raigarh is something of a misnomer. Pushpa Singh is currently campaigning from a stretcher. Singh, 40, fell sick after she had filed her nomination. But constituents are not surprised. Politics is the bug in her blood. A member of the Lok Sabha since 1980, she is not the type to take things lying down. Singh obviously wants to prove that when it comes to campaigning, she doesn't have a laid-back style.

POLL TALK



- *Asli Gandhi aur naqli Gandhi* (real Gandhi versus fake Gandhi).
  The Opposition's slogan in Amethi

- You have often sold your vote for money and liquor. If you can't resist, then accept their money and drink their liquor, but vote for the BSP.
  KANSHI RAM during Delhi campaign

- My wife is like Sita who has been abducted by the Ravanas of Congress(I).
  Sikkim Chief Minister NAR BAHADUR BHANDARI, whose wife is contesting on Congress(I) ticket

- I have been sent here by Rajiv Gandhi and you ought to support me. After all, even in *Mahabharat*, people obeyed Dhritarashtra though they felt he was wrong.
  M.J. AKBAR to ruling partymen in Kishanganj protesting against the imposition of an "outsider"

- Through the year you kill cobras. But on the day of *Nagpanchami*, you feed them with milk. Please don't repeat that on voting day.
  AJIT SINGH, Janata Dal leader

FOR THE RECORD

☐ THE relatively obscure Bhiwani constituency in Haryana could soon find itself a place in the *Guiness Book of Records*. Bhiwani will have the dubious honour of accounting for the largest sized ballot paper in this election. The reason: it has a record 122 candidates in the fray.

The Haryana election department had to ask other states for unused symbols they could borrow, since six candidates in Bhiwani did not have symbols.

Why Bhiwani should attract such a large crowd of electoral aspirants remains something of a mystery. The only two prominent candidates are the former Haryana chief minister, Bansi Lal, and the state Transport Minister, Dharamvir Singh.

The number of candidates has stretched electoral officials to the limit, not to mention the ballot paper itself. Consisting of eight panels, it will be approximately 34 inches long and 27 inches wide; the size of a newspaper broadsheet. Not surprisingly, extra large ballot boxes have been ordered.

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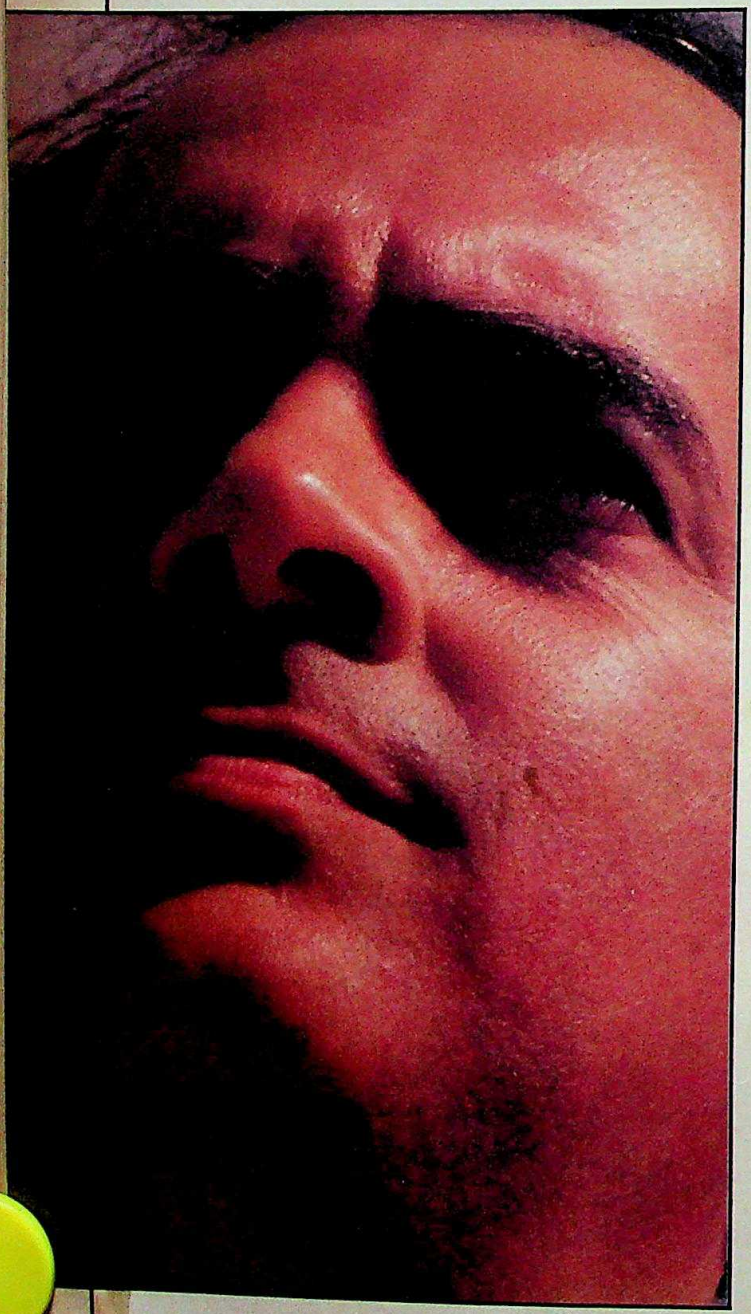
Moment of



Rajiv is trying desperately to convey that only he and his party can save the nation from disintegrating.

IN the next fortnight the political die will be cast. Shaped and moulded by the hands of India's artisans, peasants, professionals, businessmen, traders, labourers. Collectively, these disparate and antithetical forces will erect, through the ballot box, an edifice that will hold the nation's destiny in its fold for the next five years. It will consist of a leader and thousands of people's representatives. Its shape, barely a fortnight since the general election campaign began, is already vaguely discernible.

With 10 days left for the elections, the Congress(I)—notwithstanding the fact that it has deep roots in India's history, a solid base of workers, capable leaders and enormous financial clout—is increasingly looking like a party without a leader and without a slogan. A party floundering, even if temporarily, while the Opposition, against which the most effective campaign was its disunity, gains perception as being more united than the Congress(I). All the key elements of the Congress(I) campaign—communal strategy, its manifesto, advertising and slogans, selection of candidates—seem to be boomeranging.

Never has Rajiv Gandhi looked so alone, so lonely. His very political survival at stake, he dashes about from state to state at a pace almost beyond human endurance in a desperate attempt to convey the message that only he and his party can save the nation from disintegrating and that the Opposition is a worthless agglomeration of opportunists responsible for voting down key welfare measures such as the Panchayati Raj bill.

But what is becoming evident, especially in the Hindi heartland which holds the key to the portals of power in New Delhi, is that he is just not getting through to the people. He is cold and unconvincing. He has lost his charismatic touch. His very voice, as it were. The Opposition has succeeded in carrying out a strategy it had publicly trumpeted months ago—making Rajiv Gandhi the prime target. And he has no credible rebuttal or answer to the scathing and convincingly-orchestrated attacks being mounted on him in every corner of the country.

In contrast, Janata Dal's Vishwanath Pratap Singh, has proven to be a formidable campaigner. His earthy metaphors, laced with caustic sarcasm, strike an intimate and emotional chord wherever he goes. Both campaigns are in a sense negative—pulling down Rajiv, or projecting the Opposition as scorpions and fighting roosters. But the attractiveness of V.P. Singh's campaign is his uncanny ability to convert national issues into local issues and ram them home into the hearts and minds of the poorest and the illiterate with an idiomatic sledgehammer. The prevailing wisdom among Rajiv's coterie was that issues like Bofors and the misuse of Doordarshan were of no interest to India's illiterate masses and were the concern only of urban intellectuals and professional Rajiv-baiters.

How totally untrue and misleading this line of reasoning is, is demonstrable in any rustic corner of this land. When V.P. Singh asks at any street corner in the heartlands of rural India, "*Bofors ka dalaal kaun hai?*" (Who is the tout of Bofors?), the immediate response is, "Rajiv Gandhi!". When he says that the excise that the villager pays on the price of a match-box to the central kitty, instead of being invested in development works to benefit the

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common man, is canalised into Swiss bank accounts, the crowds respond thunderously. When an Arif Mohammad Khan or an Arun Nehru lampoons the misuse of Doordarshan and the Government's attempts to muzzle the press, the crowds jeer at "Rajivdarshan", and cry "shame". When opposition leaders talk about re-investing more money for rural development, denounce the price rise and excoriate Rajiv's panchayati raj schemes as gimmicks, the crowds give enthusiastic approbation.

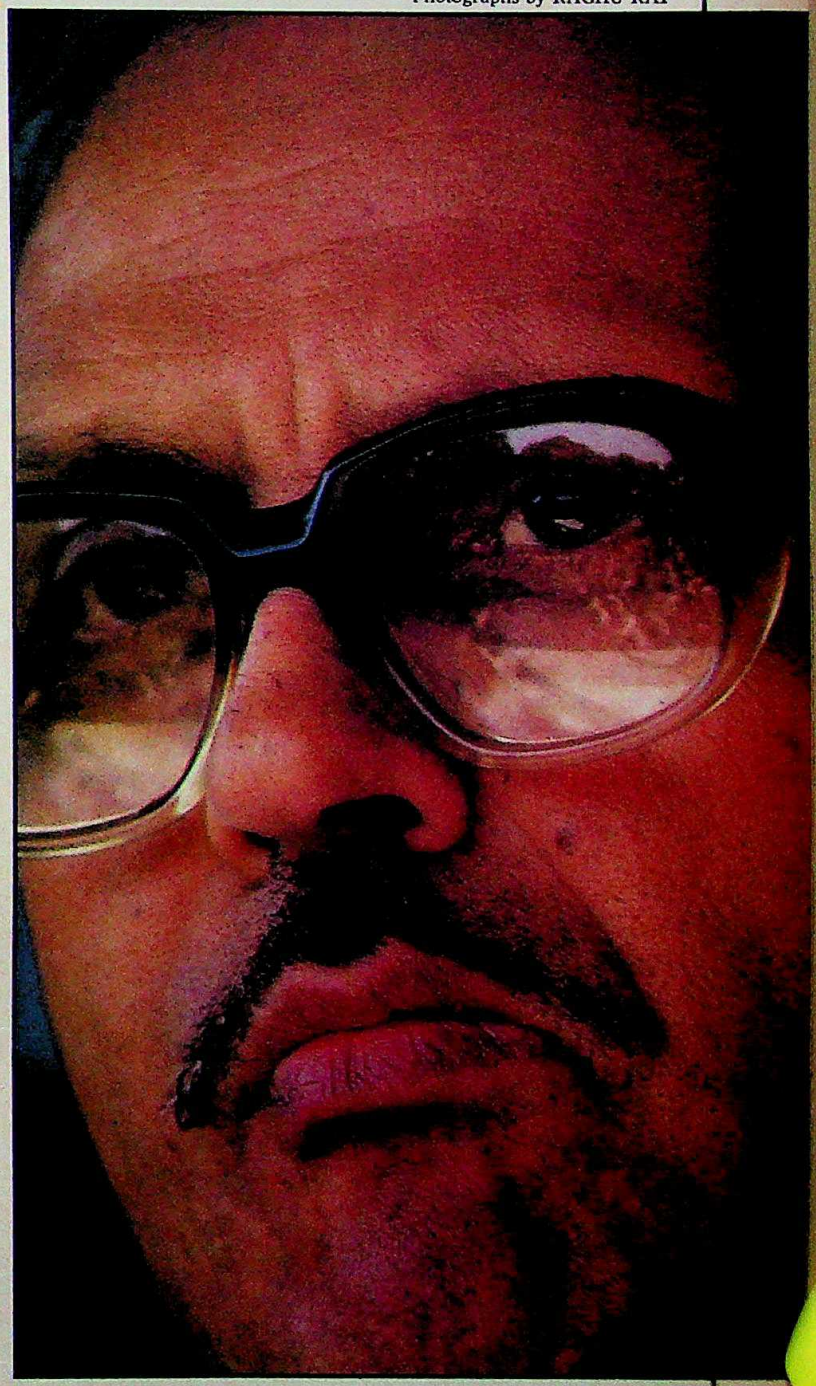
And in this area the Opposition enjoys another clear advantage, because while no amount of mudslinging by the ruling party has stuck to V.P. Singh—and this is obvious because personal attacks on Singh and even references to the St. Kitt's bank account controversy are conspicuous by their absence from the Congress(I) campaign—waves of voters, even in the Hindi heartland have begun to identify Rajiv with corruption and cover-up. Singh has a cogent and carefully calibrated attack. Rajiv's tragedy is he has few answers. Screaming Panchayati Raj and comparing the Anandpur Sahib resolution—of which few voters have even heard in the Hindi heartland—to the Opposition's manifesto, appears to be a boring and abstruse exercise that confuses Rajiv's audiences.

Obviously, the Opposition has been able to use V.P. Singh better than the Congress(I) has been able to use Rajiv. The inevitable electoral arithmetic—which had always stared the Opposition in the face but which it was unable to exploit to its advantage in the past—is that even during massive Congress(I) victories more than 50 per cent of the vote had always been anti-Congress(I), but was scattered among various contending candidates. For example, during the 1984 landslide in which the Congress(I) secured 415 Lok Sabha seats, opposition candidates still received 51.5 per cent of the total votes cast. This time, the Opposition gained a head-start by being able to field common candidates for more than 400 seats.

IN addition, while the Congress(I) has but one star campaigner—Rajiv Gandhi, who is bearing the entire burden of the Opposition onslaught as he criss-crosses the country—the Opposition has a galaxy of senior leaders who are seasoned campaigners and can effectively canvass in their own states. So, while the south has been left to Ramakrishna Hegde, N.T. Rama Rao and Karunanidhi, the north has been split between Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, Devi Lal, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Lal Krishan Advani and Chandra Shekhar. This has left V.P. Singh to carpet-bomb Uttar Pradesh and Bihar which send a total of 139 members—about 25 per cent of the Lok Sabha—to Parliament.

It is not as if the Opposition has suddenly turned into a paradigm of cohesiveness and democratic virtue. It still retains its contradictions and groupism. For example, while most of it is reconciled to V.P. Singh becoming prime minister in case of victory, a Janata Dal faction led by Chandra Shekhar and Om Prakash Chautala, Devi Lal's son, make it a point to publicly project Devi Lal as prime minister. And the possibility of a fratricidal struggle breaking out after the elections is cause for trepidation about the stability of a government led by the

Photographs by RAGHU RAI



VP. Singh's strategy is completely single-minded: strike at Rajiv and thereby demolish the Congress(I).

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National Front. And a question mark still remains on what will become of the National Front when pulled in different directions by the BJP and the left parties.

But for now, in the campaign's last lap, the Opposition is out-gunning and out-marshalling the Congress(I):

► On the communal issue the ruling party has floundered and could become the victim of an unprecedented Muslim and Hindu backlash. Having played the appeasement game through tactics such as the Muslim Women's Bill and the various Urdu bills, to the annoyance of hardcore Hindus, the ruling party tried out a Hindu card by tacitly supporting the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's (VHP) Ram Shila campaign in Ayodhya. In fact Rajiv began his election campaign from Faizabad next door, by promising to usher in Ram Rajya. This last minute strategy is unlikely to benefit the Congress(I) wholly because the BJP is already taking credit for making the Government buckle under its pressure. And whatever gains the Congress(I) may have made among Hindus could be offset by the widespread resentment that has been created among Muslims already smarting under communal violence in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Delhi's Imam Bukhari has now asked Muslims to back the Janata Dal.

V.P. Singh, significantly, began his campaign in Bhagalpur, the venue of massive anti-Muslim violence. The Opposition seems to have succeeded in manipulating both Hindus and Muslims. V.P. Singh, by opposing the VHP, ensured that Muslims don't shy off the Janata Dal, and the BJP, by supporting the VHP, kept its Hindu appeal intact.

► The once fractious opposition's gathering momentum was in evidence not only in the way it reached seat adjustments in 85 per cent of the Hindi heartland within 10 days of Rajiv's springing the early election surprise, but also in that it was able to release its manifesto one week before the ruling party could.

► For a party which has ruled the country for over 40 years releasing a Congress(I) manifesto should have been the least of its problems. After several days of delay and uncertainty during which not even the party spokesman had any credible explanation, the prime minister finally arrived at the AICC(I) office in Delhi outside which 200 journalists were waiting under a cramped shamiana. First he refused to answer questions on any other subject except the manifesto of which only a handful of copies were available. "But why can't we get more copies?" reporters asked. "I am sorry, you see, the photocopying machines broke down," was the reply.

This was symbolic of the mounting problems of the Congress(I) which had clearly become the victim of rampant mismanagement that would surely be carried over into the campaign. Until the manifesto was released to the press, even state chief ministers were not given copies of it. The effect of this was that while opposition leaders were hitting the hustings with force, state leaders were still in the dark about what message to project. Further confounding the confusion was the fact that no chief minister was given a clear-cut programme of the prime minister's visits to their state. Some of them are being woken up at midnight to be told that Rajiv would be visiting their area the next morning. The result has been a failure to mobilise workers and the prime minister is being greeted by some of the smallest crowds he has ever seen in his political lifetime. So poor has been the response that the party has had to cancel over 40 meetings in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat.

► While the Opposition's campaign is largely decentralised and frill-free, the Congress(I)'s strategy suffers from overcentralisation. Moreover, the advertising gimmicks have begun to backfire. Slogans like *Mera Bharat Mahaan* are turning into a propagandistic Frankenstein for Rajiv Gandhi. In every corner of the country, they are being parodied, sometimes with shocking vulgarity. Even the scorpions and cock-fighting advertising

The publicity overkill and the advertising gimmicks have begun to backfire on the Congress(I).

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campaign, personally approved by Rajiv Gandhi against the wishes of some close advisers, has created controversy and criticism even within his own party and provided welcome grist to the mills of an effective counter-advertising campaign in the many newspapers that carry the Congress(I) ads, making a mockery of the ruling party's Rs 27-crore ad blitz.

Notwithstanding the publicly expressed doubts about the Opposition's ability to continue to hang together, it still enjoys an upper hand in another crucial area—selection of candidates. Fielding new candidates, it has an aura of freshness, while the Congress(I) baggage still consists mostly of tired old faces.

Ultimately, the management of the campaign has created demoralisation and resentment in the party. A coterie of political associates, personal friends, close advisers, and an assortment of young Rajya Sabha members have been put in command to issue instructions to chief ministers and PCC(I) chiefs. And increasingly, these senior state leaders have refused to make themselves available to these political managers whom they describe scathingly as upstarts.

IN the process, the prime minister is becoming the main casualty. His image has been trivialised. A person who was sought by all Congressmen suddenly appears to have become a liability. Campaign posters bearing Rajiv's portraits are no longer in demand. Candidates are simply refusing to put them up in their constituencies. And while he is under vicious attack from all Opposition leaders, his own partymen, concentrating on local issues, simply refuse to invoke Rajiv's name or to defend him.

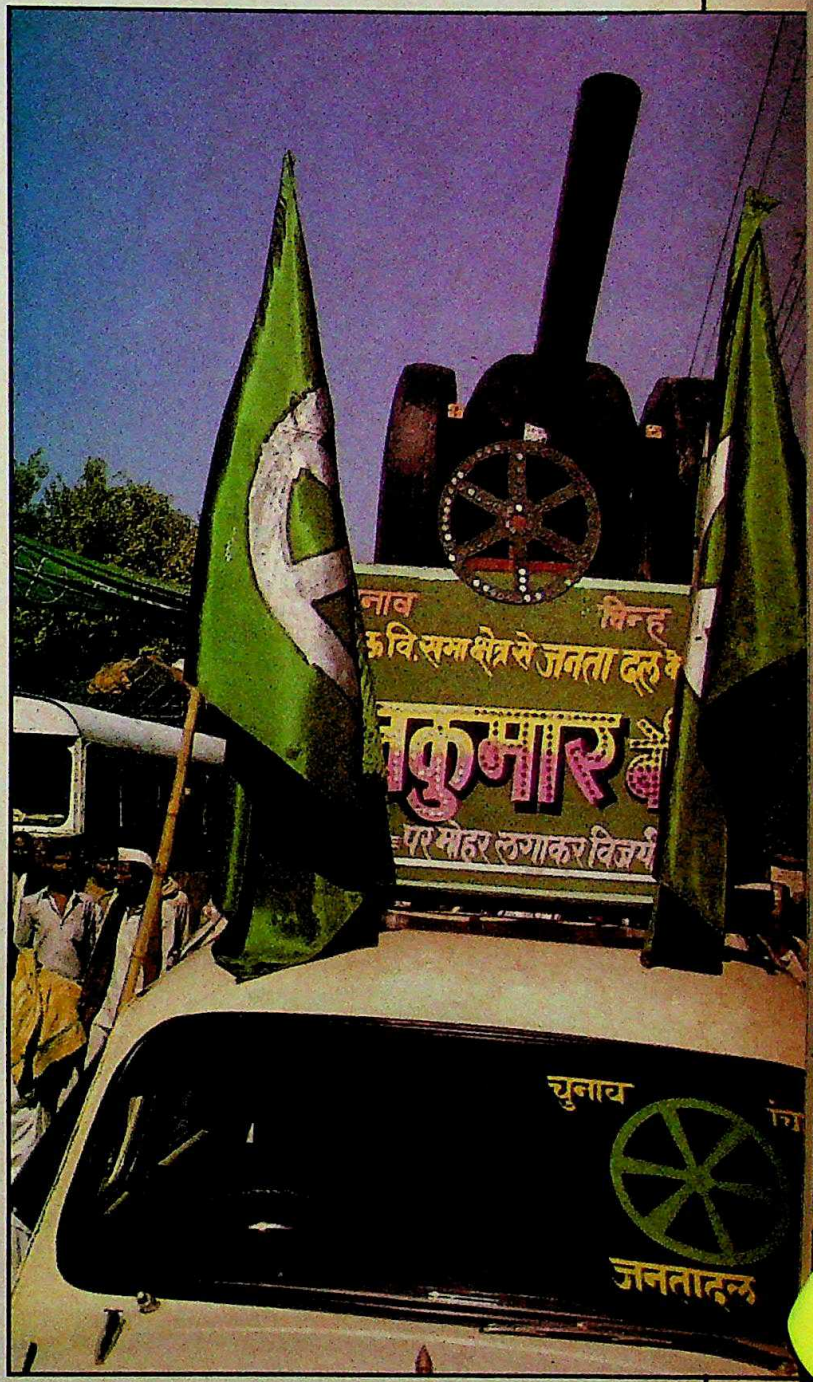
The Congress(I) party always fares well in elections when it has a decidedly charismatic leader. The greater the charisma, the more dedicated the grassroots workers. Today, the most ominous signal for the party is the collapse of its top leadership. Rajiv is no longer seen as a vote-catcher. And the party has no alternative leadership. And for this the blame rests squarely with the party. In promoting and building Rajiv's personality cult, the party was falling into the trap of the Opposition. Admittedly those cults existed in the past—Nehru, Mrs Gandhi. But neither leader was ever personally tainted by such serious corruption charges and no prime minister of India has been the object of such widespread scurrilous lampooning as Rajiv.

So even as Rajiv assumed the role of the party's top campaigner, the Opposition increased the intensity of its attack on him. The strategy was clear: demolish Rajiv and the party may crumble like a house of cards. The Opposition is convinced that once the ruling party's star campaigner is finished, lesser-level state leaders will begin to cower, protect their own turfs, and not participate wholeheartedly in the national campaign.

When President Zail Singh chose to appoint Rajiv as prime minister in 1984 even before the party had formally elected him, Singh said he had done so, not because he believed in dynastic succession but to prevent the Congress(I)'s disintegration. Today the wheel seems to be coming full circle with the possibility not only of the party's collapse but also of the end of the dynasty.

And because the National Front is contesting only 350 Lok Sabha seats, leaving others to allied satellite parties, the stage could also be set for a new era in Indian politics—the disappearance of brute majorities and the advent of coalition governments. And the difference this time is that a country overdosed in the political paranoia of the who-after-Nehru?-who-after-Indira syndrome does not panic any more at the prospect of change. The voter's attitude may well be, after-Rajiv-whoever. The voter is increasingly realising that for all its awesome power, he is stronger than the Government, that if he can change it, then he can also make the one he chooses bend to his will and perform in his interests. These are signs of a maturing of democracy.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR and PRABHU CHAWLA



The notion that issues such as Bofors were of no interest to the masses has been proven false.

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Party functionaries welcoming Rajiv: putting up a brave front

Frantic Pace

Rajiv's campaign has a blistering pace, but a tired, mechanical air. In place of the old fervour, there is the weariness of a tiresome task to be got over with. And the crowds, sensing the change, no longer respond as before.

TOOFAN mein, andhi mein, vishwas Rajiv Gandhi mein (Be it a hurricane, be it a storm, our faith in Rajiv Gandhi remains true to form). The slogan is plastered on just about every hut, wall and storefront in the prime minister's constituency of Amethi. But the man who came to file his nomination papers from what is supposed to be his pocket borough, far from resembling a storm, does not even come close to having the intensity of a teacup tempest.

And as election fever has spread across the land, the lack of fervour and glitz that marked Rajiv's nomination ceremony seems also to pervade his mostly airborne campaign as he jets from city to city and helicopters from mofussil town to mofussil town in search of that bewitching aura that had made him the star attraction, the darling of India's millions in 1984.

Today, far from being his usual bewitching self, he appears bothered and bewildered. In 1984, his nomination day was a day of celebration in Amethi where he had been surrounded by huge, chanting crowds in a mood of festive expectation, the assassination of his mother notwithstanding. In 1989, nomination day, the crowd was inconsequential. Rajiv looked at times nervous, at times deeply brooding. Perhaps because of incessant travel. Perhaps because of lack of sleep. But his demeanour did not go unnoticed by those close at hand. And it seems to have infected his campaign.

Even the chopper pilots who ferry him from one stumping ground to another have noticed the change. A pilot himself, Rajiv has always loved to make small talk with the VIP Air Force officers who fly him. They describe him as aloof and withdrawn.

For the happy warrior of yesteryear, just rearing to go and punching the time-clock to perfection and uttering the new-fangled 21st century phrases that razzle-dazzled audiences across the land, and even made them laugh, this election seems to have become a chore. Something he just has to do. Something he must get out of the way.

He is late everywhere. The smile begins to fade almost as suddenly as it appears. The jokes fall flat. His waves to the crowd do not seem to make waves anymore. He's like a Gogia Pasha who has lost his magic wand. Those rabbits just refuse to pop out of the top hat. The campaign rhetoric lacks conviction, is flat and alarmingly contradictory at times, the timing of the delivery faulty, the body language unconvincing.

On the first day of his first official campaign trip to Amethi, the town looks as if it has been wrapped in one gigantic Rajiv Gandhi poster. He is expected to address a rally at a school playground, about a kilometre away from the helipad where the prime ministerial Mi-8 is scheduled to land at noon. Rajiv is already a half-hour late and there is no word still of his arrival.

But there is something else missing in the town. There is simply no electricity. The political power generators appear to have burned out. Hundreds and hundreds of armed policemen and home guard personnel lounge around town, leaning on their cane sticks or seeking the shade of a tree. The residents do not seem particularly excited about the impending visit of the favourite son of the constituency.

Inside the meeting ground, a bored crowd of perhaps a little over 10,000 hangs around munching peanuts or sucking at beedis. From the VIP platform, some local leaders are screaming into the microphone and eulogising Rajiv and the Congress raj. One of them repeatedly

Photographs by RAGHU RAI

Rajiv addressing his first election meeting in Amethi: poor response

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exhorts the crowds to scream *zindabad* loudly enough "so that your voice can reach the ears of Rajivji when he comes on to the platform". In the VIP arrival area at the rear of the dais, a dozen white-clad Yuva Dal volunteers, obviously hastily conducted for the show, are being taught how to salute, how to stand to attention by a local leader. One of them is assigned the task of standing guard at a makeshift VIP toilet constructed behind a tent-flap.

Reporters, who for some reason have been banned from travelling in groups or even in pools with the prime minister's party, make small talk with securitymen and local intelligence officials. One Intelligence Bureau man offers an explanation: "The crowds he has been getting are quite small. Perhaps the prime minister's advisers don't want you to see this in place after place." He recalls that in 1984 and 1985 and even during subsequent visits to Amethi by the prime minister the crowds were ten times the size of the present one. "But can't you ensure a larger turnout?" he is asked. He smiles: "*Kabhi to unko asliyat apne aap azmaane do*" (For a change, let them experience reality for themselves).

The *Mera Bharat Mahaan* slogan, this time plastered on the foundation of the platform, is the subject of wicked jokes. Even as he is waiting for Rajiv to appear, Abhay Singh, a young shopkeeper attending the rally, repeats what is a popular takeoff on the slogan using an ad campaign for condoms as a metaphorical description of how India, in his view, has been cheapened: *Khareedne me aasaan, rakhne me aasaan, istemaal karne me aasaan. Pehle chaar aane me teen milte the, aaj kal muft mil rahe hain, Mera Bharat Mahaan* (Easy to buy, easy to keep, easy to use, it used to cost 25 paise for three, nowadays you get it free, *Mera Bharat Mahaan*).

And this shocking irreverence, of all places in Amethi, and that barely five minutes before the prime minister is to arrive. The thin crowd, that later swells by a couple of thousands as political workers start hustling more people in, is not the only thing worrisome to local Congressmen. What has caught everybody's attention, and even veteran policemen express total surprise about, is that the route from the helicopter pad to the meeting ground is virtually empty. Where, in the past, thousands of spectators had lined up behind the barricades on either side of the street to cheer from behind police lineups, the route is deserted.

Rajiv is one hour late. But when he arrives the ritual is the same as everywhere else. Getting out of his bullet-proof car with Sonia in tow. The

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garlands. The Sewa Dal white-shirts screaming *Rajiv Gandhi Zindabad* until they get hoarse. Rajiv looks tense, tired. So does Sonia. But daughter Priyanka following them is a picture of innocence, curiousness, a fresh breeze of uncorrupted youthfulness in an atmosphere that otherwise is staged and repetitious. Rajiv, much in the fashion of his grandfather charging up the ramp of an awaiting Dakota—an image popularised by Films Division documentaries—charges up the stairs leading to the top of the speaker's platform.

Sonia, pulling her red-and-black sari *pallav* closely about her face, sits on his left. Priyanka stands in the background. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Narayan Datt Tiwari, who seems to have gained weight and wears John Lennon-type dark glasses, looks from a distance like a bespectacled puffin. From close up, you can see deep, puffy bags underneath Rajiv's eyes. He seems anxious. Blinks his eyes repeatedly, purses his lips, pats his ruffled hair into place and the movement of his jaw muscles is clearly discernible as he grits his teeth before rising to speak.

The crowd, with huge enclosures still unoccupied in front, is barely enthused. Except for some *zindabads* from a few cheer-leaders in the front right enclosures, there is no spontaneous sloganeering. He tells the Amethiites how he has changed and developed the area during the last few years. He reminds the audience of his mother "Indiraji's *balidaan*," and how the Congress(I) had pulled the country out of the "darkness" following her assassination.

Then he talks about Punjab. Separatism there, he points out, is finished, and the Government "has achieved success against terrorism and will keep fighting against it". "*Zindabad*," shout the cheer-leaders seated in the front. An official tries to hush them. But Rajiv, looking in their direction says, "*Bolne do, bolne do*" (Let them cheer. Let them cheer).

Then he pulls out what is supposed to be the trump card of his speech—a copy of the National Front's election manifesto and waves it before the audience as if he is giving them access to a secret document. "There is no word in this manifesto about terrorism," he bellows. "Doesn't the Opposition recognise the existence of terrorism or are they afraid to speak out?"

He brought the campaign to Madras' Marina Beach, the venue from which the National Front was launched a year ago, a little more colourfully than in Amethi. The tricolour and AIADMK black-and-red flags flutter in the sea breeze. Black barricades form a vivid contrast to the expanse of silver sand. Facing the 20-feet-high bullet-proof stage are larger-than-life cut-outs illuminated with multi-coloured electric bulbs.

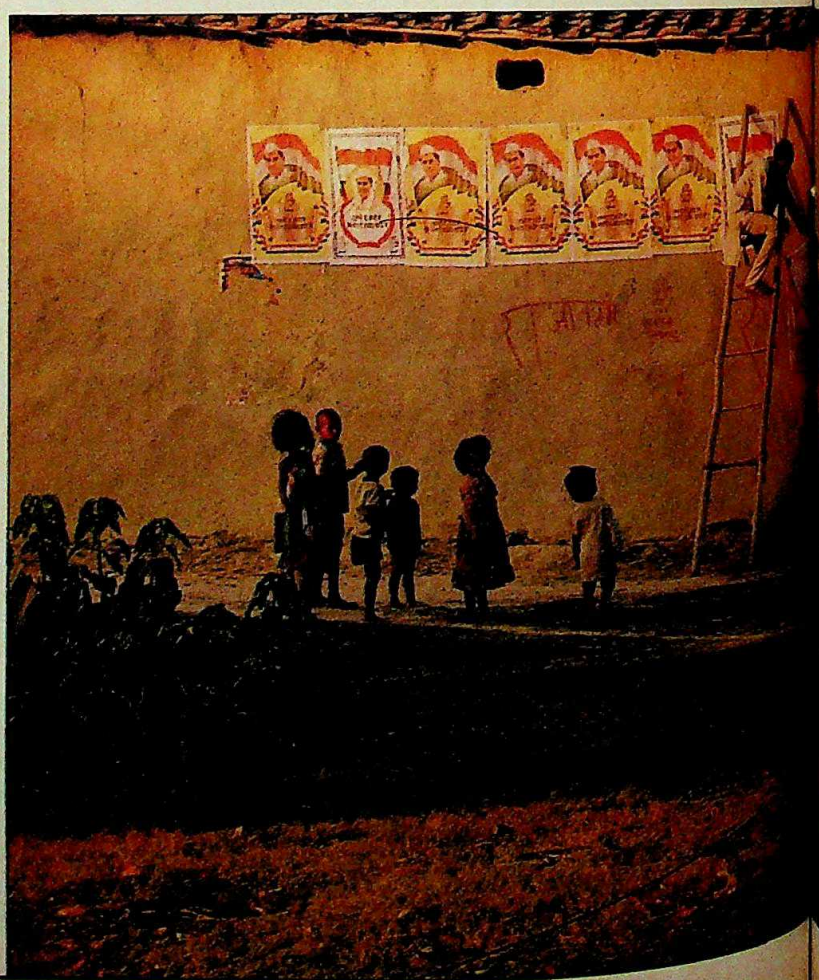
Rajiv, who used to conduct his pre-election rallies across the country as a many-costumed, many-turbaned thing, arrives at the scene at 7.05 p.m. minus fancy dress. He is not wearing a dhoti-jiba and *angavastram* around the neck, the costume he chooses for his Tamil Nadu tours, but his usual spotless white kurta-pyjama. At least a dozen rainbow-coloured brocades are presented to him. Following him is the general secretary of the AIADMK, Jayalalitha, in her black-and-pink Mysore silk saree. Rajiv climbs the stairs to the stage briskly and waves to the crowd. He first bares his palm, the symbol of his party, and then holds aloft his index and middle fingers spread into a 'V', as M.G. Ramachandran used to. A crowd of 50,000 cheers.

RAJIV starts off in Tamil: "*Sahodara Sahodarigale*" (brothers and sisters) and "*Vanakkam*" (greetings).

He immediately switches to English. First, he tries to strike a sentimental chord by recalling his earlier stage appearances with MGR, and MGR's friendship with his mother, Indira. But he fails to be evocative or to create an emotional response. He talks about the party's welfare measures like the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, and the perspective plan for women, which his government contemplated but could not, he admits, implement to his satisfaction.

"Out of Rs 100 allocated to an anti-poverty project, I know that only Rs 15 reaches the people," he says. "The remainder is gobbled up by middlemen, power brokers, contractors and the corrupt." This is because, he explains, too much power is concentrated in Delhi and the state capitals. He then comes to his punch line: if the Opposition had not defeated the Panchayati Raj bill, a system would have been established in which the welfare money would go directly to the people. "We cannot accept the verdict of 83 people. Let 83 crore people decide on the issue."

He then launches into a diatribe against the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1978 seeking greater autonomy for Punjab. "This resolution," he says, "tried to weaken Delhi and the opposition manifesto is attempting to do the same thing." Then comes the central contradiction. While he is promising Panchayati Raj and the resultant decentralisation of powers as the great panacea for the nation, he



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contemptuously dismisses the Opposition's demands for decentralisation more or less as an agenda for secessionism.

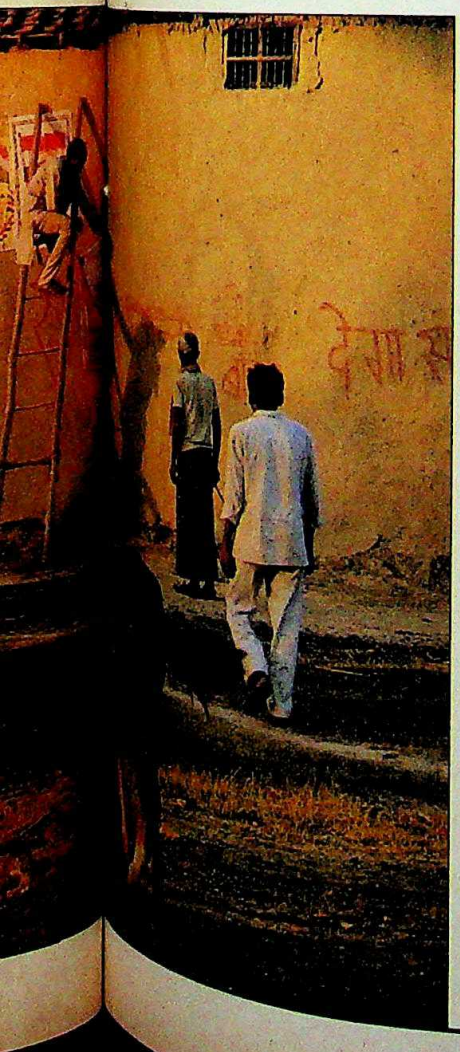
The argument is repeated in speech after speech, at venue after venue. In Amethi, Rajiv says: "*Dilli ki shakti khatm ho jayegi*" (The Centre will lose its power), "*aur yeh shakti rajyon me chali jayegi*" (and this power will go to the states). "*Aur jo garib pradesh hain, jaise Uttar Pradesh garib pradesh hai, bhugtenge*" (and the poorer states like Uttar Pradesh will suffer).

It seems to matter not a whit to him that he is in a single speech demolishing his own arguments for Panchayati Raj—the need to decentralise decision-making in order to make local governments more autonomous and give, as the Congress(I) slogan says, "power to the people".

Even in Amethi, the general response to his criticism about anti-poverty funds being siphoned off by middlemen is one of disdain. As Rajesh Gupta, who attended the rally, later remarked: "But after all it is *his* government. He has been in power. It was up to him to have

SHEKHAR GUPTA

(Clockwise from top) Rajiv's helicopter; arrival route; securitymen relaxing; posters being put up: unenthusiastic air



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prevented this. He seems to be making excuses."

By itself, Rajiv's attack on *dalali* is not an entirely misplaced concern, and if delivered with appropriate aggressiveness, should serve to produce the appropriate effect. That it backfires is because the gestures, the body language, seem out of gear. For when Rajiv says, "*Hum jante hain, garibi hatane ka paisa aap ko bheja jaata hai voh poori tarah se aap tak nahin pahunch paata. Hum yeh bhi jaante hain ki beech mein bhi aise log hain jo kha jate hain.*" (We know how middlemen steal money appropriated for anti-poverty measures), he actually smiles. A mischievous smile that suggests a conspiratorial awareness rather than indignant outrage. It doesn't work. If anything, it bares an if.

Nor do the jokes. In Tamil Nadu, for example, with the AIADMK's Jayalalitha standing next to him, he quipped: "I suppose there was a little bit of controversy about the legacy of MGR." The Jayalalitha diehards in the audience, in whose minds no such controversy exists, did not find it amusing. In Chail, near Allahabad, where he arrived late and was greeted by about 5,000 people, a thin attendance compared to 1984 when 50,000 people had turned up, he said: "*Main maafi chahta hoon late hone ke liye, magar kabhi kabhi helicopter bhi rasta bhool jaate hain*" (Sorry for being late, but sometimes even helicopters lose their way). This could hardly be expected to produce much cheer among a crowd that had been waiting since 4:30 p.m.

Rajiv leaving the dais: tearing hurry

His helicopter schedule—18 Mi-8's, many of them painted blue and white are on standby all over the country—often serves to make mincemeat of his campaign. Because the choppers must take off before sunset from the local helipad to the airport from where Rajiv will board his executive jet to fly off to another state for the campaign, the later he gets, and the later the meetings get, the more everything is played out in comic fast forward.

In Chail, for example, while waiting for Rajiv to arrive, N.D. Tiwari starts making a speech to keep the audience from straying. Halfway through his speech, because he has heard the hum of the chopper, he stops and begins scanning the horizon. Spotting the aircraft, he tells the audience Rajiv has arrived. The speech is not resumed. As evening shadows lengthen, Rajiv is on the platform with his usual speech. Hurrying through it—he has a helicopter to catch before nightfall—he begins introducing the local candidates, starting with Kamala Bahuguna. "But where's Kamla Bahugunaji?" he asks. She is not even on the stage, but seated down below.

He has arrived in Chail from Rewa in Madhya Pradesh. The helicopter will now take him to Allahabad from where he will jet to Bhubaneswar from where, after night meetings, he will jet to Hyderabad, arriving at 3.30 a.m. Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, all within 12 hours. The plan is to address 168 meetings in 20 days.

Rajiv's travels follow a plan drawn by Mani Shankar Aiyar. Aiyar sat with his computer and took almost three days finalising the itinerary. The seats were divided into three categories: A (sure), B (marginal) and C (lost) category. The schedule was drawn in such a way that the prime minister would spend more time in B category seats which fell in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The meeting venues were chosen in such a way that the electorate from at least three parliament constituencies could be mobilised for each meeting.

To those who argue that this grasshopper electioneering, this desultory campaign, prevents the prime minister from making a comprehensive impact in concentrated regions and states, the prime minister's aides respond that the impression to be created is that at any given time, the prime minister is everywhere in the country. The prime minister should be ubiquitous.

But the way things seem to be going right now, the prime minister is not being made ubiquitous but superfluous.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR

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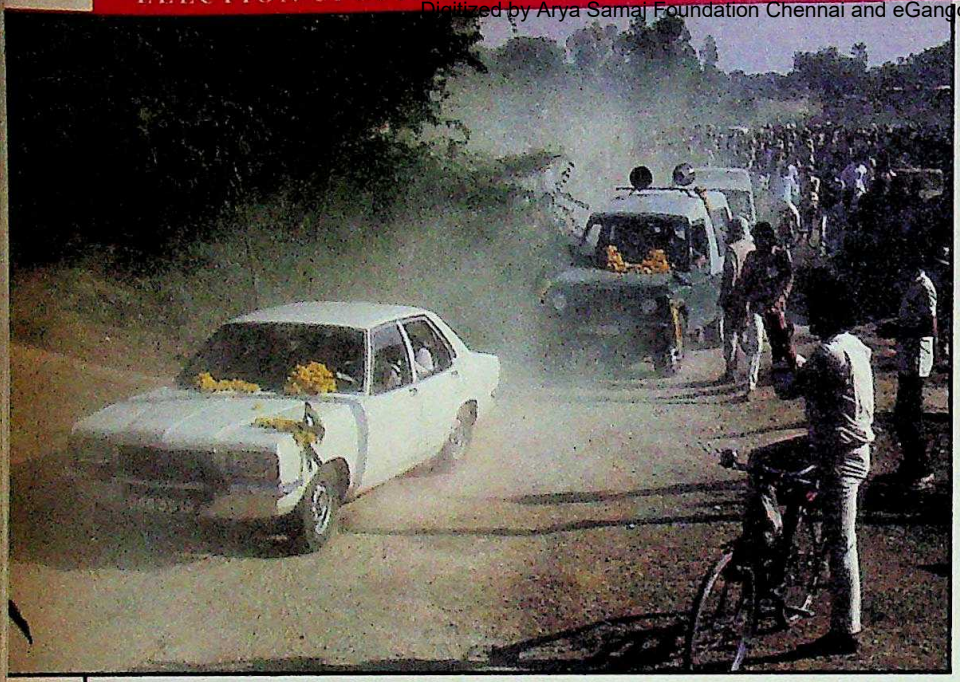

Singh's white Contessa: the juggernaut

V.P. SINGH

Making Waves

The Janata Dal leader has been cutting a tireless electoral swathe through the Hindi heartland to ensure Rajiv's defeat. The peoples' response has been electrifying.

ASHWAMEDHA and Rajasuya were the ancient Indian practices of conquest. A king extending his domain would follow a white horse that had been unleashed to roam in hostile territory. Wherever the horse ran unchallenged, its master would claim the terrain as undisputedly his. And wherever it was stopped—war!

From eastern Uttar Pradesh, where Vishwanath Pratap Singh launched his formal election campaign last fortnight, he is creating a latter-day version of this epic ritual to the horror and consternation of the political monarchs of the ruling party. The steed is a white Contessa with a driver at the helm and Singh is the passenger in the front seat, speeding bumpily down serrated and pot-holed rural dustways and hurling gauntlets with such daredevil abandon that even the ranks of Congressmen, can scarce forbear to cheer. Many of them, in fact, are joining him.

It is an electoral phenomenon that is palpably electrifying the countryside. Singh arrives in Fatehpur, his new constituency, on November 7 to start his campaign. On that very day the 500-strong Brahmin Samaj, the backbone of the town's Congress(I) machine deserts his opponent Hari Shastri, the two-term incumbent, and openly pledges support to Singh. The Congress(I) headquarters wears a deserted look with Shastri making at best a faint-hearted effort to try and stop the challenger. In Ghatampur, an hour down the road, a reception committee has waited three hours under the blazing sun for him to arrive. The committee members are all Congressmen who have deserted their party the same day.

"Is this what is called a wave?" Singh is asked. "See for yourself," he smiles, adding: "Forget the numbers, try and get a feel of their pulse, see their eyes, their eyes will tell you." "But you only began campaigning two days ago? How has this happened?" "Wrong. I began campaigning two-and-a-half years ago. And I saw it then. Maybe you didn't see it." "What did you see?" "That the simplest, the poorest man responds to national issues and wants to protect the dignity of the nation." "You mean he understands issues like Bofors and reacts to them?" "Let me let you test this."

The Contessa grinds to a halt in a pall of dust at an intersection near Moosanagar. A dozen young farmers, who have heard that Singh would be passing that way, and have been waiting under a neem tree, rush to the car. Their eyes: adulatory, frenzied, blazing like meteors. They begin chanting: "*Raja nahin fakir hai, desh ki taqdeer hai.*" (Not a king, a hermit is he/With him rests the country's destiny.) Singh alights and motions them to silence. "There is a man here from Delhi," Singh tells them, "who wants to know if villagers know about Bofors. How many of you know about Bofors?" All raise their hands. "*Bofors ka dalaal kaun hai?*" (Who is the middleman for Bofors?) "Rajiv Gandhi!" they chorus contemptuously. The Contessa moves on.

There are no frills, gadgets, widgets. No fancy ad campaign. No advisers. No advance men. A threadbare organisation. Not even a motorcade, save for a jeep. No securitymen. Singh's campaign is his own, his speeches are his own, and public meetings are called often at less than a day's notice. But the crowds simply materialise as word gets out that he is on his way. At every street corner. At every hamlet. At every railroad crossing. At every intersection. A homespun slogan spells the character of the campaign aptly: "*Na poster hain na parche hain, sirf V.P. Singh ke charche hain.*" (There are no posters nor pamphlets, there's only talk of V.P. Singh everywhere.)

Consider for example, his first arrival on November 7, at Fatehpur. The campaign headquarters, festooned with a single large banner carrying Singh's portrait and the party symbol—a chakra—is a three-storey building facing a slum area. The evening before, about a dozen youth, mostly inexperienced in politics, are busy organising things under the supervision of Singh's son, Ajeya, also a political novitiate. He is asked about plans, about strategy, about public meetings. He looks blank. "All I know so far," he says in a clipped Oxford accent, "is that he's expected by train tomorrow at 6.15 a.m. and then there's a workers' meeting at 9:30 after he freshens up at the circuit house." A big reception at the station? "We're not quite certain how many will show up."

The train arrives on schedule from Bhagalpur where he has spent the previous day, and a thousand people shouting "V.P. Singh zindabad", and "*V.P. Singh sangharsh karo hum tumhare saath hain*" (Struggle on V.P. Singh, we are with you) —the familiar battle cry of his early Jan Morcha days when he first started campaigning against corruption rent the air. And he is bedecked with garlands.

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At the campaign headquarters no more than a hundred workers await Singh inside a spacious hall. The air is of disorganisation, inefficiency. No one is certain of his programme. Outside on the adjoining streets there is a hint of casual curiosity. The motorcade— if it can be described as that— of two scooters, four Suzuki motorbikes, a jeep and the white Contessa, arrives an hour late and Singh, dressed in khadi kurta pyjama with a stain of bird-dropping visible on his left sleeve just below the shoulder, gets out smiling. He is mobbed.

Suddenly, as if they had been hiding in corners, there are people everywhere. Jumping, screaming. And it takes Singh 10 minutes to get to the podium barely 100 feet away. The hundred people inside the hall are now a thousand. The streets outside are now packed and people clamber onto the roof of the building to get a ringside seat shielded from the skylights. When he rises to speak, the aggressive, boisterous indiscipline of the crowd melts into a silence of concentrated attention.

It is a theme he will use repeatedly on the campaign trail but for a few variations in metaphors *(see box)*. In substance it is little different from what he has been hammering home at rallies all across India for the last two-and-a-half years since his expulsion from the Congress(I)—the need to save the national honour compromised by Rajiv Gandhi, the desecration of national institutions, the Bofors revelations, high prices, lack of government accountability, the need to throw out Rajiv Gandhi. His expressions vary from barely controlled outrage to a scornful, teasing smile, especially when he launches an attack on Rajiv.

> **Singh's campaign is his own, his speeches are his own. The crowds simply materialise as word gets out that he is on his way.**

"During my political career," he says in a voice tinged with anger and sadness, "I've seen a lot of things being bartered, but never as in the last five years, have I seen the nation's very honour and self-respect being sold out." People shake their heads and the hall resounds to the clucking of a thousand tongues. And as the speech builds to a crescendo, punctuated by howls of approval as he finishes each point, the audience turns once again into a raucous mob. *"Raja tum sangharsh karo. Ab to yeh spasht hai, Rajiv Gandhi bhrasht hai. Bhrashtachari nahin chalegi, nahin chalegi."* (Struggle on Raja. Now it's known, Rajiv Gandhi is corrupt. Corruption won't do, won't do.) Out of almost nothing, a fired up and determined organisation is born, ready to storm the town.

Next? "Not really sure," says Ajeya Singh, who is closest to anything resembling a campaign manager for his father. "I think he has a luncheon with some friends and there's talk he'll visit the bar association." Two hours later, with no advance warning the Contessa arrives at

Photographs by RAGHU RAI

With Nehru in Akbarpur: frenzied welcome

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V.P. SINGH'S SPEECH

Lively Rhetoric

Vishwanath Pratap Singh's speeches rarely extend beyond 20 minutes and are peppered with earthy metaphors and similes that unfailingly evoke visible and audible emotional responses. He conveys immediately that he is campaigning against Rajiv Gandhi, denounces him, and proceeds to demolish and to ridicule him. The piece de resistance:

"Dig the warm sands in the desert wastes of Rajasthan. Or the icy hard rocks of Siachen. You will see a few drops of the blood of a Jawan, the son of a kisan, mixed in it. Can Rajiv, this prime minister, take a fistful of that exalted soil, hold it to his forehead and say he has given his motherland what he owed it? If he cannot, should such a prime minister stay?"

"To turn against them was a matter of conscience. One day we will all be gone. Our dust will mingle with the dust of our *janmabhoomi*. And when the dust of this land asks me if I was true to her salt I should not have to bow my head in shame."

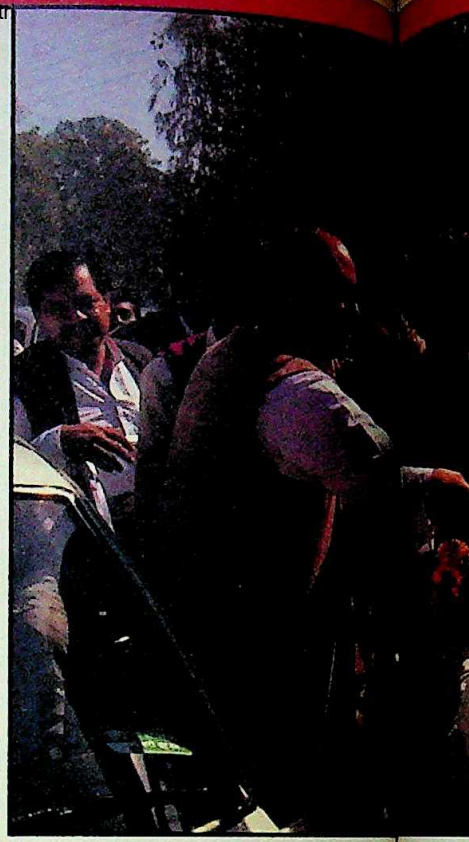
From patriotism the theme shifts quickly to high prices and unemployment. "*Aaj naujawan bazaar mein khada hai apne mathe par likh kar bikau. Aur use kharidar nahin milta* (Today the young man stands in the market with for sale written on his forehead. But he can't find a buyer). Today, everything is expensive. The only thing that is cheap is the blood of human beings. *Chulhon ki aag bujh gayee par pet mein bhook ki aag jalti hai. Jab yeh aag dimag mein pahunchti hai to kranti paida karti hai.* (The fire has gone out of the hearths but the fire of hunger burns in people's bellies. And when this fire reaches people's minds it generates a revolution)."

"I've never seen such a tired and defeated prime minister...A government's life is for five years. So this government is on its death-bed. Like a man on a cot taking in his last few breaths. So he does *shaiyyadan, gaiyyadan, bachhiadan, sonadan, pushpdan* (gives away a cot, a cow, a calf, gold, flowers as part of his last rites), Panchayati Raj, rozgar yojana etc etc." His likening of the Rajiv Government's election-eve sops to the largesse a dying man hands out to the Brahmins is a brilliant example of the art of communicating with rural masses which he is rapidly perfecting into a science.

"You all know that when a vehicle is brought for renewal of licence you check its steering and brakes. Today Rajiv sarkar has come to you to renew its licence for five more years. So check it out."

"Those fed up of unemployment raise your hands. (Thousands of hands wave in the air) So on the issue of unemployment, Rajiv ka licence?...(his voice rises to a questioning pitch when he says the word licence), and the crowd roars back, *'radd!'* (cancelled). Those who are fed up of high prices raise your hands. (More hands are raised). So, on the issue of prices, Rajiv ka licence? ...(The audience thunders: *'radd!'*) On the matter of honesty, Rajiv ka licence? ...(The audience responds both hands flailing the air: *'radd! radd! radd!'*)

"*Faisala ho gaya*" (the verdict has been given), he announces and walks away to his waiting Contessa.



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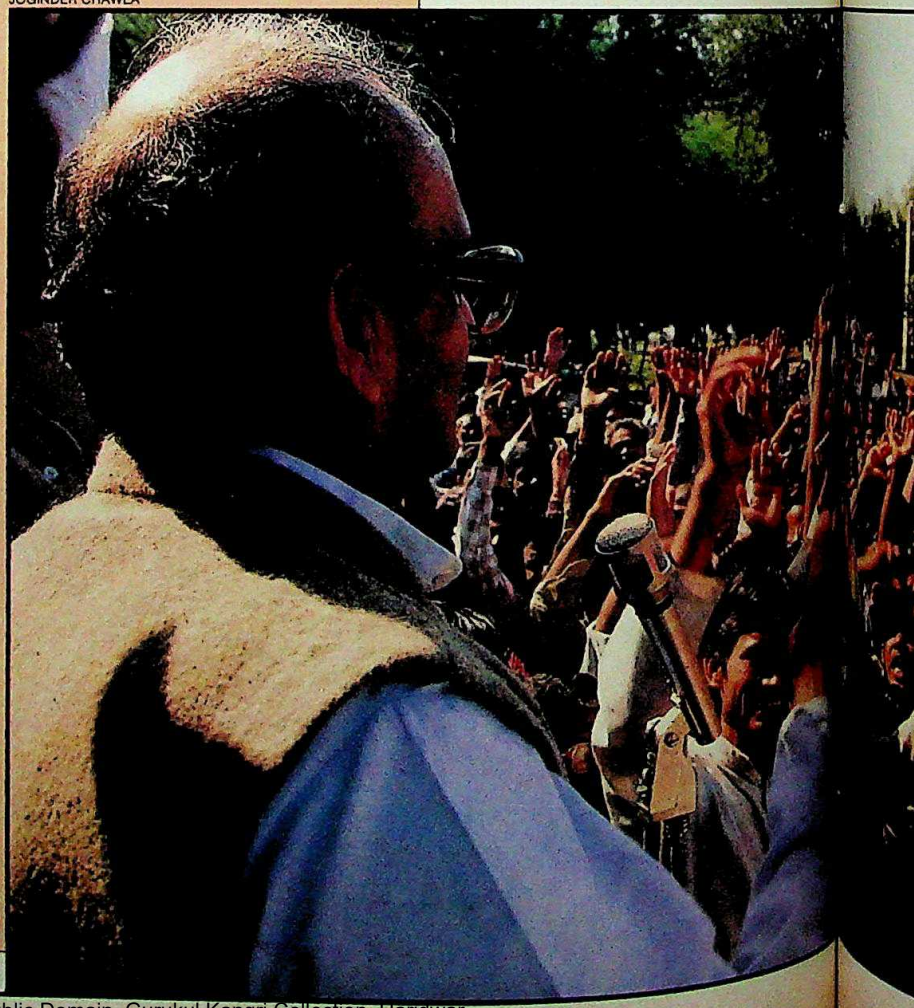

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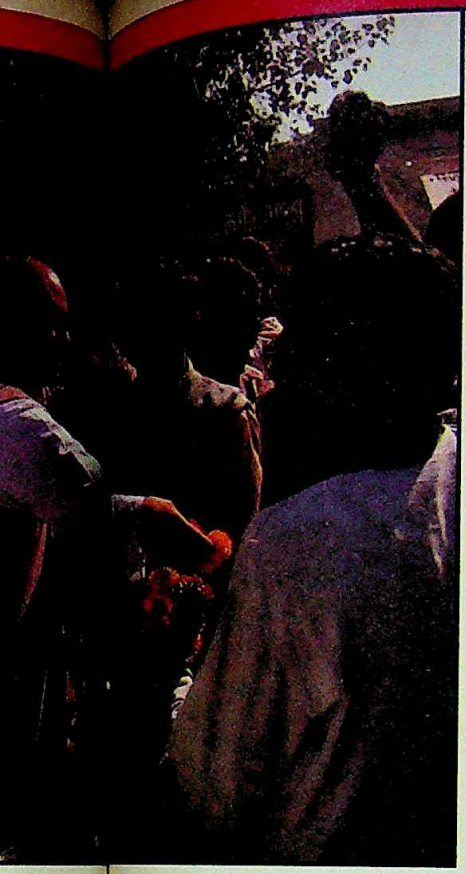


Amid cheering supporters

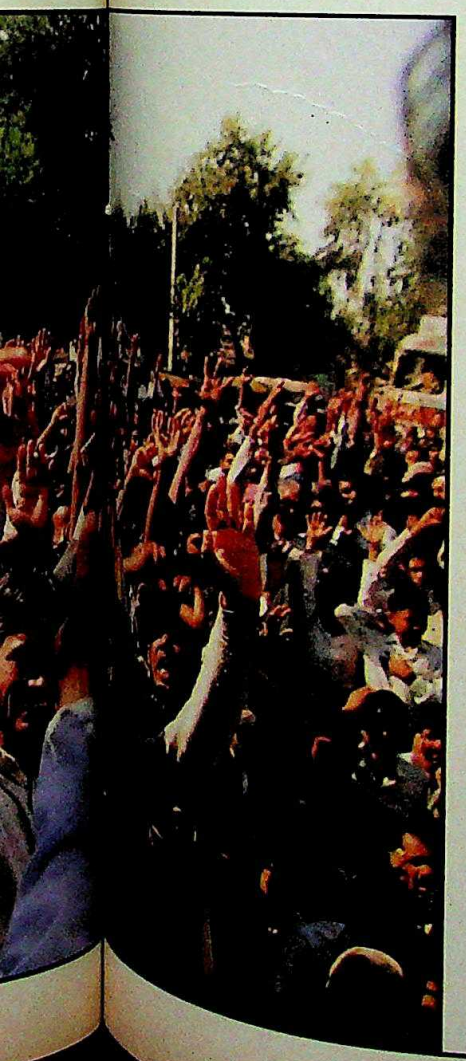
the district court complex. He shakes hands with a lawyer. Then with a litigant. A crowd of no more than 10 people in tow. And then you see what is meant by a wave-maker. Within a half hour, the entire complex comes alive with "V.P. Singh zindabad" slogans as nearly 2,000 people pour in from, God alone knows, where. The stroll, starting out with intimate gestures such as people embracing him or tousling his patchy hair, turns into a march; the march into a rally that lasts two hours. And still a sense of deep intimacy remains.

THEN, at 8 p.m. that night, at three-hour notice, the first public rally—attended, as townsfolk attest, by the largest gathering that Fatehpur has ever witnessed. "This is not just an election for Fatehpur," Singh says, "but for the entire nation. Put a *chakra* outside each house and I'll assure you there will be no *chakkar* there by any Congressman. Let this be your *Sudarshan chakra.*" And the crowd responds: "*Janata Dal ka chakra chalega Congress ke panje par.*" (The Janata Dal wheel will crush the Congress(I) hand.)

He continues: "Remember I also have to go outside to fight, so I'm leaving victory here in your hands. You tell me, when I go out and people ask me about Fatehpur, what shall I tell them?" The crowd thunders: "*Jeetengay, aap jeetenge, laakhon laakhon me jeetenge.*" (Victory will be yours, victory will be yours; by lakhs and lakhs victory will be yours.)

Next day he goes out. Between the 8th and 10th he will travel more than 2,000 km winding a tortuous route through east, central and west Uttar Pradesh. Then he'll head back east again. He can expect no more than three hours of sleep a night. Nor can he afford to catnap in the car, because as the word spreads, he is stopped anywhere and everywhere by sloganeering crowds, large and small, who often try and physically disgorge him from the car should he decline to step out to talk to them. His travel schedule was drawn up in a night as he and wife Sita sat over a map of the country. The basic idea was to cover at least 100 of the 129 constituencies in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and then to concentrate on Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh while avoiding wasteful trips to the south.

True to his reputation, even in the campaign, he is a loner, travelling with his driver or, when necessary, with a party candidate, a green *gamcha*—the party colour—wrapped loosely around his neck. There are no meals along the way. Only bananas and peanuts and water chestnuts. An occasional apple. To freshen his throat he sucks on a Pepsi lozenge or tucks a clove into his cheek. He arrives in Ghatampur two hours late. There's a public rally, planned only a day earlier, at a school ground.



Seeking roadside no-confidence vote against Rajiv: enthusiastic response

Only a few hundred people, including a dozen members of the reception committee, most of them Congressmen who had deserted their party to welcome him, are in waiting. One of them, taking a cue from the *Mera Bharat Mahaan* slogan, which has become a universal butt for scornful parody, is reading his own odious version of it: "*Congress beimaan, aur rupaye dekh kar Rajiv ka dol gaya imaan. Congress mein hota hai goondon ka samman. Matdata ab nahin bikega, gundon ka shasan nahin chalega.*" (The Congress(I) is shady, and the lust of money has made Rajiv lose his integrity. In the Congress(I) the criminal wins praise; but no more will the vote be sold, and the reign of criminals we will erase.)

Singh's speech is almost an organic extension of this sentiment. And the crowd's response to him is as if he is converting believers. Again, the believers flock to him. It's like a pied-piper syndrome. He appears, starts speaking and the few hundreds swell to nearly 10,000. He talks about the HDW submarine deal, his aborted attempt at an inquiry. About Bofors. He does not have to explain the details for there appears to be perfect comprehension in the crowd. "What do people want?" he asks. "*Ke sab ko izzat ke saath zindagi bitaane ka mauka mile.* (That everyone should be allowed to live with self-respect.) But they don't allow you to. Even when you buy a box of matches you pay an excise tax on it that goes to the Centre so it can be used for the development of the country. But instead, the tax you pay is smuggled into Swiss banks."

Between Moosanagar and Gajner, about 100 km down the road from Fatehpur, two cars travelling in the opposite direction come to a grating halt right in front of the Contessa in a whirlwind of dust. As the dust clears a shadowy figure—much in the manner of Clint Eastwood, emerging guns drawn from the smoke and mist—materialises. A barrel of a man. Arun Nehru. Singh has entered Billaur, Nehru's constituency. He smiles a hello and plunks himself in the back seat of the Contessa and Singh offers him a banana.

"*Yaar* Vishwanath," Nehru says, "I've been here about four days and been to more than a hundred villages. It's

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amazing. What I'm seeing here is a greater intensity than even 1984. You can't even move here, there's so much enthusiasm." He is not exaggerating. For apart from the frenzied crowds that exhort Singh to fight, and beat their chests in support of him and erect human roadblocks to greet him in small bunches or at hastily organised rallies where even microphones are not present, there is but for one lonely jeep displaying the Congress(I) symbol, not a sign of any electoral activity by the ruling party for the remaining 150-km journey to Unnao.

Outside Sanchedi, Singh points towards a tree on the side of the road. "Look," he says. A Congress(I) flag hangs limply from a neem tree. He chuckles: "They could not find a house or building to put it up, so a tree is their last resort." Further down the road he motions once again towards a tree. Another Congress(I) flag? No. Singh says he wants to go behind the tree for a bladder stop. "Not here," says Nehru, "See the people waiting. They'll just grab you. Wait for some thick bushes." Barely out of the bushes and into the car and a group of 50 farmers converge on Singh and garland him with a string of one-rupee notes.

At Akbarpur, residents scream their welcome not only from the sidewalks but also from the rooftops. "Where are we?" asks Singh. "I think this is Chaubeypur," replies Nehru. Next, at Ruri, a rustic town Singh has never even heard of, the townsfolk in thousands appear to have gone mad. The moment the car enters it is literally mobbed by what looks like an entire city. One car mobbed by the entire town. They try and lift the car. The next 20 minutes are a tumult of arms and legs and voices shouting hoarse for Singh. As the car begins to inch forward to the formal meeting place thousands run alongside dancing and showering rose petals for the next 2 km.

> **Singh stresses there's been an erosion of fundamental rights in the Rajiv regime and attempts to throttle the press.**

Next, at Sheoli, it is sunset, and some 15,000 villagers have been waiting for five hours for Singh and Nehru. The speeches are sober and short. Singh and Nehru stress that there's been an erosion of the fundamental rights of people in the Rajiv regime, that there have been attempts to throttle the press and turn the official media into a propaganda machine to avoid accountability for corruption in high places.

An old man, a freedom fighter, rises to his feet from the multitude. "For those who have sinned, hell exists not in the next world but in this one. Rajiv has sinned. He must be punished. *Usko yahin dand do* (Punish him in this world)," he demands amid thunderous applause.

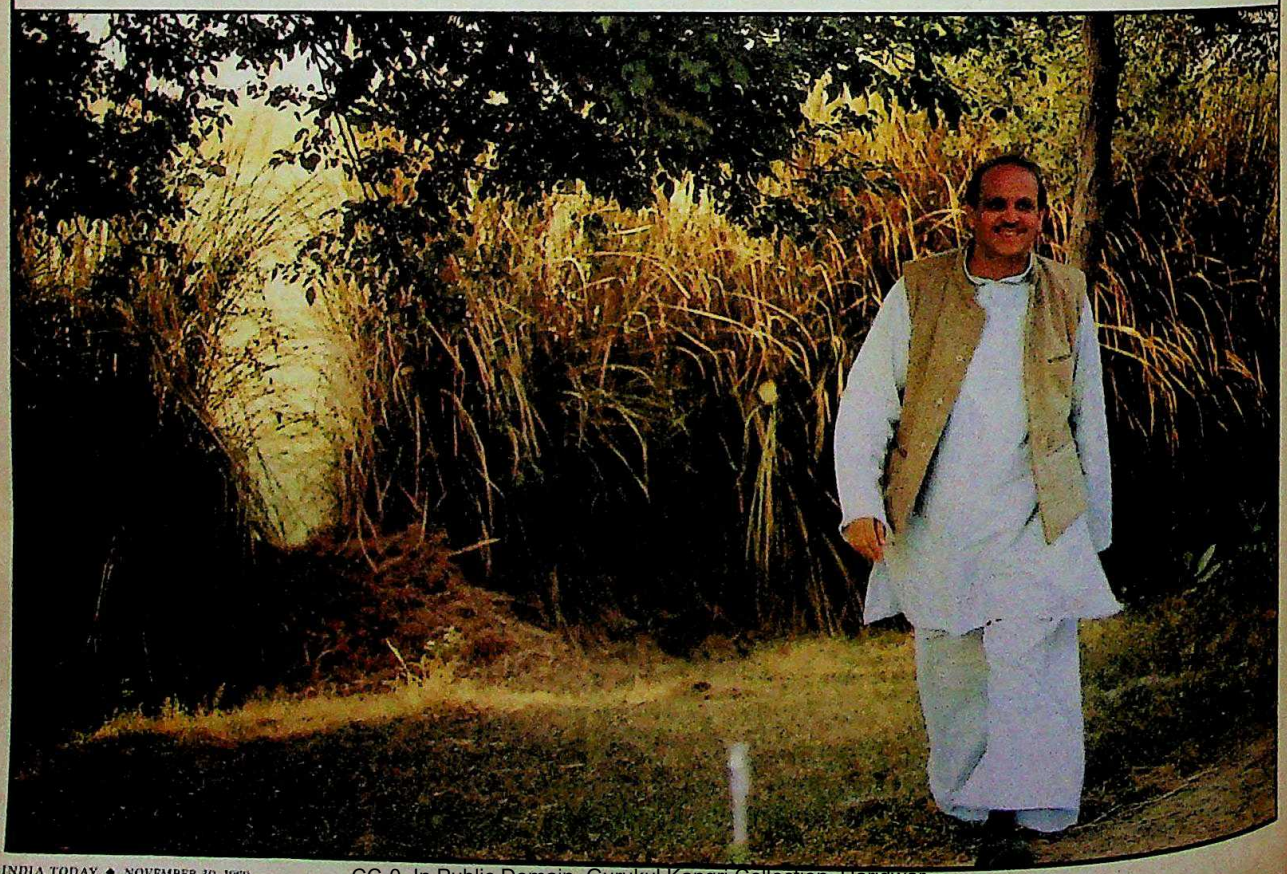
Back in the car Singh muses: "Perhaps we should create a new slogan about Moresco (a company involved in the Bofors pay-offs). How about "*Rajiv Gandhi kaun hai?* Moresco *ka chor-esco!* (Who is Rajiv Gandhi? The thief of Moresco.)" And he guffaws, the gold-filling in his right upper molars showing prominently.

Then on a more sober note, he muses: "When I had my last meeting with Rajiv after I resigned as defence minister, he asked me, 'Why are you taking this path? It can lead only to disaster.' I replied: 'You go your way. I've already chosen the disaster path.' Let's see whose path leads where."

Then he falls silent. Tucks another clove into his mouth and speeds off into the night.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR

Singh takes a break: confident



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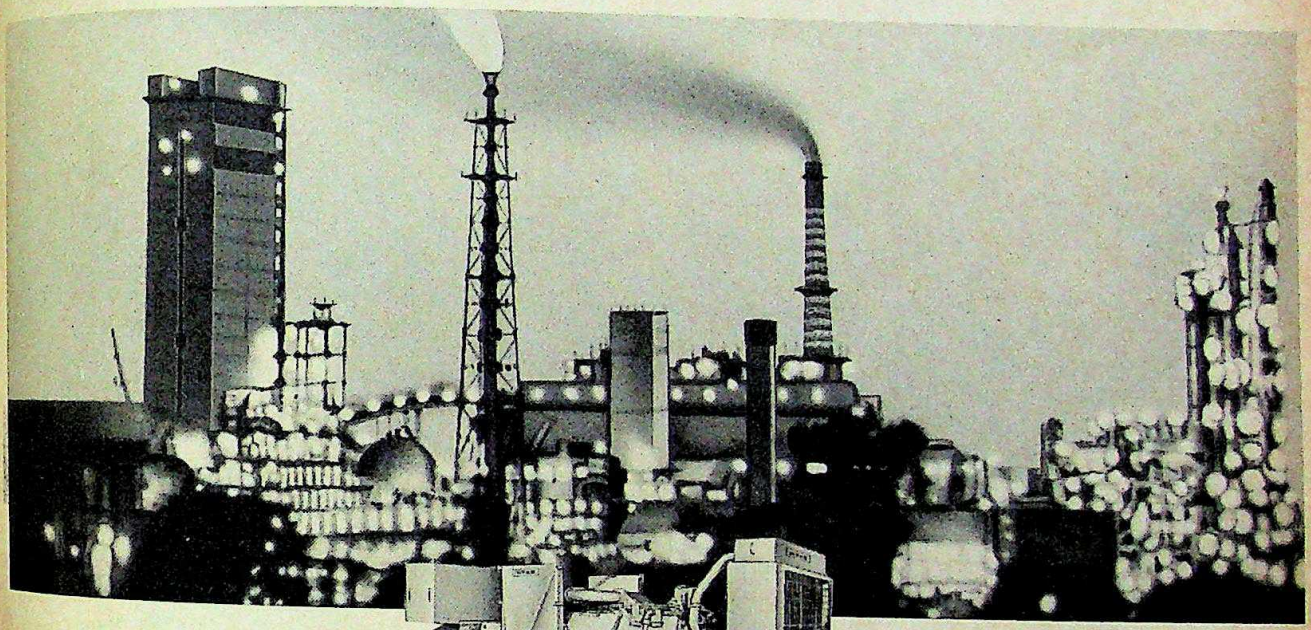

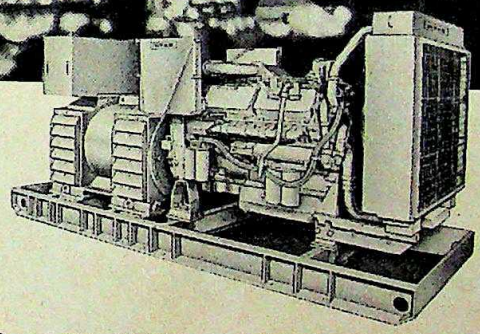

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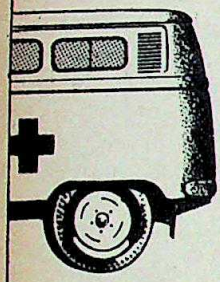

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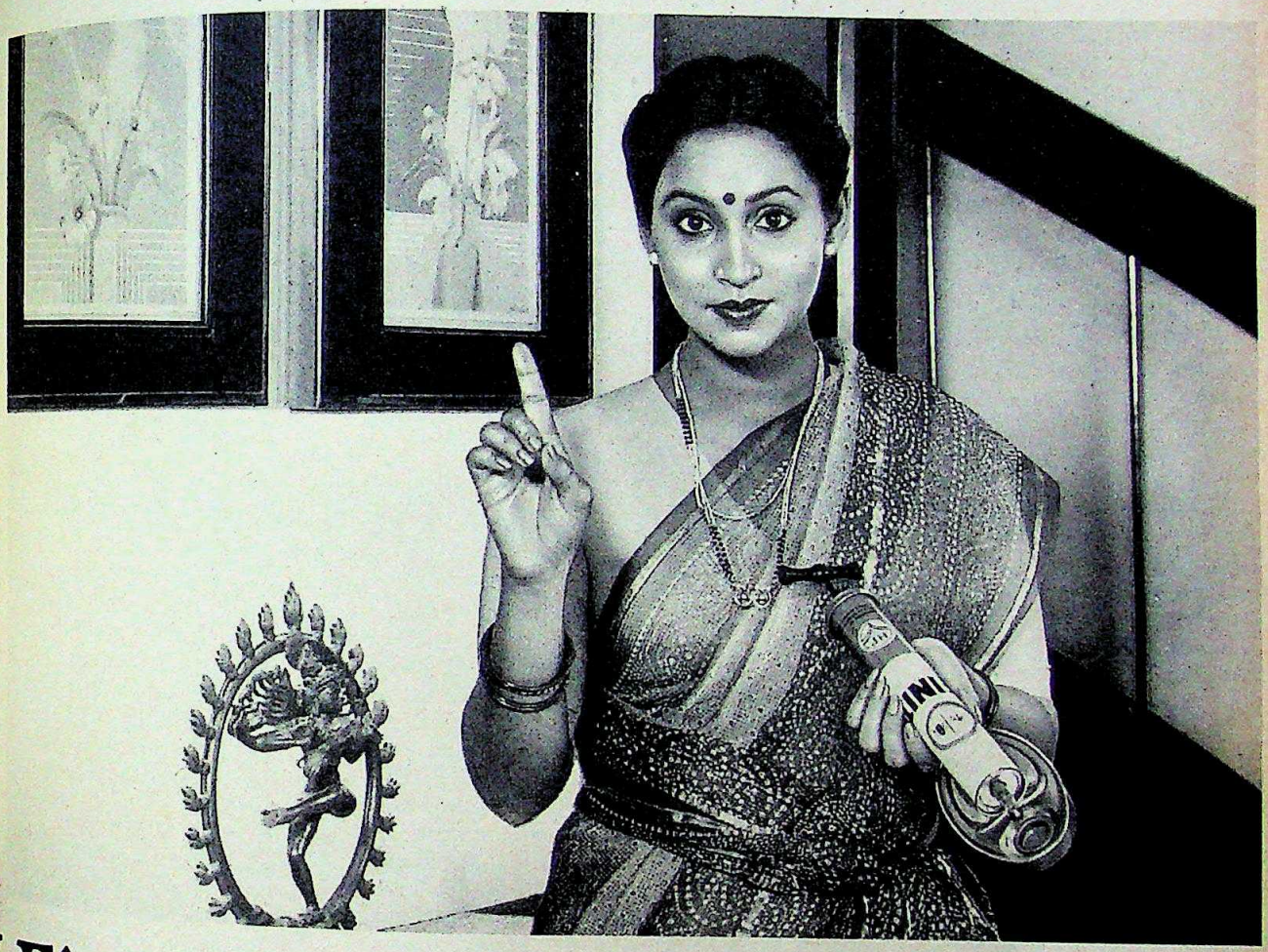
"No mosquitoes and cockroaches in my house...



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UTTAR PRADESH

Advantage Opposition

V.P. Singh puts Congress(I) on defensive

IF the 1989 election campaign has become a political Mahabharat, the battle for Uttar Pradesh is growing into a *chakravyuha*, a deadly trap in which both contenders fight for glory, or survival. Ruling India without winning Uttar Pradesh is not a statistical impossibility even though the state contributes 85 seats (total electorate 7.94 crore), or nearly one-sixth of the Lok Sabha.

But it is a political absurdity. More so in the current context when the two major claimants for prime ministership, Rajiv Gandhi and V.P. Singh are wooing their Uttar Pradesh constituents in the most significant electoral battle of their lives. There is no dearth of *maharathis*. Others include: Chandra Shekhar, the Opposition's perennial dark horse for the prime ministership, other Janata Dal stars like Arun Nehru, Ajit Singh and Maneka Gandhi, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Kanshi Ram and of course, the Congress(I)'s Narayan Dutt Tiwari, who would like to be king but might probably end up being king-maker in the event of a split result.

On paper, Tiwari is contesting for the Vidhan Sabha where his party is waging a desperate campaign against the Opposition and its own inbuilt contradictions and dissensions to continue clinging to power. But as a series of political decisions, including the one to hold the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha polls simultaneously in the state and the allocation of tickets subsequently showed, he had already emerged as the lynch-pin of the new Congress(I) syndicate, sometimes defying, sometimes manipulating and quite often advising the prime minister. Tiwari, it is obvious, looks at this election as the penultimate if not the last step in his pilgrimage to the portals of high power in the capital.

With so much at stake, it is no surprise that the state has seen some of the most bitter, intense and purposeful campaigning so far, beginning slowly but picking up rapidly as the fortnight progressed. And by the end of the first round it seemed the Opposition had taken a lead which the Congress(I) could find hard to narrow decisively in the last round with the pace and the pulses quickening.

Both eastern and central Uttar Pradesh are responding with visible aplomb to V.P. Singh's electoral entreaties. And in the Jat-dominated western Uttar Pradesh, Ajit Singh should be able to reclaim his late father Charan Singh's legacy. The worry showed in the Congress(I) camp where campaign managers talked darkly of "some reverses" in the Lok Sabha while promising "an easy majority in the Vidhan Sabha because of predominantly three-cornered contests". Said a somewhat philosophical Tiwari: "Considering the circumstances, we are doing reasonably well." In a similar vein, added state Congress(I) chief Balram Singh Yadav: "This election is a lot different from 1984.

- ***Bhaiyya ka, bhaujai ka***
Vote Congress(I) ka.
(The brother's vote, and the sister-in-law's, is for the Congress(I).)
Congress(I) slogan

- ***Na yehan koyee Janata Dal hai,***
Na yehan koyee DS-4,
Rajiv Gandhi key panjey se,
Harenge sab daku chor.
(There is no Janata Dal here,
Nor any DS-4,
Rajiv Gandhi's claw
Will render every charlatan null.)
Congress(I) slogan

- ***Aap picchley paanch varshon se kahan the? Aapke intezar mein main sookha ja raha hoon.***
(Where were you for five years? I have been languishing, waiting for you.)
signboard hung from a huge cutout of a shoe in Kanpur streets welcoming Congress(I) candidate for Sasmau constituency

RAGHU RAI

AMETHI

Duel of the Gandhis

The Mahatma's grandson takes on Nehru's

THE voter in Amethi has a problem. For the past elections the choice had been clear: a scion of the nation's number one political family. Now he has to choose between *Asli Gandhi* (real Gandhi) and *Apna Gandhi* (our own Gandhi).

No two men with the same last name could be so different, in personality or political style. There is Rajiv Gandhi, whose family first picked Amethi as the safest of safe pocket boroughs, a forgotten island of poverty. As soon as Amethi adopted the Gandhis, its face changed. Factories, roads, tubewells, and largesses all came in. All Rajiv is asking for today is a tribute from his constituents for all this.

He is asking for it through three rounds of personal campaign, through loudspeakers on over 200 jeeps (160 brand-new), through 10 video raths, and through the baritone voice of his late mother played from hundreds of loudspeakers to the accompaniment of canned cheers. Rajiv's close friend and confidant, Satish Sharma, has been running the campaign full-time.

Six kilometres outside Amethi, at

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JOGINDER CHAWLA

Rajiv arrives in Amethi; Sonia campaigns; and (below) Rajmohan's personal contact trail: differing styles

Kushitali village, the Rajiv bandwagon arrives: a brand new Mahindra jeep fitted with a French Peugeot engine, three Crown TV sets with Hitachi kits, a Japanese Funai video cassette player, a Sony record player, all run by a Shriram-Honda generator. On three screens, Mrs Gandhi speaks about Rajiv's childhood. Cut to her funeral, Rajiv and Sonia with tear-stained cheeks. The smoke yields to the wide, blue sea. A seagull rises in the mist. Cut to Rajiv wiping the tears from a little girl's eyes. The seagull again.

Cut, on the campaign screen, to Kasara village. It's twilight and Rajmohan Gandhi reclines on a cot along with his diminutive wife Usha, in the Harijan quarter of the village. He bends often to stop people from touching his feet. A few goats loiter around. "Who was Mahatma Gandhi?" he asks softly, under the glow of a crescent moon. "A great man. He ruled the country," says a villager. "No, no. He gave us freedom but did not rule the country. I'm not even a thousandth fraction of him. But I'm his grandson," he introduces himself. At Ishwarpur, 8 kilometres down the road, at a meeting held in the glare of the headlights of two of his campaign jeeps, he tells people to vote out the *jagirdari* (feudal rule) for a *sajhedari* (partnership).

His campaign headquarters is a shanty room in Saindham, a nondescript hotel. Bahujan Samaj Party chief Kanshi Ram, incidentally, stays in the adjoining room. "We have just 11 jeeps of which four are not working. But more should come in the next 48 hours," hopes Laxmi Jain, the gentle Gandhian economist who has just won the Magsaysay Award. Whatever real muscle or decibel power Rajmohan has, is provided by the supporters of Sanjay Singh, Amethi's assembly candidate. They are noisy, and openly boast expertise in booth-capturing, none of which suits Rajmohan. "We need resources, but not this *Shivji ki baraat*," says a supporter. The Janata Dal has rushed 10 more jeeps. But the hordes of Congress(I) vehicles make the battle look like a ruthless cavalry charging a gaggle of satyagrahis.

But the Congress(I) knows the wind blowing across Uttar Pradesh may not stop at Amethi's borders. It also faces an unexpected irritant in Kanshi Ram who could corner vital Harijan votes.

So, the Congress(I) is taking no chances. For the first time, Sonia herself is campaigning, staying at the Tatarpur Canal rest house near Jagdishpur. She traverses the dusty countryside, treading on uneven village paths despite her three-inch high heels, sticking *bindis* with the Congress(I) hand on the foreheads of women, pointing to the hand brooch on her red-and-white khadi sari. Her delivery in Hindi is near-perfect: "Please vote only for my husband and put your stamp on the *panja*." She told INDIA TODAY: "I have been working with these people for over eight years. So it's nothing new for me to campaign now." She doesn't seem to be enjoying the campaign but is more relaxed than she seems on more formal occasions.

Yet, the very fact of her unprecedented involvement in the campaign shows the degree of concern in the Rajiv camp. Surely, whatever the outcome anywhere else, Amethi is one seat the Congress(I) will try the hardest to win, fighting to the last man, the last ballot.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Amethi

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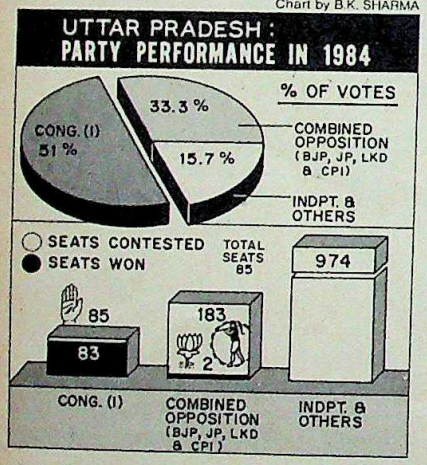
But by the voting day we will be clearly ahead."

If the Congress(I) spokesmen talk in euphemisms and escapist platitudes, the opposition leaders ooze confidence. After a day's intense campaigning atop his green Maruti gypsy in his dusty, backward, Brahmin-dominated Bilhaur constituency last week, Arun Nehru relaxed on a lavishly cushioned king-size bed in one of his admirer's houses. "A wave does not respect reputation, caste, religion, stature, nothing," he said, rising on his haunches. With eyes gleaming, he adds: "*Aaisi dhulai hogi Congress kee, pitayee hogee.*(The Congress will be beaten to pulp)...They are finished. *Finito*"—stressing the Italian *Finito* with transparent allusions.

As INDIA TODAY correspondents travelled through the state during the first round of the campaign, it became obvious there were good reasons for the Opposition's confidence. Nowhere is the Congress(I) trying to answer any of the charges made against it by the Opposition. It is promising development and stability. The result is a curious cacophony of campaign voices where the two sides articulate their views and promises on

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



entirely different wavelengths. And at least for the moment the people seem more receptive to the Opposition and its refrain on price rise and corruption. Further, it is locked in straight contests for 78 of the 85 Lok Sabha seats with only parties like the BSP threatening to divide the votes.

The situation is not so encouraging for the Opposition in the Vidhan Sabha as the Janata Dal and BJP could not work out an understanding. The Congress(I) has been given the gift of triangular fights for nearly 350 of the 425 seats.

Given the significance of the state it was hardly surprising that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi opened his party's 1989 campaign from Uttar Pradesh—in fact, from Faizabad, the somewhat dubiously exalted city of Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid fame. After promising to usher in a Ram Rajya he made the state a frequent stop on his itinerary as he criss-crossed the country. Tiwari too was pulling out all the stops, hopping from one constituency to another in his French-made Dauphin helicopter, returning to Lucknow only late in the nights, often sleeping at the VIP lounge in the airport.

IN contrast, barring constituencies like Bilhaur (Arun Nehru), Bahraich (Arif Mohammed Khan), Ballia (Chandra Shekhar) and Pilibhit (Maneka Gandhi), the Janata Dal campaign began late, in a slovenly manner. But on November 7, V.P. Singh finally landed by train at Fatehpur, his constituency and it all began to change.

But even if V.P. Singh is able to generate a wave it will have to be a mighty strong one to be able to blow aside the Congress(I)'s inherent electoral advantages: infrastructure, resources, reach, vote banks among the Harijans, minorities and women and the promise of stability. The Congress(I) campaign depends on high-decibel electronics and swankily printed posters while the Janata Dal counters it with the word of mouth. Glamorous constituencies are a case apart but even one look at the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal offices which are situated close to each other in Badaun in western Uttar Pradesh—where former chief minister Ram Naresh Yadav fights Devi Lal's alter ego Sharad Yadav—shows the difference. The Congress(I) office with ostentatious lighting, bright slogans and fancy decoration looks like a marriage *pandal*. The Janata Dal office has a sombre appearance with a few party flags fluttering at the gate and bands of workers resting on hessian cots. The Janata Dal campaigners say they are conserving their scarce resources for the last, decisive round of the campaign when they will throw everything in, posters, banners, audio and video cassettes et al.

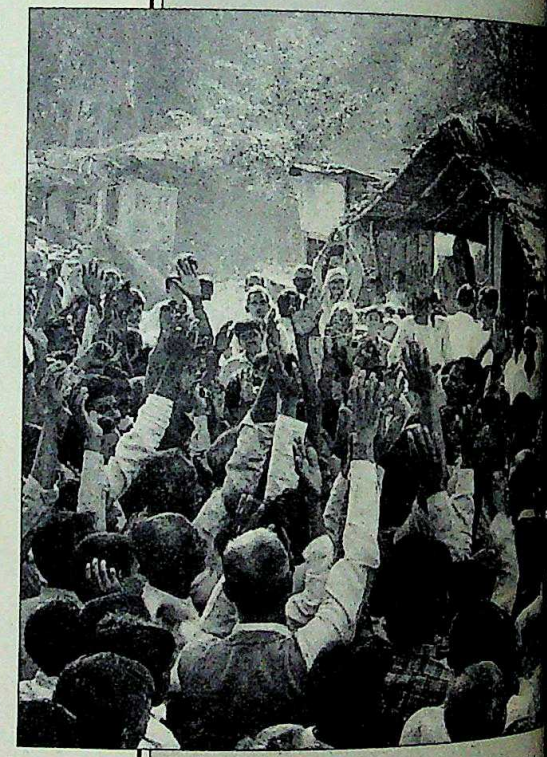
While the Congress(I) organisation went through the campaign motions with the precision of a well-oiled machine and the Opposition conserved resources for the final push, the most surprising element was the reluctance on the part of several key ruling party candidates to get down to the brasstacks. Last fortnight

FATEHPUR

The Amethi Syndrome

For voters V.P. Singh is a potential prime minister

EVEN the most seasoned campaigner could not have chosen a more suitable pulpit. In the village of Gogauli, 3 km off the Grand Trunk Road bissecting the Fatehpur Lok Sabha constituency, the portly Congress(I) candidate and Union Min-



ister of State for Agriculture Hari Krishna Shastri stands atop a *pucca* chaupal addressing a hundred-odd villagers.

Shastri's back is to the cemented panchayat room which displays a television antenna. To his left is a large concrete-lined well and facing him is a gramin bank. Ask any villager. He knows all of these—the chaupal, the panchayat, the well and the bank—have been constructed because of Shastri.

"Hasn't he done a lot of work here?"

"Yes, particularly as the agriculture minister."

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"So he is a good person?"

"Yes, and so soft-spoken also, but..."

"But what?"

"But Raja *saab* is contesting this time. The vote must go to him."

Shastri's motorcade—rather a modest one by Congress(I) standards—has turned back to the highway, to stop at the Bindki Road Chaudagra. The audience nods as Shastri stresses his contributions to the constituency. It even responds as he accuses V.P. Singh of deserting Allahabad within a year of winning from there.

But a quick survey of the audience there, and the same feeling surfaces: Shastri is a good man, but when it comes to the Raja *saab*, the considerations are entirely different. Says Vijay Mohan, 22, a factory hand: "We are voting for a prime minister. Other things don't matter."

There are many, in both Congress(I) and opposition camps, who think V.P. Singh could not have chosen a safer constituency. Poor and underdeveloped, it spreads right along the Ganga, flanked by the privileged Rae Bareli and Amethi on one side and the dacoit-infested Bundelkhand on the other. In terms of development, Fatehpur appears to be a town frozen in time—in dire need of a weighty representative for a turn in its fortunes.

There are other reasons too. The Thakurs, who form the bulk of Singh's support, constitute a sizeable 18 per cent of the electorate. More significant than numbers, however, is their influence at the village-level, as the most dominant caste. But just as Thakur loyalties bring in votes for Singh, they also bring in resentment from the oppressed, underprivileged communities.

V.P. Singh himself has opted for a non-casteist, soft-spoken image, but his Thakur storm-troopers show little moderation. And it is not uncommon to run into people from the backward classes complaining bitterly about that. V.P. Singh also carries the albatross of his estranged brother, Sant Bux Singh's record of inaction during the two terms served from the same constituency. But his supporters believe the current pro-V.P. Singh feeling will overshadow these factors.

There is also an element of controversy—about how V.P. Singh came to be confronted again by a son of Lal Bahadur Shastri within a year (he defeated Sunil Shastri in the '88 Allahabad by-election). It is well-known that the late prime minister treated V.P. Singh like his own son. And many say the Congress(I) has attempted for a second time to disturb his rather sanctimonious conscience. In the Allahabad campaign, V.P. Singh made no direct reference to Sunil Shastri and the compliment was returned. But Fatehpur is different.

V.P. Singh says he was keen to avoid fighting another Shastri. He had advised Shastri through Sunil, his younger brother, "a month and a half ago to change his constituency if he wanted to". But Shastri has a different version to narrate. Asserting that he never wanted to avoid fighting V.P. Singh, he says: "He is a liar, a very, very selfish, meek and ambitious person."

Shastri claims that on the contrary V.P. Singh had promised him on the steps of Parliament that he would not contest from Fatehpur. "There is no question of any family links entering this campaign," says Shastri emphatically, adding, "when my father won the 1965 war, V.P. Singh welcomed him by slashing his own thumb and putting the tilak on his forehead with his own blood. But today if Shastriji were alive, he would have fought against this man, V.P. Singh."

This is truly a no-holds-barred campaign and Shastri is fighting with his back to the wall. What makes matters worse for him is the fact that his party seems to have given up the seat. He also has to carry the burden of four of the five sitting MLAs, who have all been renominated despite at least three of them having dismal records. The only new face, Amar Singh in Bindki, is controversial for his role in the questionable deals in the cooperative bank of which he was chairman.

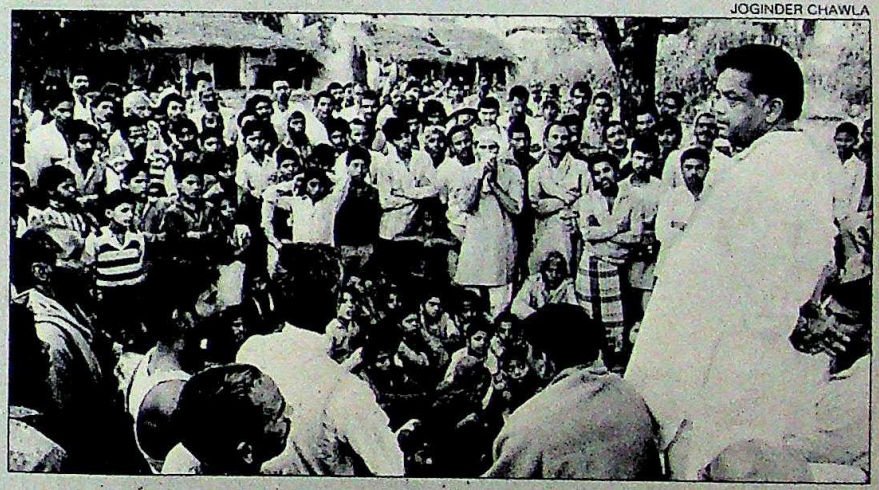
But Shastri is not giving up, and claims: "I am comfortably placed." V.P. Singh is contemptuous of the challenge: "I don't even have to come to Fatehpur again. The issue has already been decided." With the dice so heavily loaded against him, the Congress(I) candidate has at least one factor firmly in his favour: his rival's overconfidence.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Fatehpur

Photographs by JOGINDER CHAWLA

V.P. Singh talking to constituents; and Shastri (below) addressing a chaupal meeting: unequal contest

JOGINDER CHAWLA



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several of them wasted valuable time waiting for the *shilanyas* ceremony at Ayodhya to be over before beginning to campaign. At his pocket borough of Pratapgarh, Union Commerce Minister Dinesh Singh sat pretty with a well-manicured look untouched by the election dust and waiting for the *shilanyas* before jumping into the fray. "If the Government gives in to Hindu fundamentalists in Ayodhya we can all go and happily retire in Delhi and yet get elected," he said somewhat wishfully as the subsequent developments showed (*see box*). But the Raja of the adjoining principality of Kalakanker did not deny that he was facing heavy odds in a truly fratricidal electoral fight.

His rival is Abhey Pratap Singh, or Badey Raja as he is called in this feudal town. He is the elder son of Ajit Pratap Singh, forest minister in the Tiwari cabinet and an old Dinesh Singh supporter who left the Congress(I) in the nick of time to join the Janata Dal. So did his brother Arun who is contesting from an adjoining Vidhan Sabha constituency on a Janata Dal ticket. The embarrassed father has withdrawn into political recluse in Lucknow and Dinesh Singh misses him. Particularly so in a region where electoral fortunes are decided as much by popularity as by muscle power and where rivals often call each other by

AYODHYA

Communal Card

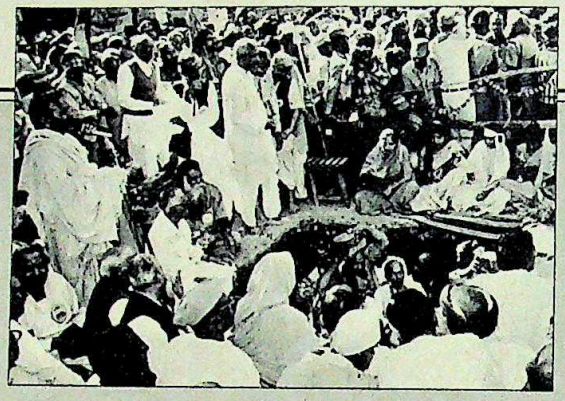
IT was an unusual victory celebration. As thousands streamed into the sanctum sanctorum of the curiously-shaped shrine, their heads bowed in reverence and eyes glazed by extreme religious fervour, the slogans they shouted were not just to extol the gods.

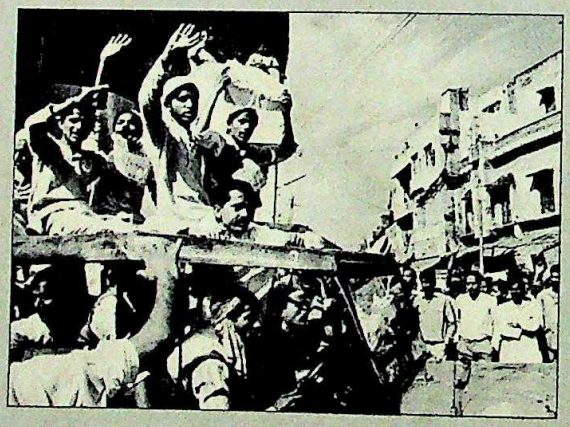
Take for instance, the favourite one: "*Yeh to kewal jhanki hai, Kashi, Mathura baaki hai*" (This is just the beginning, we still have to sort out Kashi and Mathura). And "*Tel laga ke Dabur ka, naam mita do Babur ka*" (Rub Dabur oil, wipe out Babur's name). Undoubtedly, a poor attempt at versification, but it reflected the mood on the morning of November 9 at the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid shrine in Ayodhya.

Even though the authorities attempted to persuade the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) activists to lay the foundation stone 250 ft away from the shrine's entrance, they were ultimately allowed to lay it where they wanted to in the first place: in front of the main entrance, just 170 ft away. In a belated attempt to defend its position, the Government said the foundation stone had been laid on land declared indisputed by the Allahabad High Court. The Muslims said it was very much within the disputed area and the Hindu fundamentalists said they couldn't care less.

"The idols in the shrine shall not be moved by an inch. The new temple will take the place of the old one," said Jagdish Tangri, Punjab Shiv Sena president, ringed by six Sikh bodyguards from the Punjab Police. Also, while the VHP agreed to postpone construction of the temple till January 27, next year, there seemed no doubt that the devout would return to resume building the shrine.

Worried by the rising resentment among devout Hindus, the Government had capitulated totally. Yet with the BJP and other allied groups claiming victory, it was doubtful if the move would win any Hindu votes for the Congress(I). At the same time, it had alienated the Muslims and the subsequent days saw announcements by several key Muslim leaders to oppose the Congress(I).





***Shilanyas* at Ayodhya (top); and Muslims protesting in Faizabad**

At this point it was uncertain which way the Hindu vote would swing. Even V.P. Singh, who had rushed to Ayodhya on November 9, to "plead restraint" and to draw electoral mileage, was caught on the wrong foot. He was still in neighbouring Faizabad when the news came that the *shilanyas* had taken place peacefully. Now, if he criticised the move, it would upset the Hindus. If he didn't, it would leave the Muslims angry. Not surprisingly, he seemed visibly flustered at his news conference.

Hindu activists had chosen the right day for the *shilanyas*, when nearly a million pilgrims were present in Ayodhya for the panch-kosi parikrama mela, giving them ample muscle-power.

A mile away at the VHP camp, a guide at an exhibition explained to the pilgrims a pictorial representation of how Babur "demolished" the temple, killed the priests and built the mosque. At the shrine, 15 companies of paramilitary forces who manned the Maginot Line-like perimeter to guard it, had put up a banner "welcoming devotees to this sacrosanct birthplace of Lord Rama". And many of the devotees returned home with a pinch of the sacred soil dug out of the hole made for the foundation. It is abundantly clear where the sapling of communal discord will grow in the months to come.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Ayodhya

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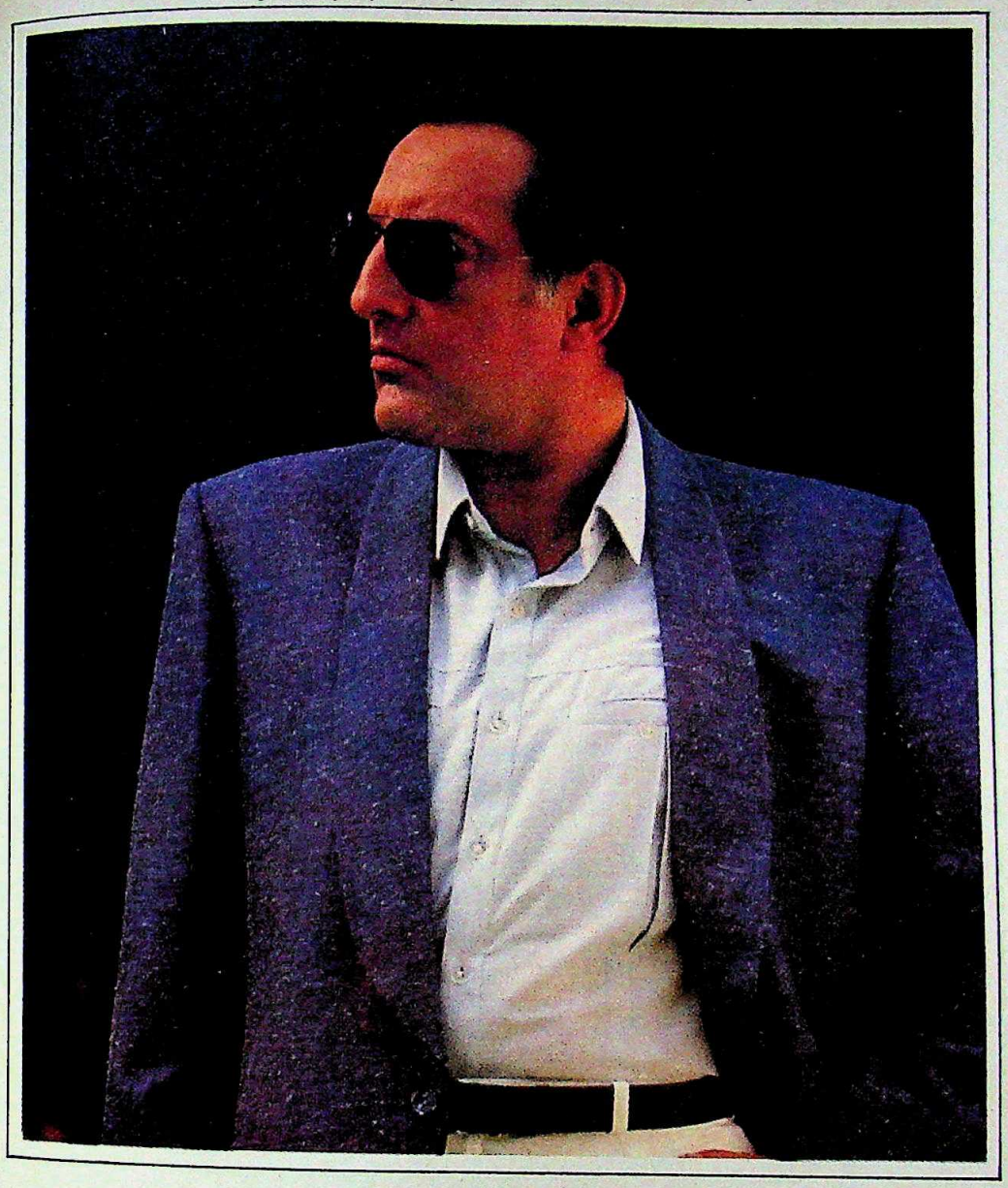

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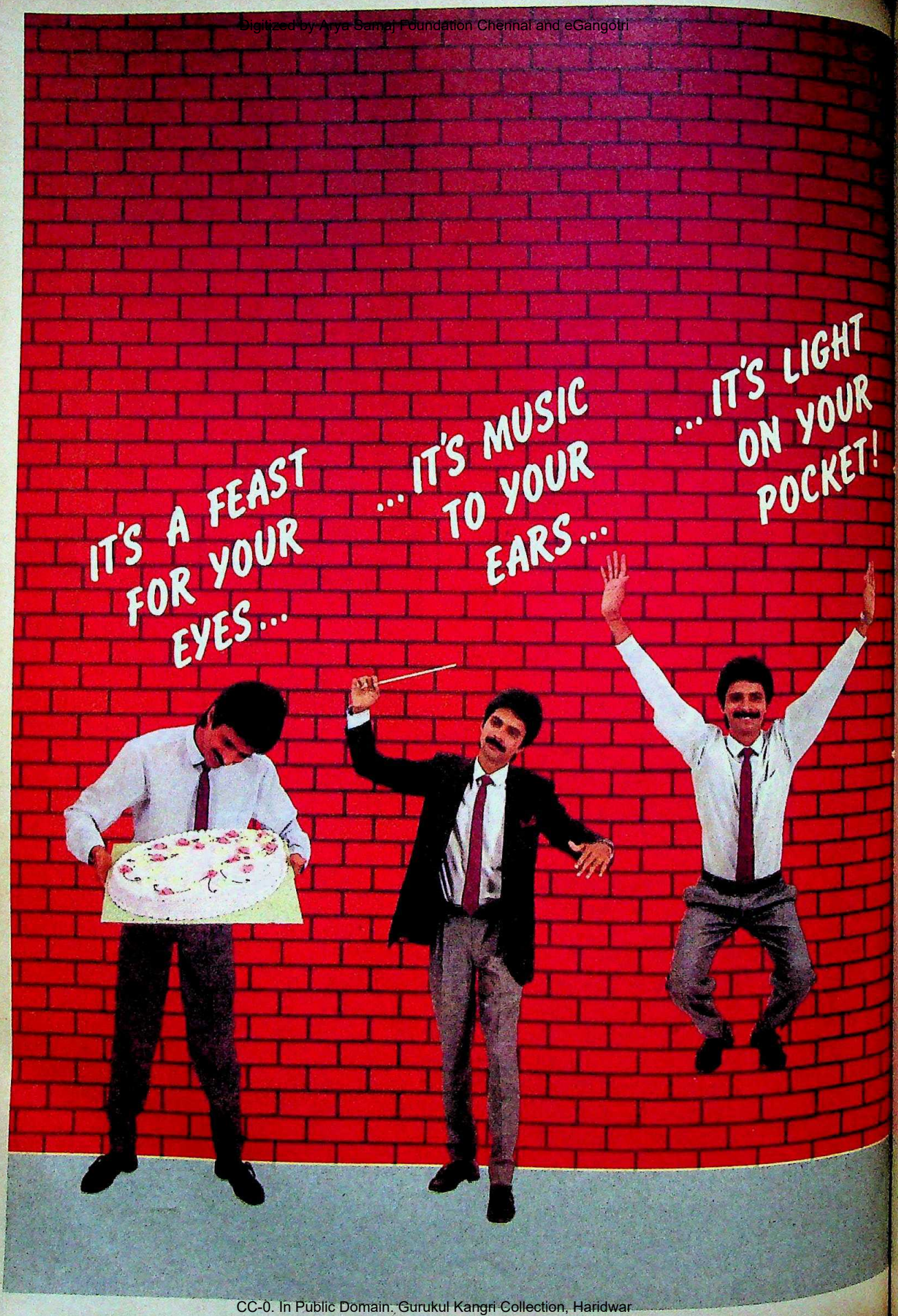

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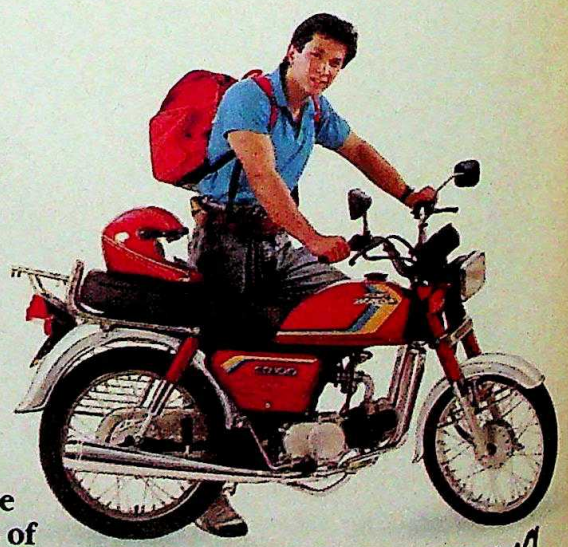

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the epithet of "*booth luteras* (booth capturers)." Badey Raja himself talks in euphemisms: "Actually our boat is not so nice but its sails are getting the wind."

Unfortunately for the Congress(I), some of these winds have indeed wafted in from their own camp because of their tactical errors in announcing a simultaneous poll and retention of most of the old candidates. Initially the names of 25 of the 67 sitting MPs had been marked with red because they were unpopular and ineffective. At least seven of them had corruption charges against them. There were MPs like Pilibhit's Bhanu Pratap Singh, Nainital's Satendra Chandra Guria, Bareilly's Abida Ahmed, Almora's Harish Rawat, Shahjahanpur's Jitendra Prasad, Faizabad's Nirmal Khatri and Jhansi's Sujan Singh Bundela who had almost counted themselves out when the UPCC(I) election committee was meeting in Lucknow. All of them have been nominated and that too from their old constituencies.

The story is almost the same in the Vidhan Sabha also as far as ticket distribution is concerned. Only 56 of the sitting Congress(I) MLAs (supposed to have been close to the late chief minister Bir Bahadur Singh) including 20 rebels who are now contesting from the Janata Dal have been denied tickets out of a total of 268. The disaffection is palpable. At a key election meeting last fortnight, a very senior Congress(I) functionary de-

● ***Jahan koyee shasak na ho usey Rajiv ganarajya kehte hain,***
Jo dharm bina ho shaasan usey secular rajya kehte hain,
Jahan pradhanmantri seedhey ghoos deta ho gram pradhanon ko,
Usey shisht bhasha mein panchayati raj kehte hain

(Where there is total anarchy, it is called Rajiv's democracy
Where there is no faith they call it secular raj.
And where the prime minister sends bribes directly to gram pradhans,
In polite language, they call it panchayati raj.) ***Opposition doggerel***

HALDWANI

Tiwari's Bastion

THERE'S one assembly constituency in Uttar Pradesh where Narayan Dutt Tiwari isn't campaigning at all. Haldwani—his own constituency. That is the measure of the confidence the chief minister has in the outcome. Says he matter-of-factly: "The people of Haldwani will look after my interests."

Just as he has looked after theirs. Tiwari's husbanding of Haldwani stretches back to 1952 when he first tasted electoral victory on the Socialist Party ticket. He knows many of the local people by name. His opponents, the Janata Dal's Hukum Singh Kunwar and the BJP's Nand Kishore are pygmies in comparison.

But if Haldwani, or Nainital North as it is called, is a sure bet for the Congress(I), the same cannot be said of the Nainital Lok Sabha constituency. In the hill resort of Nainital itself, the sitting MP Satendra Chandra Guria literally faces an uphill task. The denial of the ticket to Union Defence Minister K.C. Pant has angered many. Says Ateeq Shamin, a farmer: "Had it been Tiwari himself, it would have been different. But most of us won't support his *gudia* (doll)", a snide reference to the ruling party candidate, Guria. The Pant factor could also affect the party's support among the Brahmins who make up 22.5 per cent of the 8.83 lakh voters. The reason: Pant is a *lambi dhoti* (long dhoti) or upper caste Brahmin while Tiwari is a *choti dhoti* (short dhoti) or lower caste Brahmin.

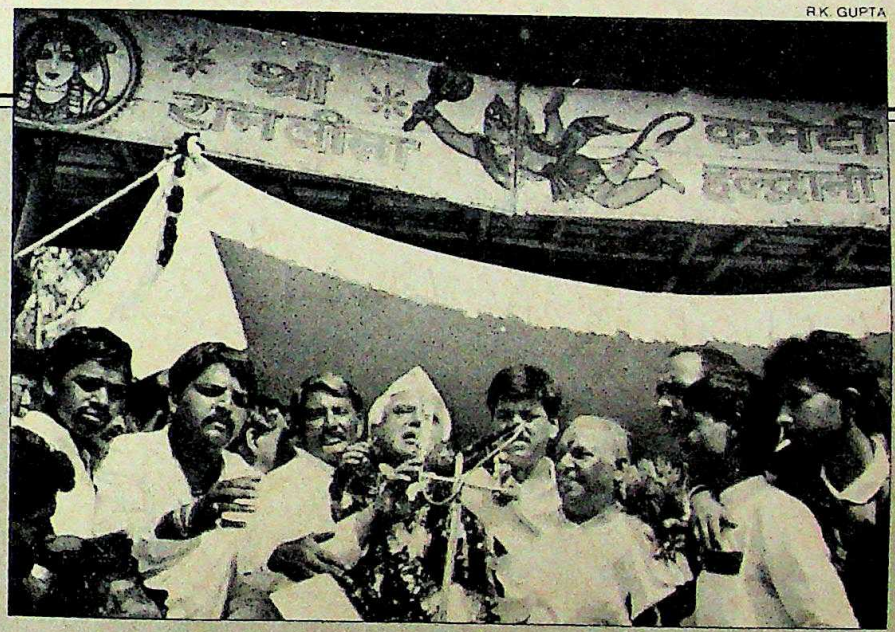
To complicate matters, Ramesh Rana, an influential Tharu (tribal) leader, is contesting. With 60,000 Tharus in Nainital, he could eat into the Congress(I) vote.

In the assembly constituencies too, it will be tough going. In Khatima, the DCC(I) general secretary and the sitting Congress(I) MLA are both rebel candidates while in Kashipur, the chairman of the municipality quit the Congress(I) and is contesting as an independent.

The bright point for the Congress(I) is the divided opposition—in both the Lok Sabha and the assembly contests. Also working in its favour are the goodies Tiwari has showered on Nainital, including 32 small and large industries with a total investment of Rs 800 crore. But Tiwari is still left fighting a ghost—Pant. Or perhaps two. The ruling party election posters carry a portrait of Tiwari. There is none of Rajiv Gandhi.

—DILIP AWASTHI

R.K. GUPTA



Tiwari with supporters during campaign: sitting pretty

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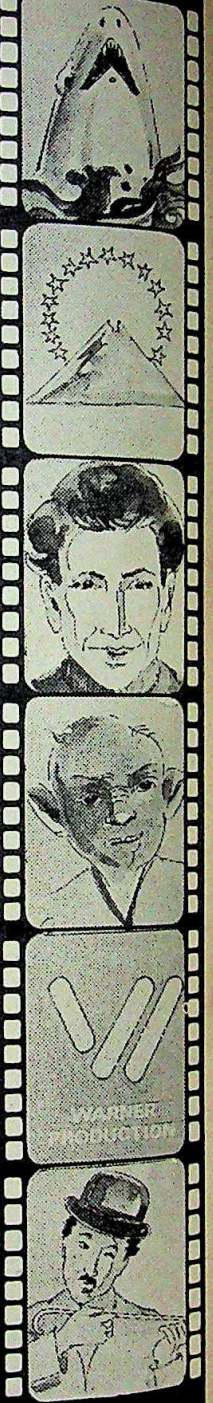

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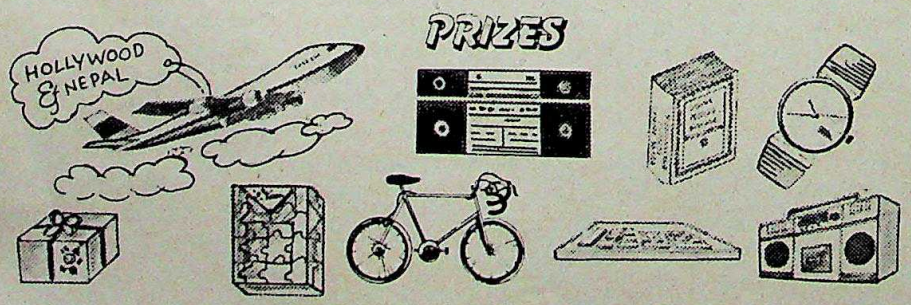

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• *Bhookhey ko, do aur do, char rotiyan*
Vipaksh ko, do aur do, char jootiyan
(For the hungry, two and two adds up to four rotis,
For the Opposition, two and two adds up to four shoes to fling at one another.) *Congress(I) slogan in Kanpur*

• **Time is a factor against me. Do I campaign, or answer the charges? Do I bother about the so-called modesty of that Miss or Mrs Mukti Dutta, or my own political future and national interest?** *Z.R. ANSARI*
Congress(I) candidate from Unnao, charged with attempt to rape Ms Dutta

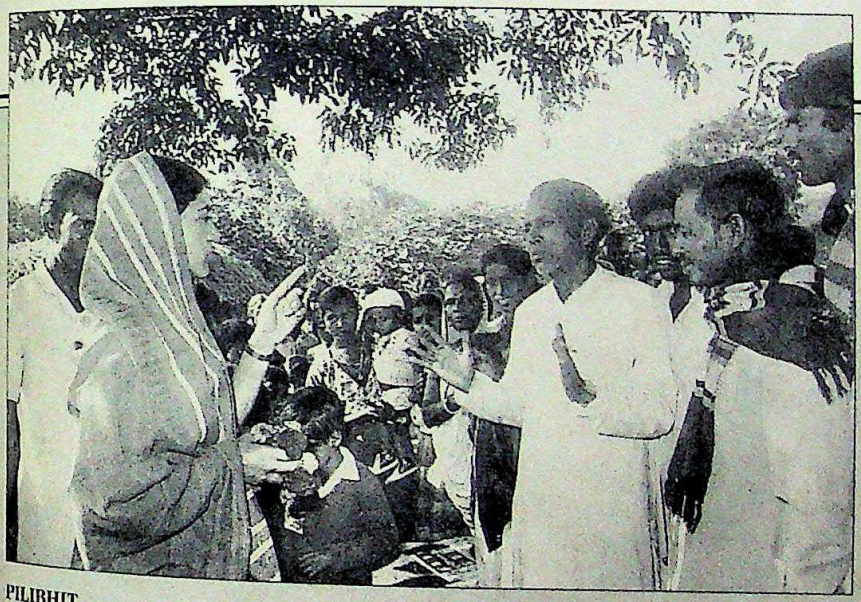
livered a stirring speech and then moments later told INDIA TODAY: "We are our own worst enemies. Maybe we should get defeated. It will do some good for the party."

Others point out the folly in not bringing in any young faces just when the party wanted to cash in on the new vote in the 18-21 age group. Tiwari, however, strongly defends the selection of candidates in which he played a key role: "We have fielded winning candidates. We will not be humbled anywhere in the state."

This is not to say that all has been hunky-dory with the Opposition. Between the BJP and the Janata Dal at least 80 rebels are in the field, eroding the Opposition's chances in the assembly poll. Says the state Janata Dal leader Mulayam Singh Yadav: "We have done the best we could in the given time. But once we win we can accommodate those partymen who could not be given tickets elsewhere."

This is counting one's chickens before they are hatched. But the Opposition is in that kind of a mood. The reality, however, is that while they have taken the lead in the Lok Sabha poll the Congress(I) may still exploit the confused scenario in the assembly poll. The Opposition's best hope is that the voter will not bother to put his stamp on one symbol for the Lok Sabha and on another for the Vidhan Sabha when he walks into the polling booth, the sanctum sanctorum of democracy.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA with DILIP AWASTHI



Maneka wooing rural voters: personal touch

PILIBHIT

Maneka's Challenge

MANEKA Gandhi is on an ebullient high in Pilibhit. She is racing through her election meetings—addressing over 100 in the span of a week—while her opponent, sitting Congress(I) MP, Bhanu Pratap Singh, has yet to make his presence felt.

The gutsy, high profile Gandhi *bahu* had flung herself into her campaign from day one. As one of her strategists points out: "If you begin your campaign early, you have enough time to visit the same places twice." And Maneka's innovative but inexpensive campaign is proving effective. Her supporters have painted slogans with *geru* (ochre) on every wall and mud hamlet. The slogans say: *"Kranti ki aandhi, Maneka Gandhi."* (The storm of the revolution, Maneka Gandhi). Some are even more dramatic: *"Desh ke liye degi lahoo, Bharat ki bahadur bahu."* (India's brave daughter-in-law will give her blood for the nation).

Accompanying that is an audio cassette of election songs. Sample: *'Drithrashtra ke hath mein sattaa, sabhi taraf andhiyara, humne dekha, dekh rahein hain, yahi hai unkaa naaraa'.* (Drithrashtra holds the reins of power, there is darkness everywhere; we have seen, we are seeing, this is his slogan).

In another allusion from the Mahabharata, she narrates how Krishna used the Sudarshan Chakra to kill Shishupal. She tells the villagers: "The same 'chakra', which is my election symbol, is now available to you. Use it and kill the Shishupals running the country now." But she refrains from attacking Rajiv personally. Her crisp 15-minute speeches are models of poll oratory.

Here is the real Maneka: mature, confident, a tireless campaigner who knows exactly how to reach the rural heart. Her saris are in her party colours of green and saffron and her head is constantly covered; the perfect image of a demure but determined widow.

That carefully-tailored onslaught has virtually submerged her opponent. Bhanu Pratap Singh, in fact, was not expecting a ticket. In the initial party list, he had been nominated for the Vidhan Sabha seat of Bhojipura (Bareilly). The reason for that last-minute switch is perhaps because the constituency has 1.4 lakh Kurmi voters who may favour Singh, a Kurmi himself. But the majority of the 8.5 lakh electorate seems clearly under the spell of Maneka. As she herself predicts confidently: "Pilibhit is for me what Amethi is for Rajiv."

—DILIP AWASTHI

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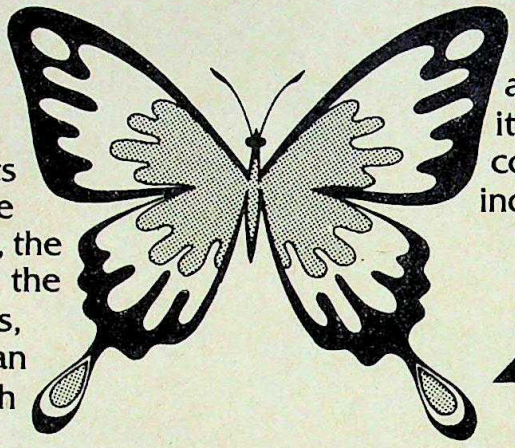

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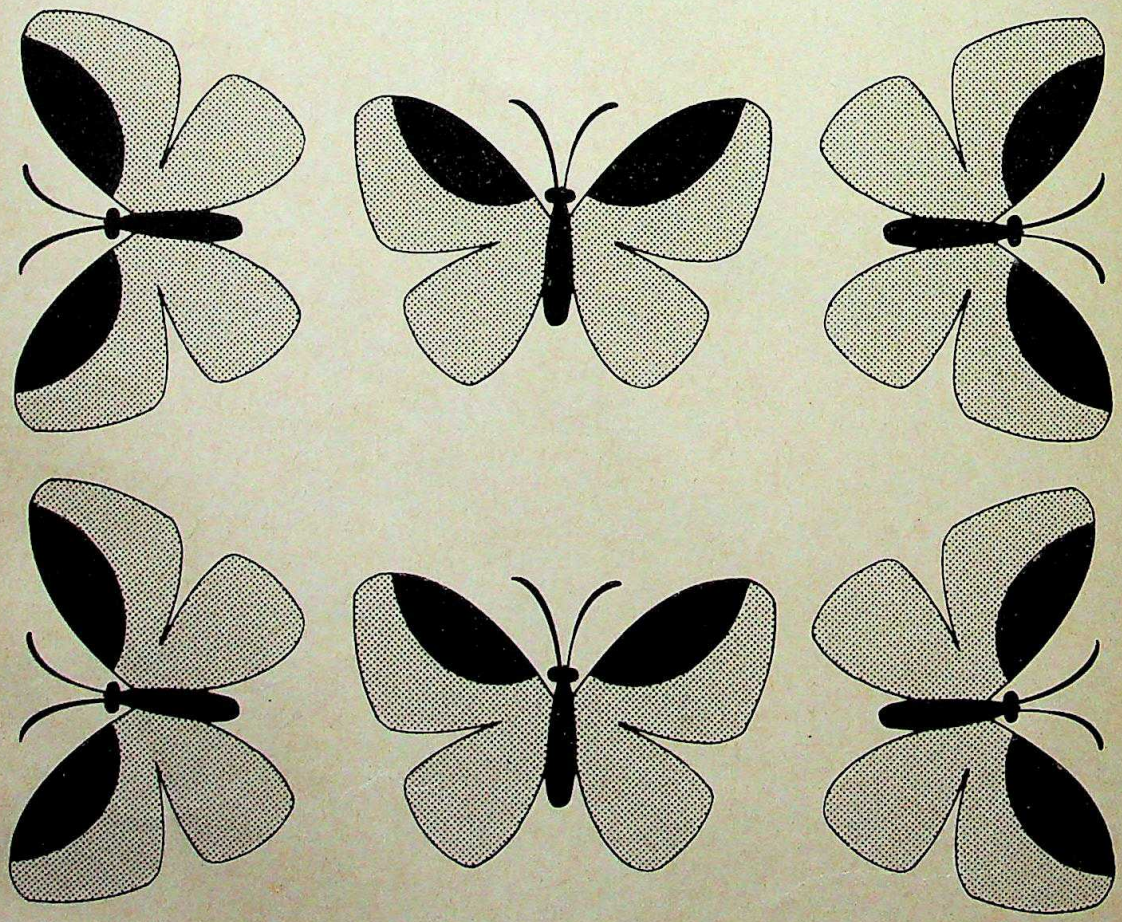

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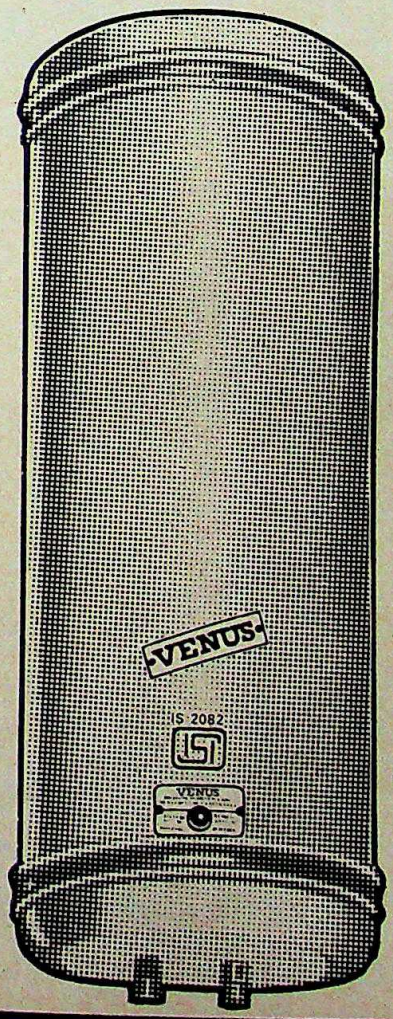

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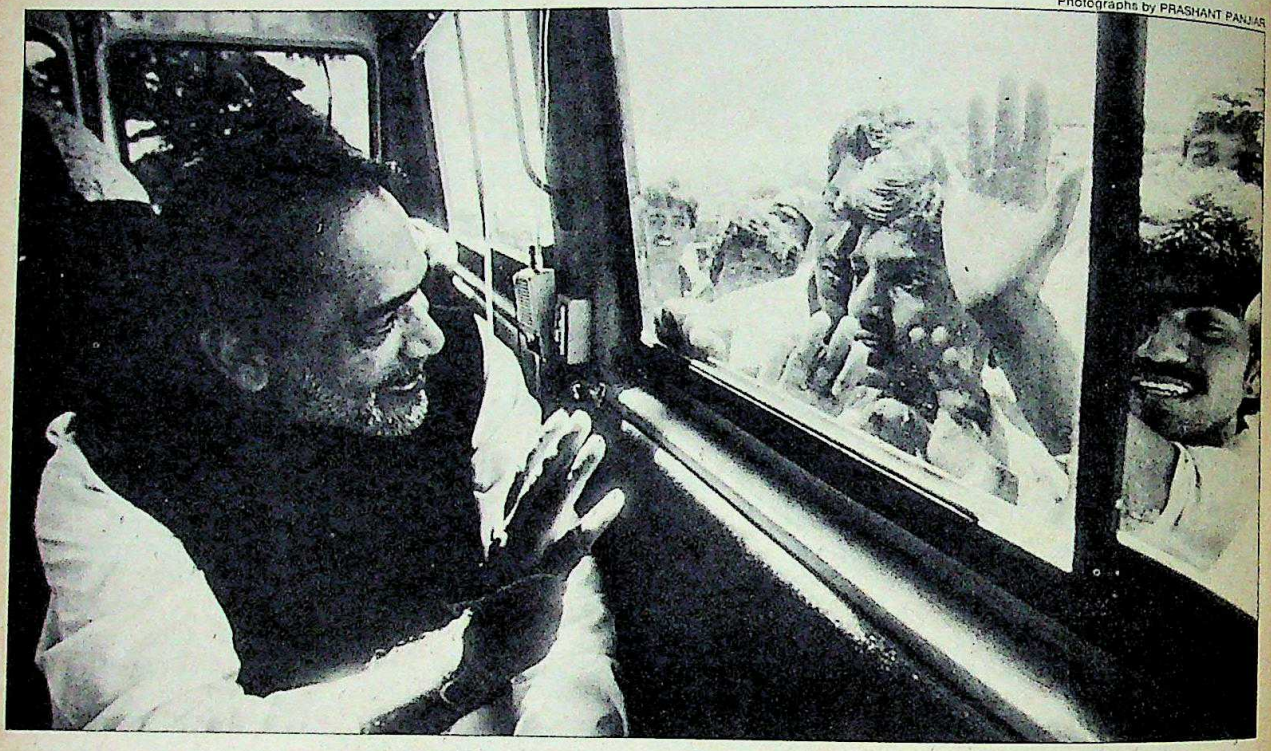
KARNATAKA

Close Encounters

The Congress(I) is up against a fragmented opposition

Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR



Hegde on the campaign trail: tough going

A collage of confusing campaign issues churned in a deafening medley as Karnataka bestirred itself for the simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly elections after months of political uncertainty, which was followed by a stint of President's Rule.

As the campaign entered its last phase, it was evident that this was an election that was being fought by key individual figures on the basis of their personal charisma. Issues that could turn the tide elsewhere—Bofors and the Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika bills—have been submerged in the midst of this bitter clash of personalities.

What is of significance is that Karnataka presents a picture that the national Opposition would very much like to forget. While forging a one-to-one contest in most part of the country, the Opposition is fragmented as ever in the one state that has been its bastion for six years.

The Janata Dal headed by Ramakrishna Hegde and the Janata Party headed by his arch rival Deve Gowda, are contesting all of the 28 Lok Sabha seats and most of the 224 assembly seats. The BJP too is contesting six Lok Sabha seats and 120 assembly seats separately. The Janata Dal even failed to forge an understanding with the CPI which is contesting on its own for 15 assembly seats and a Lok Sabha seat. Thus against the backdrop of a broad nation-wide unity, the Opposition in Karnataka has ensured triangular, even quadrangular contests.

For Ramakrishna Hegde it is a back-to-the-wall fight. The aim: to refurbish his image as a leader of stature. The only way out is to lead the Janata Dal to victory. And to realise this mission, the former chief

● Besides hi-tech, the former chief minister Ramakrishna Hegde also invoked gods to give his campaign a cutting edge. Before he set off to campaign, he broke an auspicious coconut before his hi-tech rath *Vaijayanta*. But as the Dal cavalcade reached the outskirts of Bangalore, and a party worker suggested he visit the Gali Anjaneya (the wind god Hanuman) temple, an impatient Hegde said curtly, "I offer my prayers from here. Let's get on with it."

● In total contrast to Hegde's grumpy mood was his *bete noir* Deve Gowda. Cocky and cheerful, he often slapped his biceps, a picture of confidence. As his convoy raced towards Kanakapura, his constituency, his composure sagged only once—when his rath came across a funeral procession. But jollity was soon restored as supporters assured him that it was a good omen. Perking up, he often muttered, "I will show them what I am made of."

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minister had to keep away from the Lok Sabha elections.

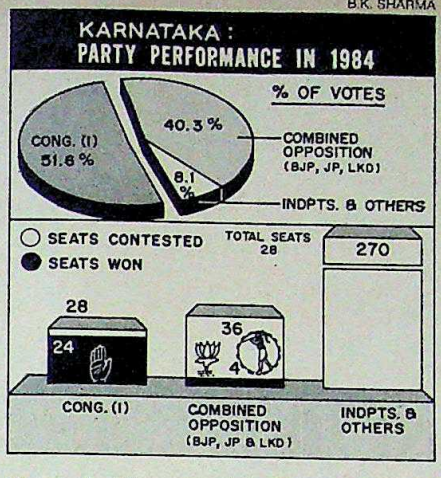
For Hegde, however, sitting in his rath *Vijayanta* with wife Shakunthala and nephew Vinayak, it looked anything but easy. During the early rounds, Hegde found the crowds restive and heckling was frequent. Hegde himself confessed that while in 1985 he encountered euphoria, sympathy and admiration, he now encountered only disillusionment. The most hostile constituencies were on the outskirts of Bangalore, in Mandya, Mysore and Hassan where Deve Gowda's breakaway Janata Party has a considerable following.

But gradually, as he emerged from the shadow of Gowda's domain, Hegde saw some hope and light. In south Kanara district—home of Janardhan Poojary and Oscar Fernandes—a Congress(I) fortress, he found tremendous and spontaneous response. Said an ecstatic Hegde: "It has restored my confidence."

However, between Hegde and his dream stands the formidable Vokkaliga chieftain, Gowda, whose influence extends to 50 constituencies in south and central Karnataka. But by putting up candidates in all 224 segments, Gowda has demonstrated his single-minded devotion to wreck the Janata Dal.

In 1985, the undivided Janata Party won 139 seats polling 43.9 per cent of votes, while the Congress(I) won just 66 seats with 41.1 per cent votes. So if Gowda takes away even 2 per cent of the votes, the Janata Dal will be in trouble. "I will show them what I am capable of," Gowda said, sitting in his bandwagon called the *Janata Vahini*, which he stopped with a buzzer every time he saw a bunch of people.

B.K. SHARMA



GOWDA'S singular aim as he raced around the state last fortnight was to ensure at least 50 to 60 seats for his party so that he would be in a bargaining position with whoever emerges as the largest party. And he certainly looks in a position to accomplish that.

Although Karnataka has never entertained a third front—K.H. Patil and Devaraj Urs who broke away from the Congress, met with disastrous results in the late '70s—Gowda's strong communal appeal and the public disenchantment with the Janata Dal makes him a force to contend with.

This suits the Congress(I) in the state fine, though it is in no better shape. It was only when Rajiv Gandhi came around on his chopper-stop tours that the faction leaders in the Congress pantheon like Bangarappa, Gundu Rao and Veerappa Moily stood together. Such momentary camaraderie has never concealed the internecine squabbling indulged by the leaders even in the face of a possible victory.

The president of the state Congress(I), Veerendra Patil, was completely sidetracked by a cabal led by Union minister Margaret Alva in the selection of candidates. While a dazed Patil scampered from room to room in five-star hotels under police protection to escape irate ticket seekers, Gundu Rao and Jaffer Sharief succeeded in getting 30 nominations changed at the last moment. The result: the kidnapping of an official candidate, an attempted suicide, an attempted murder and scores of rebel candidates. Said Patil: "The list was entirely the party high command's business. I have nothing to do with it."

Patil had given up his Lok Sabha seat

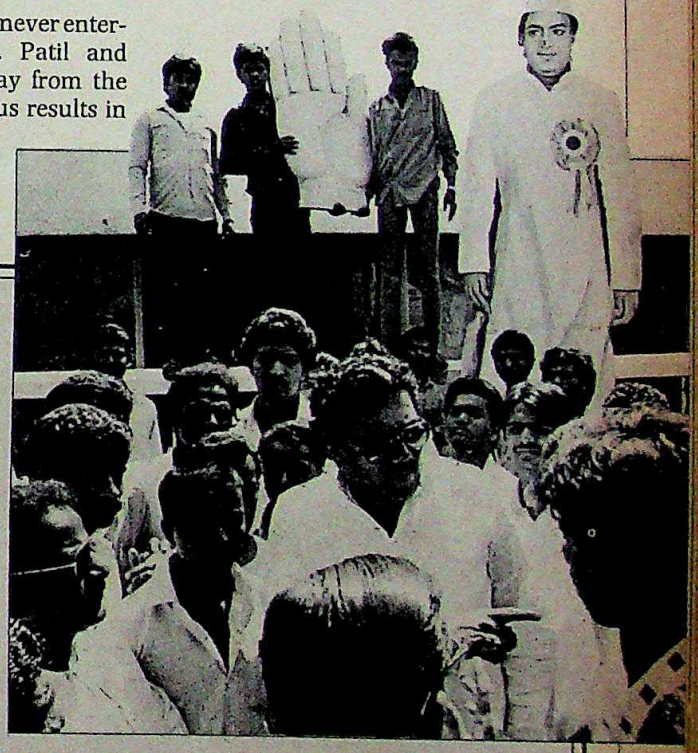
GUNDU RAO

Back in Action

THE former Karnataka chief minister R. Gundu Rao should be able to make his much-delayed return to political centrestage by winning the South Bangalore constituency. This, however, may not be as easy as it theoretically seems, for a chunk of the 3.5 lakh-odd urbane Brahmin voters on whom he banks heavily might discard him mainly because of his brash and uncouth style of functioning. But as things have turned out, his opponent, the Janata Dal's Raghupathy, who was his colleague in the Youth Congress(I), also belongs to the lumpen school of politics, and was nominated against all caste and communal logic. In fact, it is BJP candidate Ramachandra Gowda who could queer the pitch for both of them.

Many years of political hermitage haven't affected his style—as chief minister he once dived into a pool to mark its inauguration—and Gundu Rao still goes around making promises of beautifying the city. He also takes pains to remind the voters that he does not make hollow promises. He chose Bangalore South as he wanted to take on Ramakrishna Hegde, but has had to settle for Hegde's confidant. "Hegde backed out for reasons I do not know," Rao says, exuding confidence.

But the one factor that could really upset his apple-cart is a low turn out, for the city seems to be in the grip of political ennui, with even Rajiv Gandhi's speech attracting only a sketchy crowd.



Rao with supporters

The faction-ridden Congress(I) may not get a great fillip from the emergence of Gundu Rao. But at least Rao is adding a lot of colour to the often tense and bitter political climate in the state.

—CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA

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for a ticket for the Chincholi assembly constituency, after an assurance that he would be projected as leader. Instead he found himself in a whirlpool of infighting and there was no indication that the other leaders in the party accepted him as the leader. Between bouts of tea drinking and recrimination, Patil was constantly on the phone monitoring who among his enemies in the party were sabotaging his chances. But in one rare spurt of cautious optimism, Patil ventured: "If we work together as a team, victory is ours."

The result of such misgivings is that the Congress(I) has little to tell the people other than to squeal about the Janata Dal's alleged maladministration. Hegde and Gowda, on the other hand, are approaching the electorate in a more positive frame of mind. Hegde has chosen to project the modest achievements of his six-year administration: Panchayati Raj, dole in the form of subsidised food, clothing and pensions and providing water and electricity to every village. It is not much, but what appears to impress voters is his humility. "Yes, we made mistakes. We fought among ourselves. But we still did a better job in six years than the Congress did in three decades," he says in his meetings. Says Doddarange Gowda, a farmer in Bidadi village: "It is true, they did some good things. But they should not have squabbled like cocks."

If Hegde is remorse personified, Gowda is full of earthy promises including a green revolution in a state which has a pathetic 20 per cent irrigation. He has also been talking of bringing about Kannada *Swabhiman* (self-respect), though little has happened in the state to harm this concept.

But what stands out is the studious avoidance by all major campaigners of national issues. Neither Bofors nor the Ayodhya dispute found a mention in any campaign speech. Corruption as an issue receded into the background. And surprisingly even Hegde did not try to take advantage of the communal situation. It was only when he reached Muslim-dominated localities that he touched briefly on the communal situation blaming the Congress(I) for a spate of riots. Otherwise it is an election dominated by local issues.

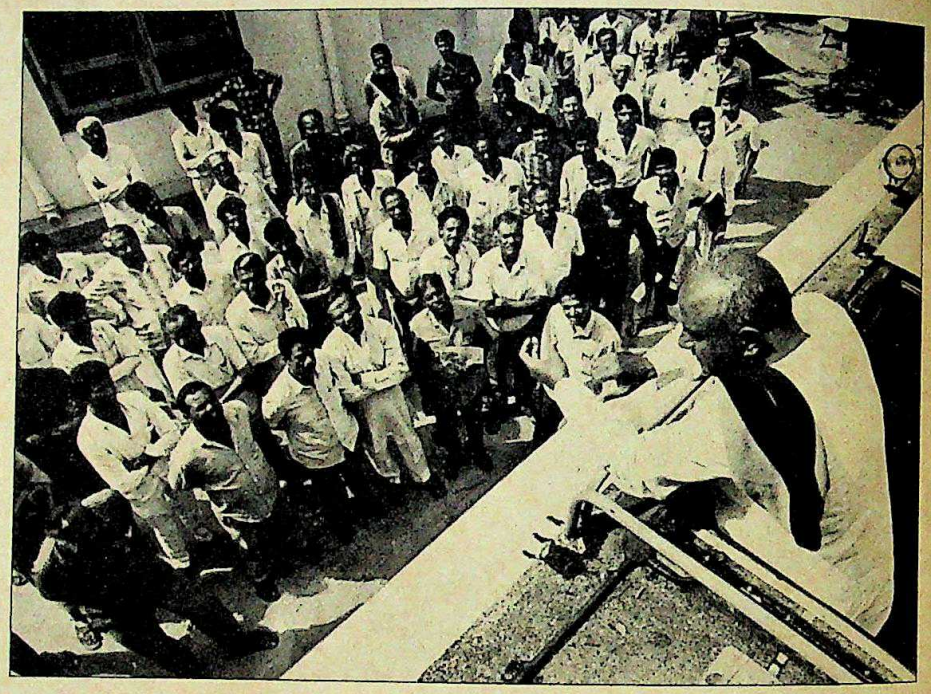
In fact, the election for the 28 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state has not generated as much interest as it should have, even Janata Dal leaders conceding that the Congress(I) will most probably walk away with most of the seats.

Deve Gowda, whose party has two key candidates in Bangalore North (Syed Shahabuddin) and Hassan (H.N. Nanje Gowda, the expelled Congress(I) (MP), makes no secret of the fact that he is unconcerned about the Lok Sabha results. Most of the resources from the Janata Dal and the Janata Party are being channelled into the assembly elections.

It's only the Congress(I) which is concentrating on the Lok Sabha poll. Of the 28 constituencies nation-wide which have always voted Congress MPs in all general elections, 11 are in Karnataka. Besides, several bigwigs of the party—B. Shankaranand, Oscar Fernandes, Janardhan Poojary, Jaffer Sharief and Gundu Rao—seek to return from the state. Says Rao: "Karnataka has never deserted the Congress—not even after the Emergency."

Karnataka has a history of swinging pendulum-like between electoral poles. In December 1984, the state voted for the Congress(I) in the Lok Sabha election and in a remarkable volte-face in March 1985 voted the Janata Party to the Assembly. There are enough reasons this time for the electorate to exhibit such political fine-tuning and differentiate between the needs and equations of a Lok Sabha and assembly poll.

—CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA



Deve Gowda atop his Vahini; Veerendra Patil

●If parts of the Representation of the Peoples Act 1951 are enforced, many leaders could get arrested or fined. The Chief Electoral Officer of Karnataka, A. Bharat, reminded parties of the stringent section 127A of the Act which states that all posters and handbills must bear the names and addresses of the printer and publisher. The printer must also obtain an identity certificate signed by the publisher and attested by two persons. More, the certificate copy must be sent along with each poster for approval.

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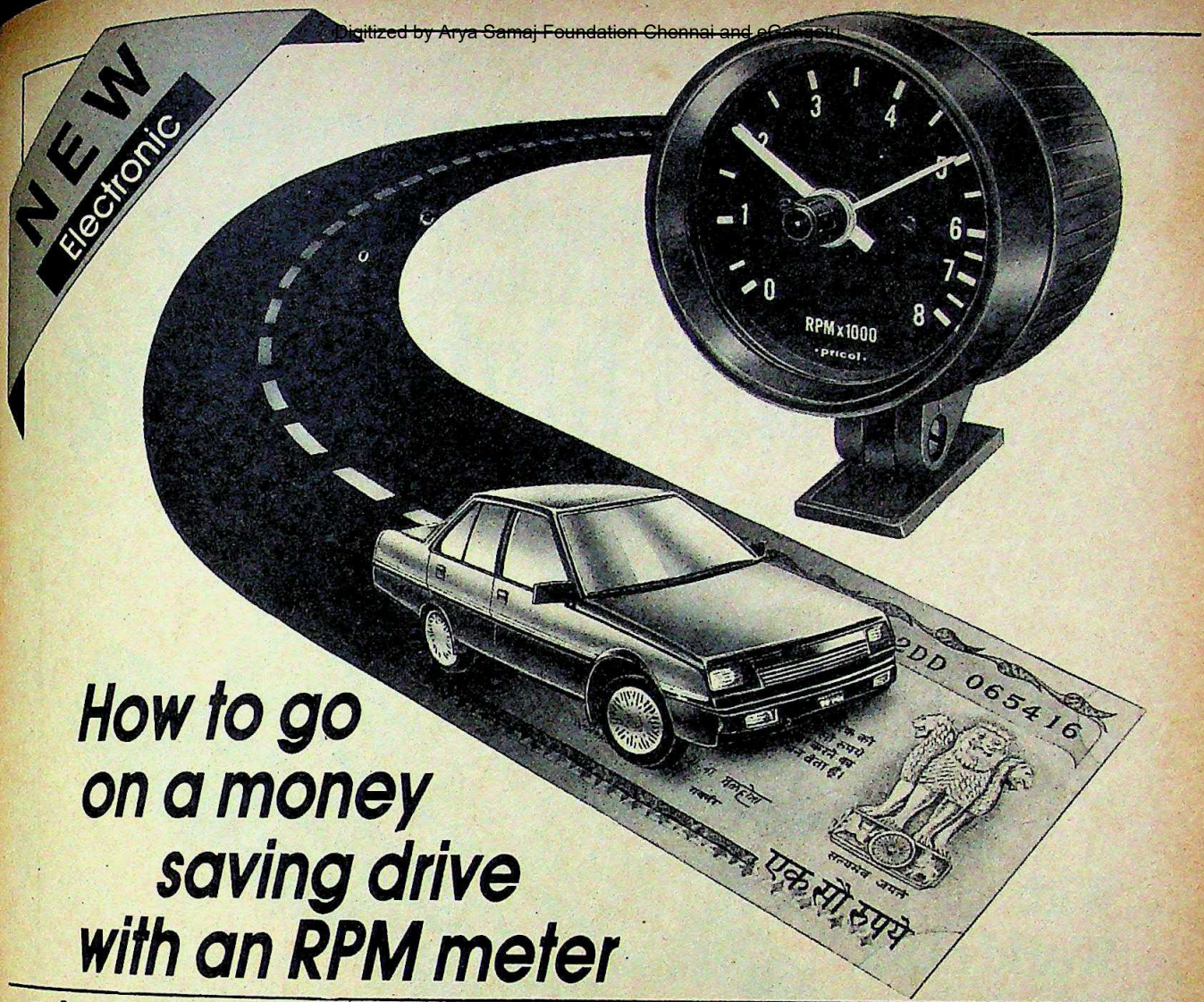

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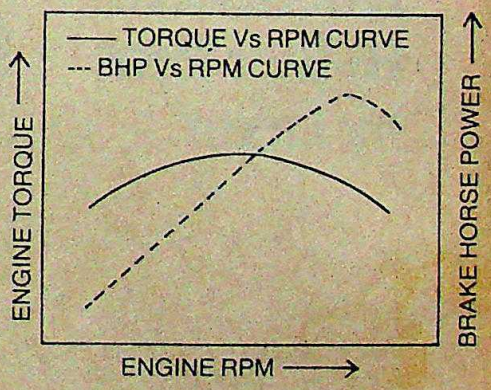

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ANDHRA PRADESH

Chinks in the Armour

The Telugu Desam faces a rejuvenated Congress(I)

IT is the same act of a continuing drama. Even the attire—saffron shirt and trousers—and the vehicle are familiar. For the fifth time in seven years, N.T. Rama Rao, 60, the creator of Telugu Desam Party and the destroyer of many age-old political equations was on the road again. Only this time his dream and rhetoric are not just of a new Andhra Pradesh but a new India.

For the chairman of the National Front and the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, the task is awesome. He has to lead the Telugu Desam back to power in the state against a rejuvenated Congress(I) which he had decimated seven years ago, deliver to the confident national opposition 25-odd MPs and then serve as a catalyst for forging a Janata Dal-led coalition government in case of a opposition victory. A gigantic cut-out of Rama Rao that looms over the busiest intersection in New Delhi is symbolic of his aspirations.

The Telugu Desam campaign has the unmistakable imprint of the Rama Rao formula—blitzkrieg of film shorts and videos. Every cinema in the state has been given a 22-minute film on the *Chaitanya Ratham* and a 18-minute trailer of the unfinished *Brahmarishi Viswamitra*.

In the first film, Rama Rao's filmstar son Balakrishna—who is touring parts of the state that his father might not reach—is shown in front of a statue of Mahatma Gandhi talking political morality and clips of all major events in the party's history. The party also sold video cassettes of the film at Rs 60 a copy. Said Rama Rao's son-in-law and party politburo member N. Chandrababu Naidu: "The film is intended to be a reminder of the aims and

SHYAM TEKWANI

Rama Rao atop Chaitanya Ratham: on the road

● Life imitates art in the Andhra Pradesh elections. One of the most memorable scenes in Telugu film archives is in *Sri Krishna Thulabharam*. The attractive star, Jamuna, playing Satyabhama kicks Krishna who is kneeling at her feet. Krishna is played by N.T.Rama Rao. Now, she is hoping that she can repeat that scene in real life, albeit metaphorically. Jamuna is contesting the Rajahmundry Lok Sabha seat on a Congress(I) ticket and the fifty films she acted in with Rama Rao are added irony. But she has lost none of her histrionic talents. Says she: "The people wait till late at night to hear me list the broken promises of Rama Rao."

● Ghanshyam Gupta, independent candidate in the Adilabad Lok Sabha constituency, gave a goat, his symbol, to a group of young men to bring it along on his padayatra. The next day when he landed up for the campaign the goat was missing. The young men had decided that the goat could be put to better use. They had made a meal of it.

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objectives of the party and what it has achieved so far. It is a political message." Rama Rao did not forget to include a dessert in this hearty multi-course meal: song and dance sequences from *Viswamitra*.

The rabbit that Rama Rao has pulled out of his political hat, however, is the *Prachara Ratham*—a lorry with hoardings and cut-outs of him as Viswamitra and Balakrishna in the role of Harishchandra. The *ratham*—one for every district—takes along a troupe of folk artistes who entertain the villagers from a platform before the screening of the two films or playing the audio cassettes of songs and Rama Rao's speeches. The troupe also stages a satire *Mr Clean*. And to complete the invasion of the tinselworld, there are lesser known stars like Ravu Gopala Rao and Murali Mohan pleading with voters to stamp on the Telugu Desam's by-now famous symbol, the cycle.

Not surprisingly, the Congress(I) too decided to seek votes through the video. The party ordered cassettes of *Gandipet Rahasyam* (secrets of Gandipet, the party headquarters) a biting satire on Rama Rao made by Prabhakar Reddy. And cinema theatres are supplied with *Indirama Charithram* (the life of Indira Gandhi). But clearly, the Congress(I) was no match for the Telugu Desam's tinsel techniques.

What the Congress(I) lacked was an anchor like Rama Rao. It was hesitant to project the PCC(I) chief M. Chenna Reddy, whose reputation has been besmirched with corruption allegations. Instead, the party in the initial stages of the campaign projected Rajiv Gandhi as the great hope. But as the campaign progressed, the local bosses were asked to battle it out and Rajiv

Chenna Reddy on a padayatra

M. CHENNA REDDY

Street Smart

DEBARRED in 1969 from contesting polls by the Supreme Court—which found him guilty of corrupt electoral practices in an assembly poll—20 years later, Dr Marri Chenna Reddy finds himself at the helm of the Congress(I) campaign in Andhra Pradesh.

Obviously, the Congress(I) high command came to the conclusion that only a street-smart politician like Reddy—whose fund-raising abilities are legendary—could break N.T. Rama Rao's stranglehold over the people of the state. At 71, Reddy is a hardened combatant, who has faced many ups and downs in a lengthy political career. He was, in fact, pulled out of political wilderness in May this year, when he was given the task of containing the Telugu Desam. As president of the Andhra Pradesh Congress(I) Committee, Reddy now has his job cut out for him in the state which faces both Lok Sabha and assembly elections.

In the few months since his appointment, Reddy has undoubtedly galvanised the slumbering state unit of the party into action. His first act was to get the warring factions to forget their differences—at least temporarily. And he has relentlessly kept up the pressure on Rama Rao through measures like the mass signature campaign asking President R. Venkataraman to dismiss the state ministry for misrule and the 'jail bharo' agitation to protest the Telugu Desam's anti-people policies.

But Reddy did not get sufficient time to gear up his party for the elections. The preponement of the polls caught him unawares. Now instead of trying to improve the party's performance in the state, Reddy is busy ensuring that he does not lose from his own constituency.

On the basis of traditional poll arithmetic, Reddy had calculated that the Sanathnagar Assembly constituency in Hyderabad would be a safe seat. Though it lost the seat in the last assembly polls, in the 1986 Hyderabad corporation elections the Congress(I), bagged eight of the eleven divisions falling within Sanathnagar.

Perhaps, it has been a miscalculation on Reddy's part. For the Telugu Desam nominee—the portly state Housing Minister Sripathi Rajeswar, who also happens to be the founder-president of the All-India NTR Fans' Association—is no pushover. A Rama Rao loyalist—who specialises in touching the actor-politician's feet at the slightest pretext—Rajeswar has the chief minister's whole hearted support.

"Annagaru is the people's leader. I have always won with his blessings," says Rajeswar. His trump card is Reddy's past. "He has the distinction of being debarred from holding public office by the highest court in the land," he says. Reddy is rising to the challenge by launching an intensive door-to-door campaign. Says he: "Campaign styles have changed over the years. Money does not influence directly anymore, one must be humble before the voter."

The Reddy-Rajeswar showdown has turned the spotlight on Sanathnagar. The recent clash between their followers and the subsequent police firing shows that both men are in deadly earnest.

Even if Rajeswar loses, his party can claim a victory of sorts. For the man who set out to contain the Telugu Desam, had to struggle to ensure that he was not humbled in his own constituency.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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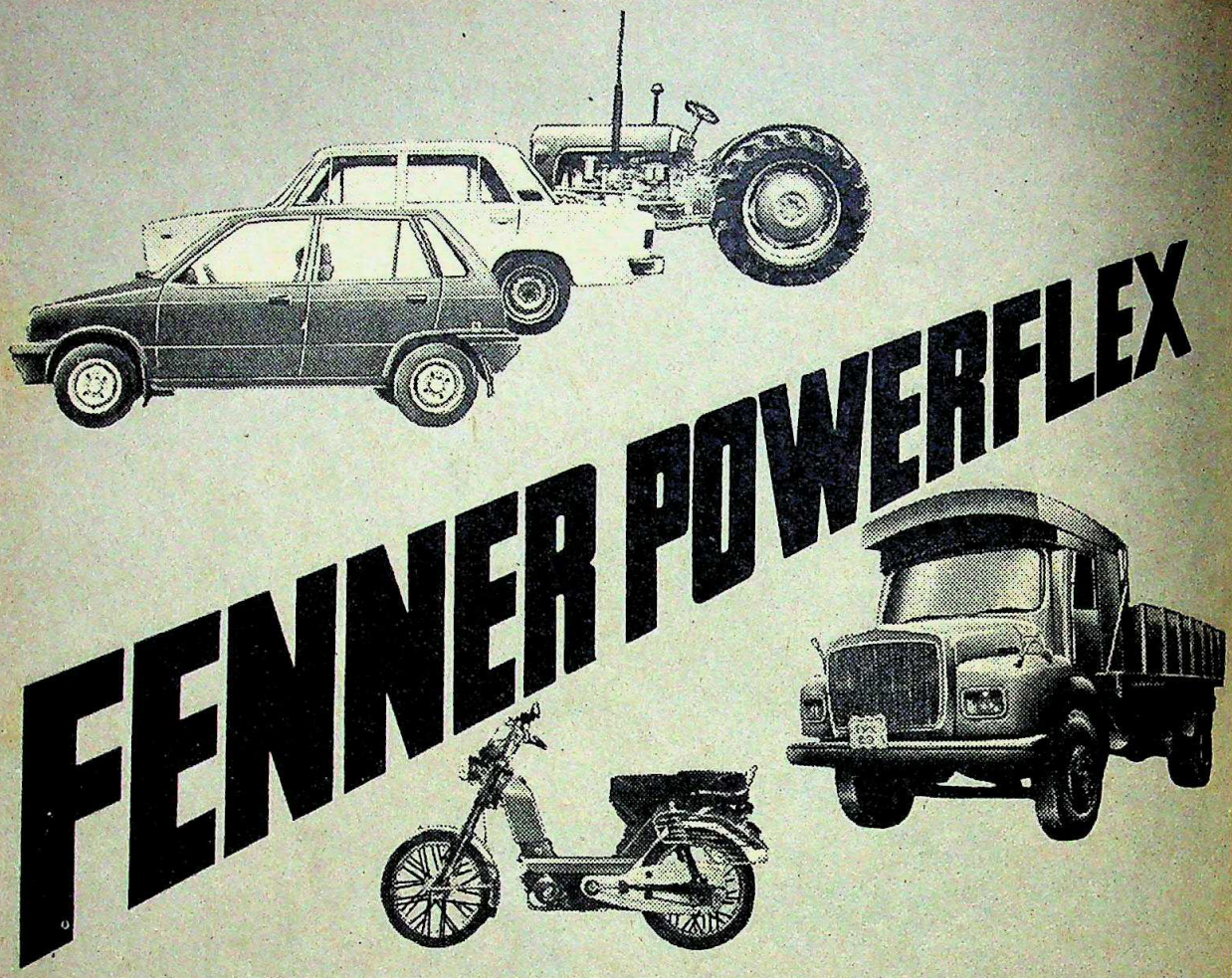

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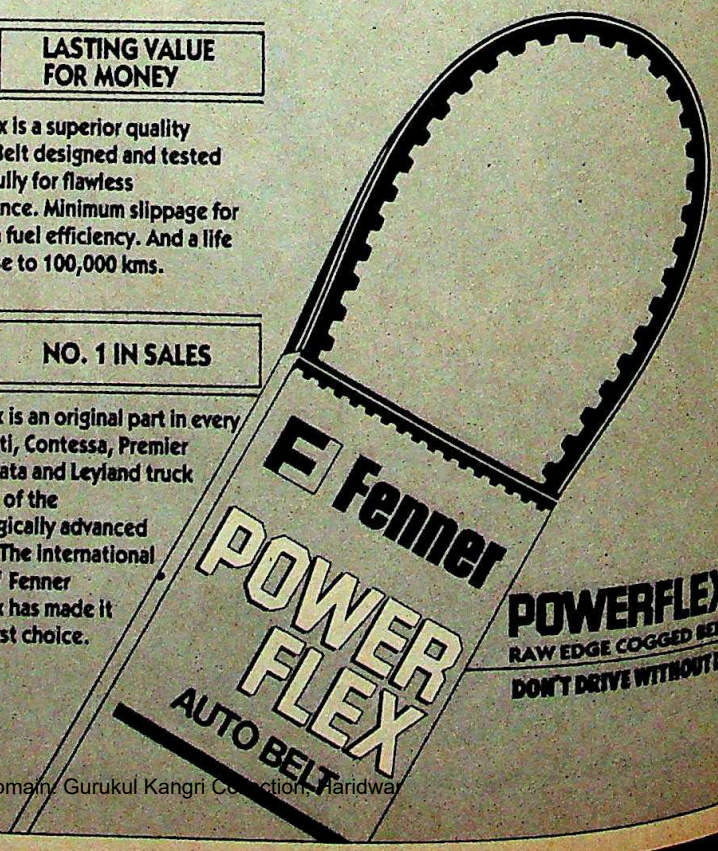

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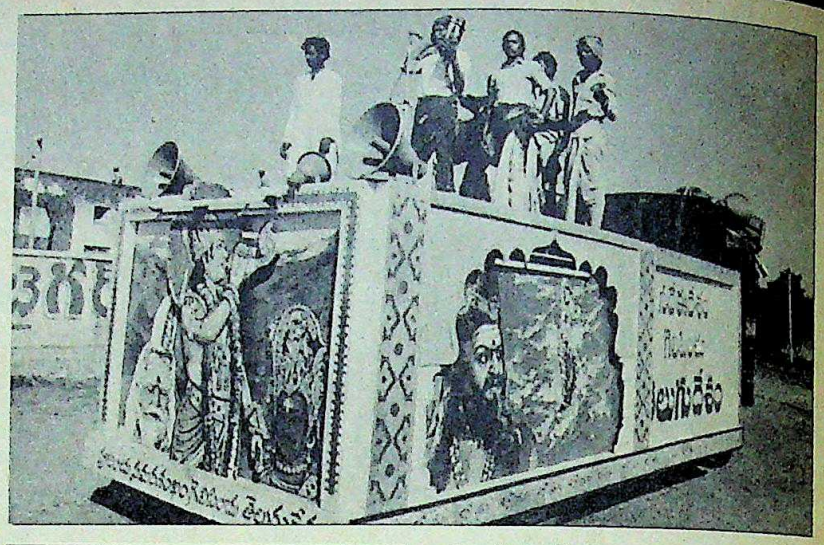
Gandhi revised his schedule so as to be in the state just twice between November 1 and the polling day.

The choice of film stars like Krishna and the heart-throb of yesteryears Jamuna as contestants was a clear indication that the party was desperately looking for crowd-pullers. Chenna Reddy was however optimistic: "Our chances are bright." His optimism is based on the fact that the Congress(I) gave an impressive performance in the mandal and zilla parishad elections cornering 41.60 per cent votes.

The Telugu Desam, like the Congress(I), had to contend with intense infighting as many of the new aspirants were brushed aside by Rama Rao in an eleventh hour manoeuvre. He knew that if sitting legislators were denied tickets they could whip up a rebellion within. For a man who held unquestioned sway over his party and the state, this was a come-down. After the lists were announced he expelled seven MLAs who dared contest as rebels.

ANOTHER factor for the optimism in Congress(I)—it got 41.81 per cent votes to Telugu Desam's 44.82 per cent in the 1984 Lok Sabha polls—is Rama Rao's wavering stand on the Naxalites and the fact that he has alienated government employees and the state deficit is an amazing Rs 600 crore. "We face a tough challenge this time and it is going to be a keen fight in several constituencies," admitted a Telugu Desam politburo member who however expects the party to get 25 seats in Lok Sabha elections and close to 180 out of 294 assembly seats. The Congress(I) on the other hand hopes to win 25 Lok Sabha seats and at least 140 assembly seats.

What is certain is that the Congress(I) is poised to improve on its 1984 performance of six seats in the new Lok Sabha and 50 seats in the Assembly. The Telugu Desam's confidence stems from the fact that there is a one-to-one fight in all the Lok Sabha constituencies except Hyderabad and some assembly seats where the Majilis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen can tilt the balance—its symbol—either way.



Prachara Ratham: new techniques

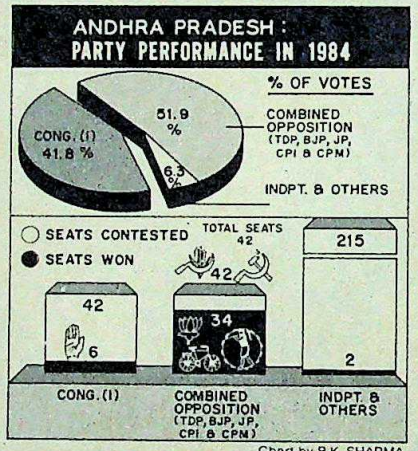


Chart by B.K. SHARMA

Like the Telugu Desam the Congress(I) also made last-minute changes in its list resulting in a lot of confusion and in some of their official candidates not getting the symbol of the hand. The party also gave tickets to three MPs, six former ministers and three MLAs who resigned from the Telugu Desam. The last-minute VIP defector, G. Narayana Rao who was speaker of the Assembly was welcomed with a party ticket to the Maharajgunj Assembly constituency, but was withdrawn soon after, as the Youth Congress(I) staged a near-revolt. As Speaker, Rao had imprisoned Youth Congress(I) activists who had stormed the Assembly. Union Minister for Industries J. Vengala Rao who was instrumental in drawing out Narayana Rao and getting him a ticket had high hopes for his party. "There is a strong anti-Rama Rao wave in the state," he said.

There has not been euphoria visible among the electorate—at least not the upheaval that accompanied the *Chaitanya Ratham* in its earlier forays. There is however no reason why the saffron-clad occupant of the *Chaitanya Ratham*, should not take his appointed place on the throne, albeit with a smaller margin.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

● Ratnakumari, the Congress(I) candidate for the Vijayawada (East) assembly seat, scored a point much before the campaign started. The widow of V.M. Ranga Rao who was murdered last year, Ratnakumari, approached the courts for protection by the CRPF as she did not have faith in the state police, and her plea was granted. She is the only candidate who goes about campaigning with a CRPF security ring.

● N.T. Rama Rao's campaign is not just cacophony and glitzy video shows. His strong point is his histrionics including calculated expressions and voice modulations. During his speeches—he practises three- and five-minute versions—he borrows heavily from Andhra Pradesh's folklore and mythology like *burrakatha* and *harikatha* and uses colloquial words like *koodu* (grub) which are used by the masses. He is able to establish instant rapport with the audience. No wonder they call him the king of the roadshow.

● Rajiv Gandhi, born in India, educated in London, was not fit to be prime minister of the country, because he did not know about the Vedas and the Bhagvad Gita.

N.T. RAMA RAO at a press conference in Rajahmundry

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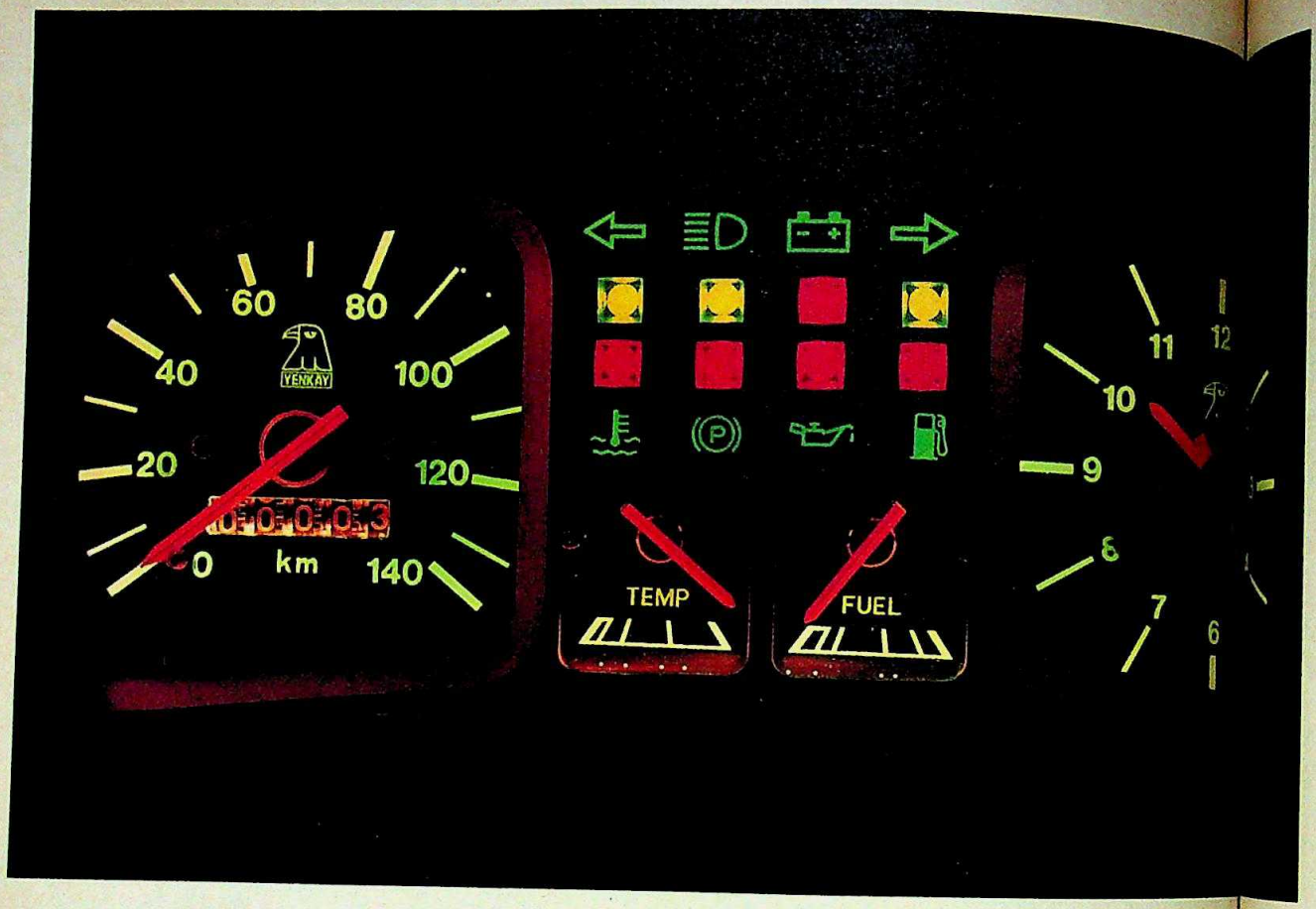

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(From left) Sinha, Rajiv and Mishra: troubled triumvirate

BIHAR

Paying the Price

The ruling party faces the prospect of being routed

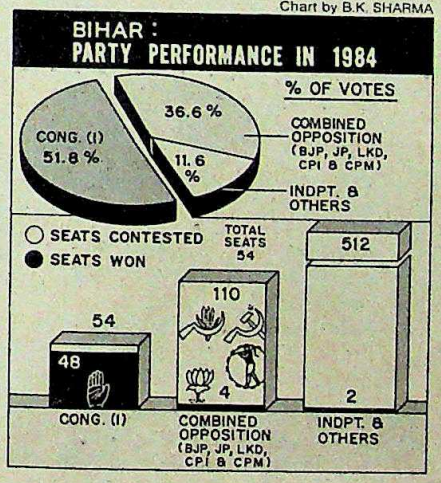
ELECTIONEERING picked up late in Bihar. But in the end, that will make little difference to the outcome. Two weeks into the campaign, the electoral prospects for the Congress(I) in the state wore the look of grim despair. Nothing that the ruling party tried to do to turn the tide, seemed to come off.

Its poll rhetoric on the threat to the nation's intergrity and security failed to cut any ice. Congress(I) candidates—including Rajiv's propaganda chief, K.K. Tewary—were jeered, slapped and shouted down. And even opposition disunity, its rather poor choice of candidates and the so-called 'friendly contests' between opposition parties in around 20 of the 54 Lok Sabha constituencies, seemed to make little difference to the electorate.

But the most significant pointer was that Rajiv Gandhi, the party's biggest crowd-puller, failed to attract anything but the sparest crowds. The public indifference to Rajiv Gandhi's election campaign at Hajipur and Muzaffarpur was a dramatic—and telling—change. Last year, in the very same venues, he had drawn mammoth crowds. Last fortnight he seemed to be addressing vacant spaces and policemen.

There were other signs that the ruling party was in serious trouble. The party's other vote-catcher, BPCC(I) President Dr Jagannath Mishra, fared even worse. At his meetings in the heart of Mithila, Mishra's political backyard, he was greeted by young men waving black flags and expressing their derision of his poll promises.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



Two Congress(I) MLAs in the Bihar Assembly quit the party. One got a Janata Dal nomination to contest from Munger, jeopardising another seat that the Congress(I) was sanguine about. Two rebel candidates in Kishanganj and in Khagaria added to the ruling party's discomfiture. Significantly, both the MLAs and a former MLA, Basant Singh of Dumrao, who left the Congress(I) and switched to the Opposition after the poll announcement, are Rajputs.

Happening as they did, so early into the campaign, those signs looked pretty ominous for the ruling party. Remarked Ashok Singh, an Aurangabad voter: "If Mishra is hooted in Mithila and the Congress(I) is uncertain about retaining strongholds like Aurangabad and Purnea, a rout is inevitable."

His words sound prophetic. The negative wave against the Congress(I) in Bihar is almost a physical thing. Everywhere, ruling party stalwarts seemed to be on the run. K.K. Tewary in Buxar, Krishna Sahi in Begusarai and L.P. Sahi in Muzaffarpur were all battling with their backs to the wall. The general anger over the stagnation in the state has finally spilled over and is finding strident electoral expression. At most meetings, Congress(I) candi-

• In Bihar where booth-capturing is common, parties are competing to form brigades to prevent booth-capturing. The Indian Peoples Front, a wing of the Vinod Mishra group of the CPI(ML)—contesting in 11 seats—has formed squads to escort voters to polling booths and resist booth-capturing. Lalu Prasad Yadav, Janata Dal candidate from Chapra, has formed the Green Brigade to cut noses of booth-capturers. And the NSUI, has announced that it would chop off the hair of any trouble-maker. Hair-raising.

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dates had no answers to the questions put forward to them by angry voters.

But if the ruling party faces the prospect of being demolished, it is a situation entirely of its own making. The years of neglect that have reduced Bihar to one of the most backward states in the country are now coming to roost. Jaleshwar Yadav of Chapra echoes the general mood when he says: "Things are getting from bad to worse. Why should we not want a change?"

The Congress(I) has re-nominated all but four sitting members, which, in electoral terms, could prove suicidal. Virtually half of the 54 Congress(I) candidates have been members of Parliament for two consecutive terms, with very little to show for it as far as the people are concerned.

Even Bihar's traditional electoral weapons—money and muscle power—have been blunted by the negative wave. One example: Tapeshwar Singh, the cooperative don and political financer, whose boasts of being a "one-man employment exchange" have boomeranged. Many of his loyal workers have turned against him. As one says: "We

BHAGALPUR

Grave Omen

LIKE the other 520-odd Lok Sabha constituencies in the country, Bhagalpur too goes to the polls this month. But unlike elsewhere, the electoral mood in the town is not festive. Campaigning is virtually absent, and hanging thick in the air is a pall of suspicion and gloom, the result of the ghastly communal killings that began on October 24 and have since then claimed more than 200 lives.

The electoral consequences of the Bhagalpur killings transcend the district boundaries. The Muslim psyche has been badly hurt everywhere and the anger is directed against the prime minister and the Congress(I).

Says Muhammad Shamshad, an embittered Central Government employee in Patna: "When the prime minister went to Bhagalpur on October 26, he promised to restore order in two days. What happened after that has left us seething in rage."

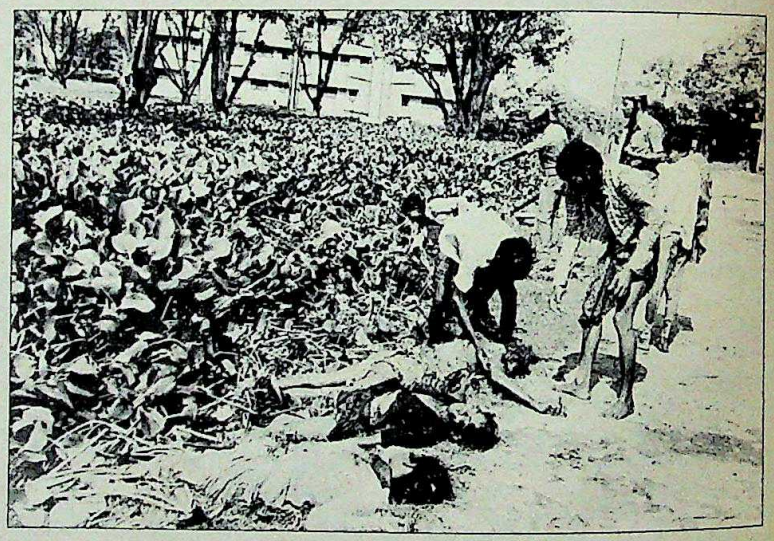
Such feelings are understandable. One of the worst carnages took place after the prime ministerial visit—in Chandeli, where about a hundred persons left in the protection of the police by army personnel were butchered after the army left. Looting and arson continued unabated and relief measures were grossly inadequate. Night curfew continued well into November and the submission of nomination papers, their scrutiny and the withdrawal of candidates took place while curfew was on—an unprecedented occurrence.

For the sitting Congress(I) MP, former chief minister Bhagwat Jha Azad, the battle ahead is daunting. Even in 1984, at the height of the sympathy wave, Azad won by only around 30,000 votes while Faiyaz Bhagalpuri, a little-known figure, polled a staggering 1,70,000 votes—mostly of Muslims. Now, with Muslims turning against the ruling party, Azad's prospects are bleak.

Muslim leaders in the ruling party are now feeling the full blast of their community's ire. Muhammad Hussain Azad, state health minister, faced a group of visitors who asked in anguish: "Should we join the BJP? At least, our lives and property can be saved then." In Patna, at a meeting of the Emarat-e-Sharia, speakers asked Muslim ministers in the state Government to step down.

The greatest beneficiary has been the Opposition—specifically, the communist parties. Says Mohammed Suhail of the Jamaat-e-Islamiya: "We have taken a conscious decision to support candidates of the communist parties wherever we can." The Urdu press has lavishly praised both the CPI and the CPI(M) for their secular stand on the issue of Ramshila puja and communal violence. The visit of V.P. Singh to Bhagalpur has also won the Janata Dal many supporters among the Muslims.

Against Azad, the Janata Dal has put up Chunchun Yadav who is expected to corner most of the backward caste votes and possibly much of the Hindu votes. He is taking care to ensure that. On November 5, the day of the *chhat* festival, he put pitchers full of milk at different places in the town for the benefit of worshippers of the sun god. Azad, on the other hand, is accused of patronising Muslim gangsters in the town.



Massacre victims: burning issue

With both Muslims and Hindus against him, Azad's only hope is that the elections won't be held at all. But the Government seems intent to prove that the situation in Bhagalpur is normal. Says Ajay Tripathi, a high court lawyer: "Anyone can challenge the election by saying that because of the curfew in the town, he was unable to file his nomination." Another reason is proferred by Shakeeluzamma, a deputy minister: "Fifty thousand Muslims are in relief camps and unlikely to exercise their franchise."

But Shakeeluzamma also voices the petrification in the ruling party when he says: "If they do come out on polling day, who knows what is going to happen." —UTTAM SENGUPTA

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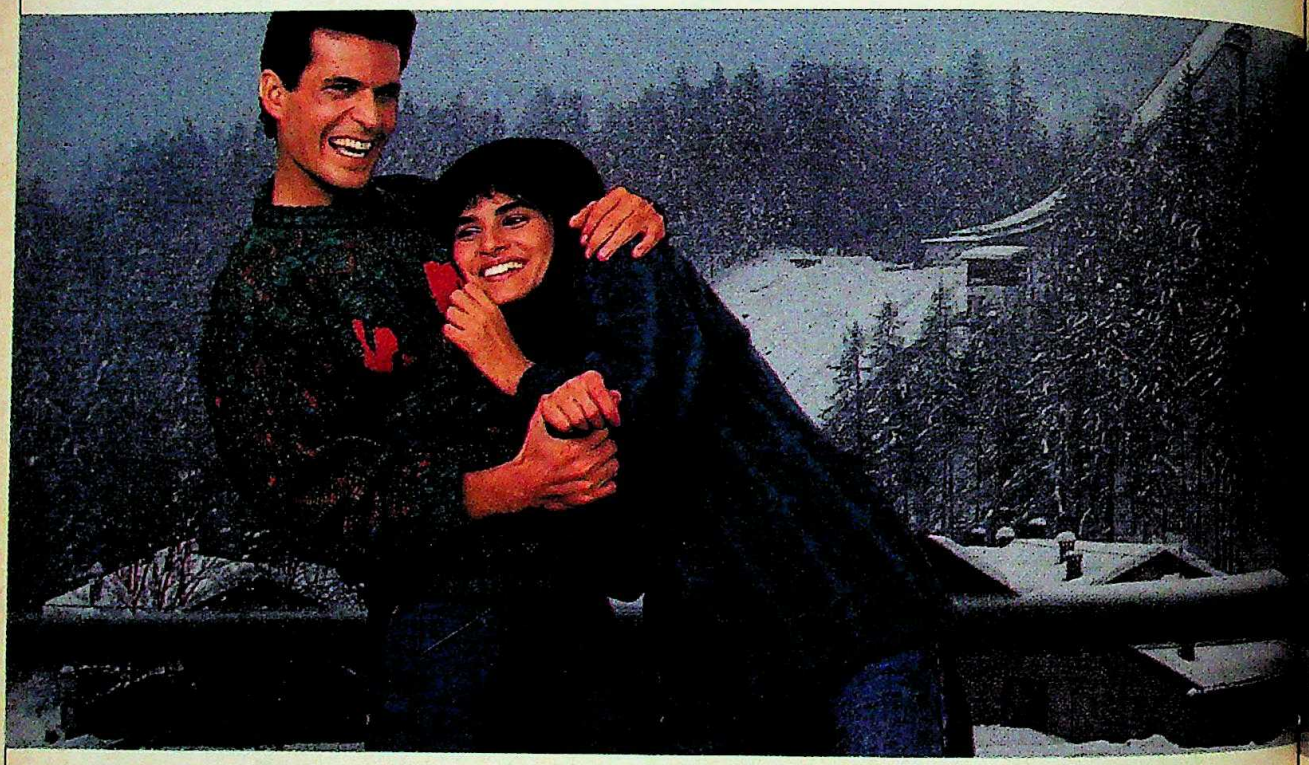

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Joy. A letter arrived in the morning post. I'd been invited to a Film Maker's Workshop. World-wide. In New York. Panic. I had to leave the next day. I had no warm clothes. And New York in the winter. Second only to the North

Pole. Then of course there was the cosmetic angle. I'd have to look smart as well. After all, I'd soon be in designer country, right? Well, I reached designer country. And all went well. Eventless, till the last evening. We were watching a Hitchcock classic. In the darkness. A soft voice whispered behind me, "Nice sweater." My heart stood still for a second. That wasn't an American drawl. I know an Indian voice when I hear one. We went out that evening. Alisha and I. And the next. "You know, it's your sweater that did it...", she said, her eyes twinkling. "Its colour ... its style..." New York in the winter. Second only to heaven.

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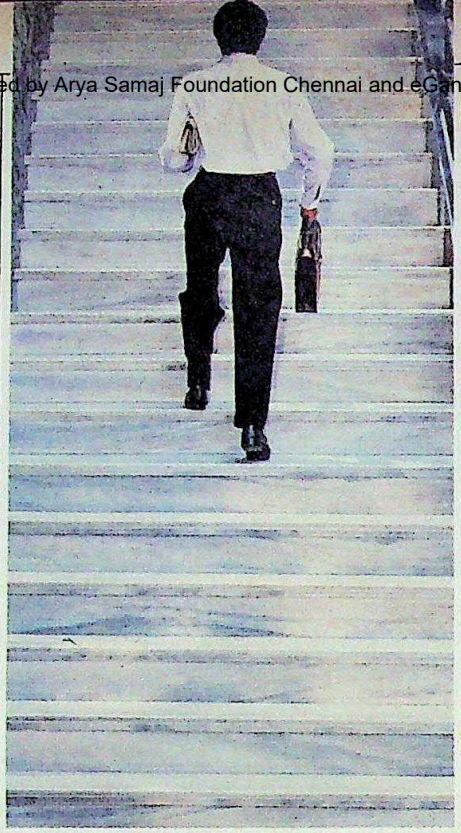

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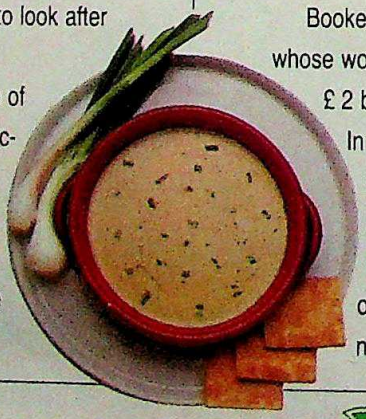

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stuck our necks out to capture booths for him and we have been fighting court cases ever since. What has he done for us?"

Local issues have thus overshadowed national issues. And the Opposition is busy reaping the electoral harvest. The laughter that greets opposition digs at the prime minister is one obvious indication of this. Chandra Shekhar's favourite campaign sally, "Have you ever seen a braver prime minister who hides behind bullet proof vests and screens and exhorts unarmed persons to combat terrorists courageously?" is met with a sad shake of the head. The mood is sombre, but anger at the ruling party's failures and neglect bubbles just below the surface.

Even in Congress(I) strongholds, ruling party candidates—Chief Minister S.N. Sinha's daughter-in-law Shyama in Aurangabad and her mother Madhuri Singh in Purnea—are finding the going tough, although their rivals are relative lightweights. In Bihar's electoral context, that says a lot for which way the wind is gusting.

Further, the Bhagalpur communal massacre has caused a burning anger among the Muslims against the Congress(I) and Rajiv Gandhi *(see box)*. With the ruling party's traditional vote banks in the state—the Harijans and other backward castes, the tribals, and now the Muslims—unmistakably alienated, it spells electoral doom for the Congress(I).

It is not that it will be all smooth sailing for the Opposition. BJP and Janata Dal leaders in the state have been accusing each other of violating the agreement on adjustment of seats. Consequently, what they term as 'friendly bouts' between them in half a dozen-odd constituencies, threaten to be not so friendly after all. A split in opposition votes in some key constituencies—like Dhanbad—can only work in favour of the Congress(I).

Even so, the negative wave against the ruling party has certainly made things easier for the Opposition, whose strategy has focused on wooing the Rajput and Yadav votes. Chandra Shekhar, for example, cannot possibly win without the support of the Yadavs. Whereas Laloo Prasad Yadav cannot win from Chapra without the Rajputs voting solidly for him. Both the candidates have therefore been campaigning for each other and issuing appeals.

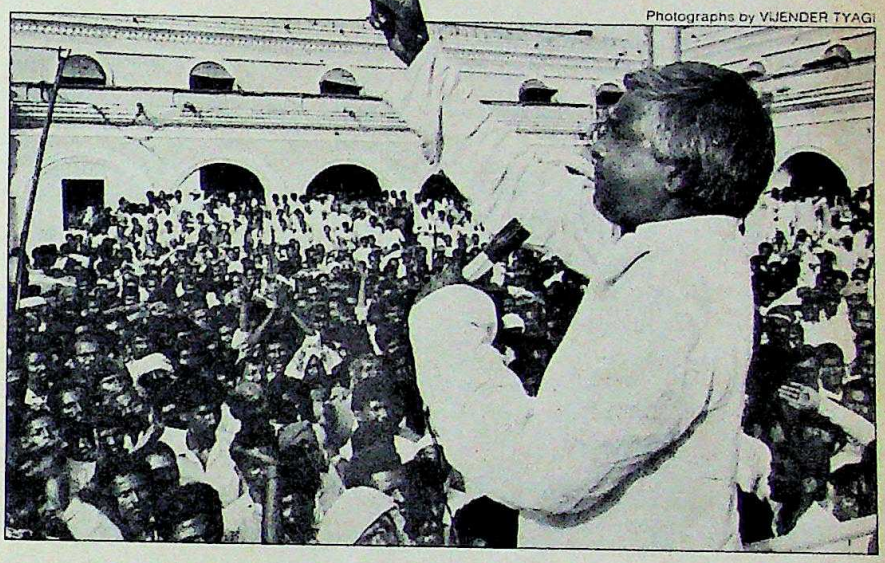
But what is increasingly becoming a negative factor in the opposition campaign is the role of marginal parties like the Indian People's Front (IPF), the Janata Party, and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. In Chapra, the Janata Party candidate, Rajiv Ranjan Singh, is pouring money into his campaign. If he does manage to cut into sizeable Rajput votes, it could make an opposition victory tougher than is being predicted.

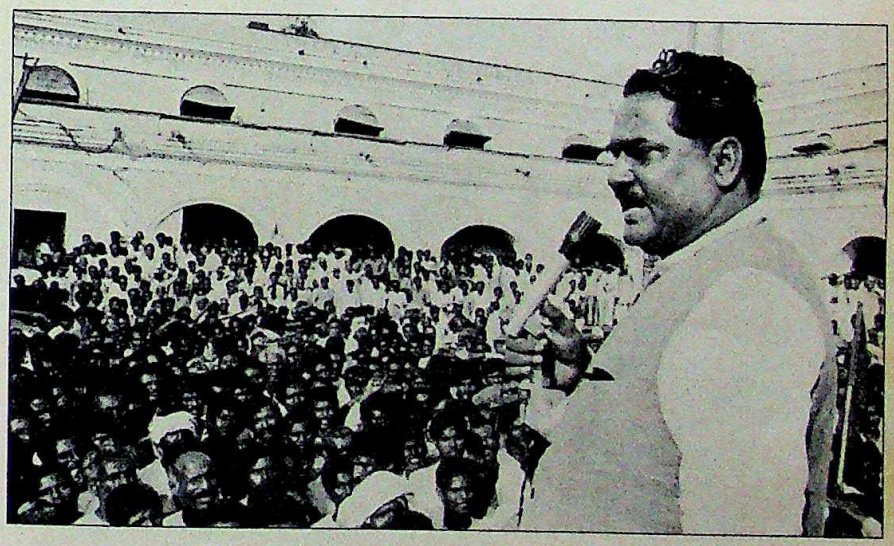
Similarly, the presence of the IPF in Patna could jeopardise the chances of the CPI candidate while the BJP candidate in Godda could suffer because of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha candidate in the fray. None of these fringe parties stands to gain more than four or five seats, if everything goes their way. But they can upset the opposition apple cart in half a dozen constituencies.

The election boycott call by the Jharkhand Coordination Committee in the Chhotanagpur plateau failed to elicit much response. There are, however, serious threats of violence and vandalism, especially in parts of Singbhum, on polling day.

That has a significance of its own.

Photographs by VIJENDER TYAGI





Laloo Prasad (top); Raghunath Jha

- **The Union Minister of State for Human Resources L.P. Sahi contesting from Muzaffarpur, has requested the Election Commission to advance the date of election from 26 November, a Sunday, to 24. His ostensible reason:** *Mahabharat.*

- **If K.K. Tewary is not talking much these days, there is enough reason. The veteran of vitriol and his entourage were chased by villagers of Phatouli. The union minister of state fell into a ditch. Will Buxar ditch him?**

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The question of rigging and booth-capturing has become a major election issue in the state. The IPF has taken the lead in forming anti-booth-capturing squads and in holding conventions on electoral rigging. And other opposition parties, sensing victory in a fair poll, have quickly joined in.

When the Election Commission changed the location of nine polling booths in the Maharajganj constituency on the grounds that earlier booths were located far away from the villages, the Janata Dal promptly protested and took up the matter in New Delhi. Eventually, the party was assured that the changes would not be carried out.

In Aurangabad, the Janata Dal candidate, Ram Naresh Singh, released a list of police officers who had been posted in the constituency during the last Lok Sabha election, later transferred out, and again brought back on election-eve. This, the Janata Dal candidate charged, was a blatant attempt by the chief minister to ensure that his daughter-in-law wins.

The decision by the Government to deploy the Border Security Force in some 'sensitive' booths also came in for sharp criticism. "There is a method in this madness," charged Lok Dal(B) General Secretary Lakshmi Sahu. He pointed out that all the booths in which the ruling party had polled more than 89 per cent of the votes were left out of the 'sensitive' list while booths where the opposition parties had polled more than 70 per cent of the votes were included. The presence of armed security forces, Sahu alleged, kept away voters and facilitated rigging by the ruling party.

The opposition concern is understandable. In the current electoral climate in Bihar, the only way the ruling party can return to power is by rigging the election.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA

MAHARAJGANJ

No Contest

HIS first electoral stop is Chanchoura Bazaar. Around 200 people with a band in attendance stop the open jeep in which Chandra Shekhar is travelling. Shouts of *"Veer Chandra Shekhar zindabad,"* resonate, as he is led to an impromptu dais. Two schoolchildren launch into a song eulogising the Janata Dal leader and how the area has flowered by his very presence.

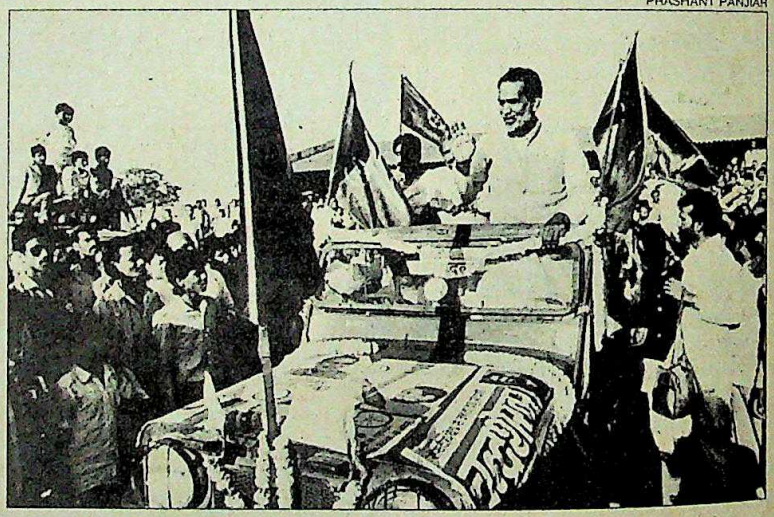
All along the route, people rush to touch him and shake his hands. Women line the road to wave at him. Young boys touch his feet. There is a scramble to garland him.

The climactic scene is at Maharajganj. Here, the waiting crowd is almost hysterical. *"Chandra Shekhar bhaiya mat ghabrana* (Brother Chandra Shekhar, don't worry)," is the refrain, as people with flags and banners jostle and shout themselves hoarse. For someone who was being described as an 'outsider' in the constituency, all this is heady triumph.

Chandra Shekhar hails from Balia district in Uttar Pradesh, just across the Ganga. His decision to contest from both Balia and Maharajganj was initially interpreted as nervousness about his prospects in Balia. But he deftly turned the tables by making it clear that his decision to contest from Maharajganj was prompted by the challenge thrown by Bihar Chief Minister S.N. Sinha that he could never win from Bihar. "Chandra Shekharji has been specially invited to contest from here," chortles former Janata Dal MP, Ram Bahadur Singh, who was expected to contest from Maharajganj.

Denial of the party ticket to Ram Bahadur Singh had upset a large number of his supporters. But ruffled feathers have now been smoothened. And Ram Bahadur travels in the same jeep as Chandra Shekhar, a symbol of unity.

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Chandra Shekhar campaigning

In any event, Chandra Shekhar's image as an outsider counts for little considering that people are unanimous in their view that the sitting Congress(I) MP, Krishna Pratap Singh, is as much of an outsider. As Jaleshwar Yadav, an old man at Ekanwaar, says derisively: "The Congress(I) candidate is hardly known in the area. He has never met us since the last election." Bystanders quip that they have seen more of Chandra Shekhar in five years than their MP because he drove from Balia to Patna through this area.

Added to this is the presence of Dayanand Sahay, the Congress(I)'s Rajya Sabha member from Bihar, who is an old friend of the Janata Dal leader. Although Sahay denies he has left the Congress(I), his remark is telling: "What difference does it make? Congress(I) *to doobi hui party hai."* (The Congress(I) is a drowning party).

If Chandra Shekhar wins from both Balia and Maharajganj, as the indications are, he will have to retain the seat which gives him a higher percentage of votes. The move appears to have paid off in Maharajganj where speakers hysterically exhort people to ensure that Chandra Shekhar wins by the highest margin. "It is now a prestige issue with the people here," said a voter.

Maharajganj it seems will get a new maharaja. For the Janata Dal leader, the only electoral challenge is the margin he will eventually win by.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA

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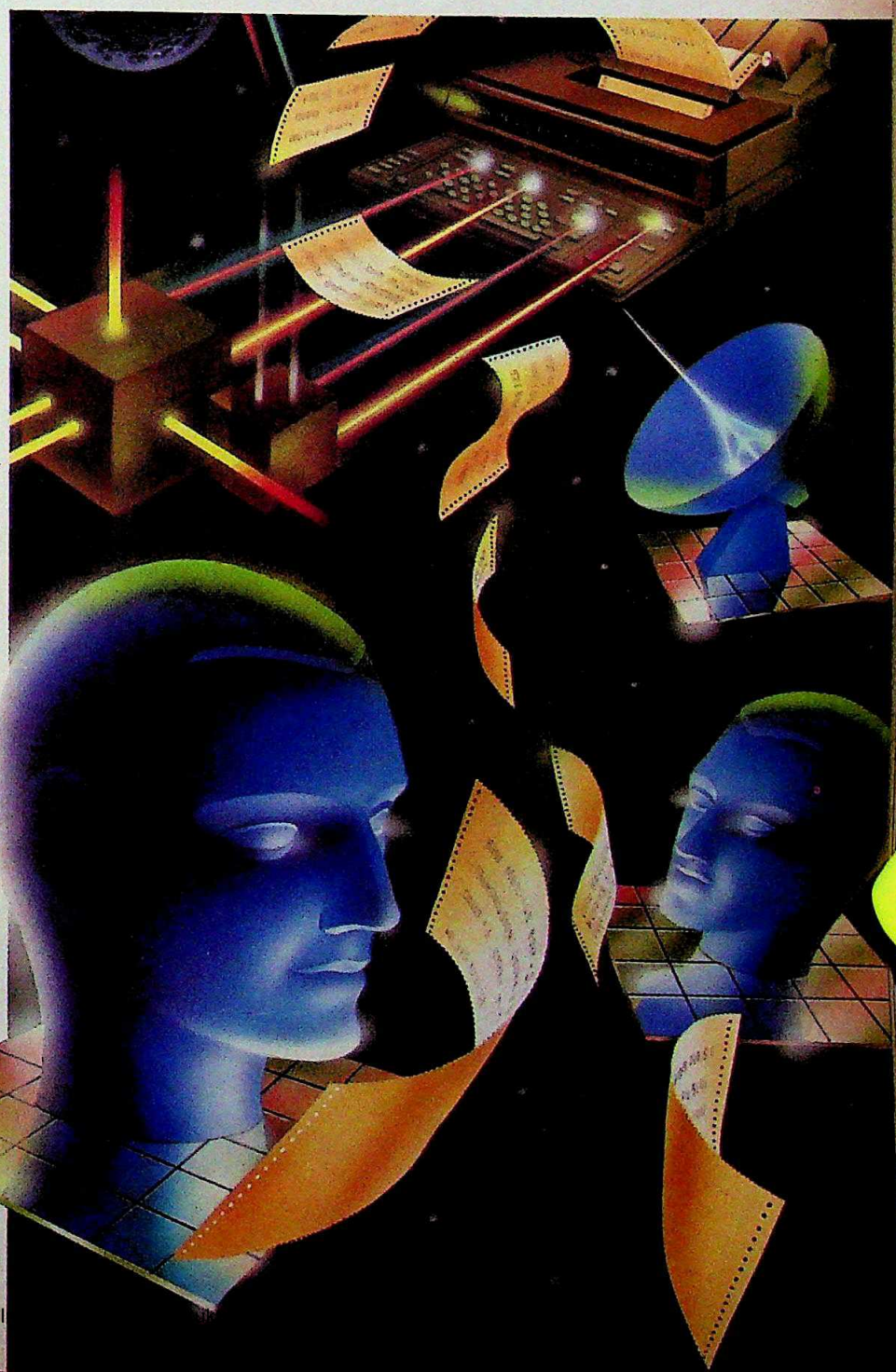

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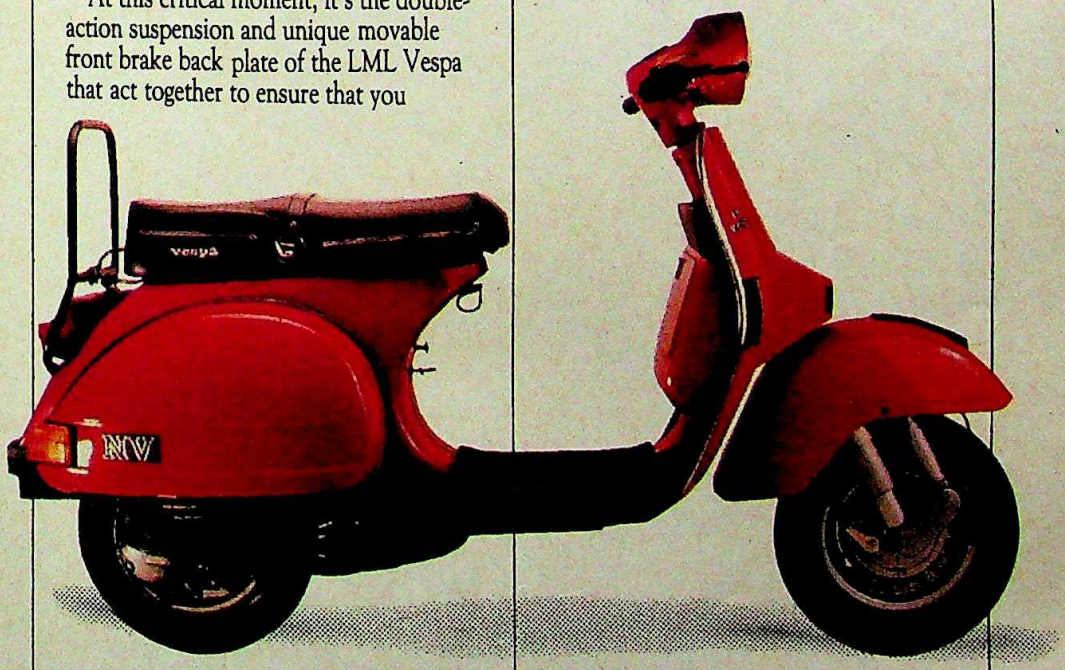

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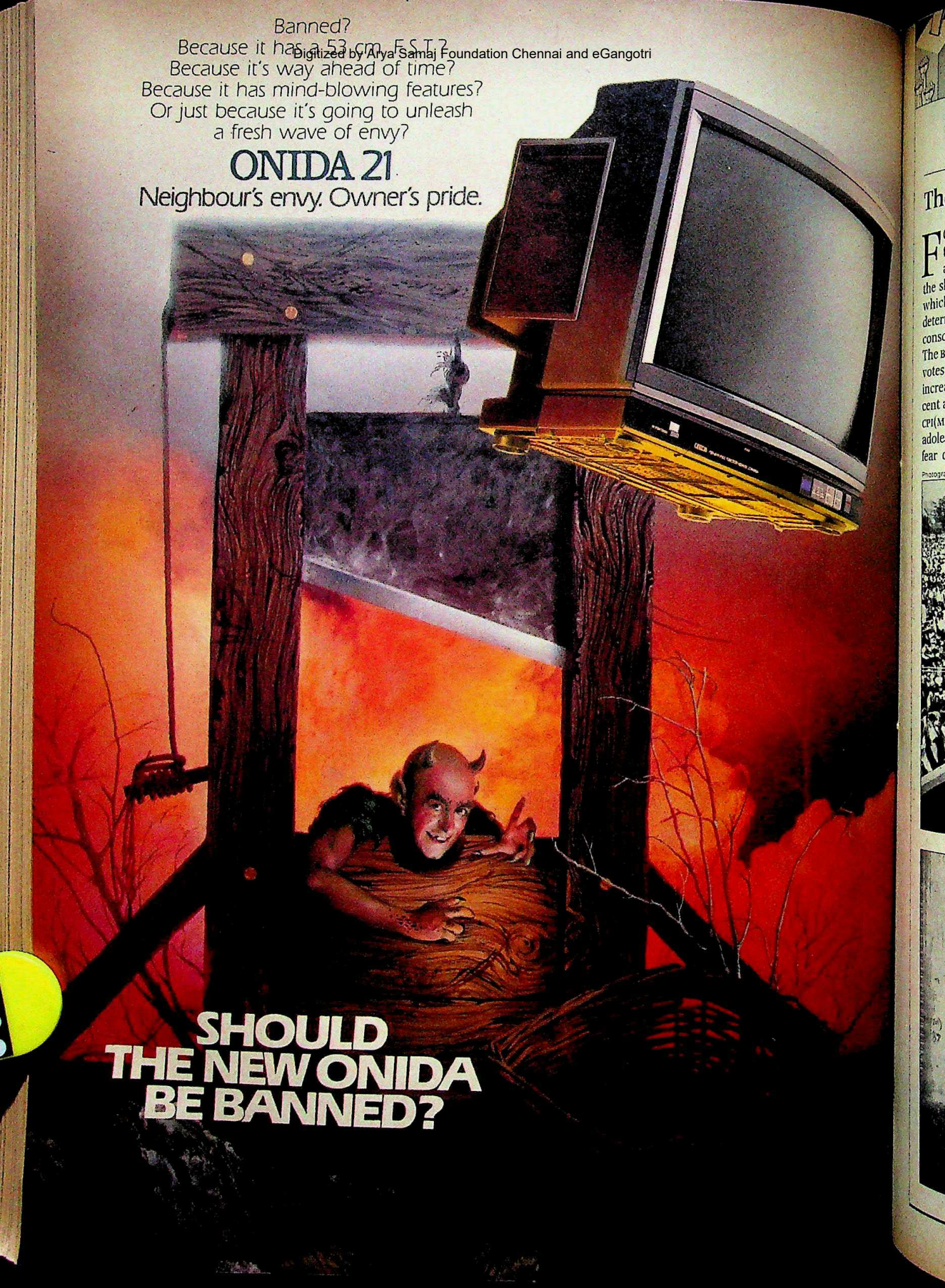

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WEST BENGAL

Left in Front

The Congress(I) and the BJP won't threaten the Left Front's supremacy

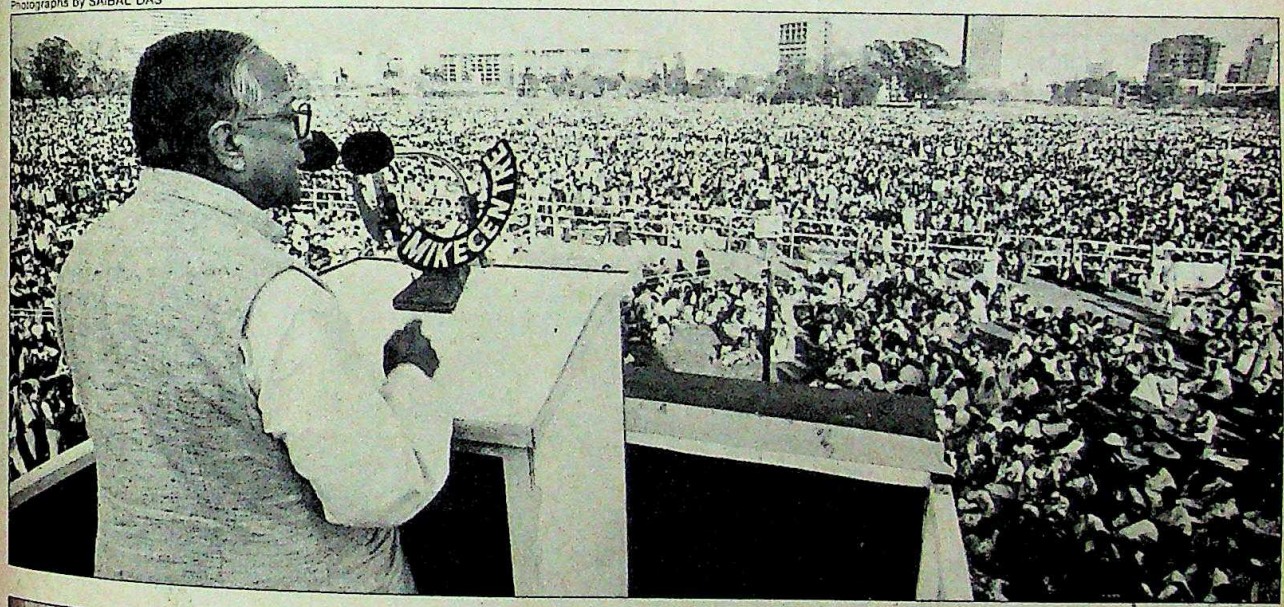
FOR the ruling CPI(M)-led Left Front the battle this time is ironically not against the Congress(I), but against the slumbering giant of communalism which the BJP is stirring awake with determined prods. This way it hopes to consolidate a part of the core Hindu vote. The BJP, which bagged only 0.9 per cent votes in the 1984 elections, hopes to increase its share of the votes to 5 per cent and has fielded 19 candidates. The CPI(M) has reason to take this brash adolescent seriously; essentially out of fear of what harm an established BJP could do in the state in future.

The BJP has been working with gusto and its efforts bore fruit last fortnight when the state Government allowed the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's (VHP) Ramshila processions and the Ram Yagna to be held in Calcutta. The BJP is now trying to capitalise on the situation, while the Left Front, predictably, has made the rise of Hindu fundamentalism a major issue in its campaign.

The Congress(I) meantime is running a weak, issue-less campaign. Even its half-hearted attempt to capitalise on actions like the reduction of the voting age to 18 have not worked. The reason: the Left Front Government had already given similar voting rights in the municipal elections. And the Congress(I) knows too well that panchayats in the state have been working admirably—of the 3,000-odd panchayats, hardly 600 are under the Congress(I)—and that attempts to accuse the Opposition of blocking the Nagarpalika and Pancha-

Basu addressing a rally; and (below) graffiti: no challengers

Photographs by SAIBAL DAS



- **Rajiv Gandhi had promised to take India to the 21st century. He does not realise that India can get there without him.** *JYOTI BASU*

- ***In the graffiti war, the stone-man is a popular theme. In Chetla, the Congress(I) caricatures Jyoti Basu as the 'stone man'. The CPI(M) in turn shows Rajiv Gandhi as the stone man, holding the brick titled 'foundation stone'. Well, stone-man versus foundation-stone-man.***

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- ***Hathe niya Sten gun; Aamader Ghani Khan; Janagan sabhdhan.*** **(People pay attention; here comes Ghani Khan; cradling a Sten gun).**

  CPI(M) slogan used in Diamond Harbour

- ***Desh bhag birodh karo, haate chaap maro*** **(Oppose the division of the country, vote for the hand).**

  Congress(I) slogan in Calcutta

yati Raj bills might boomerang.

The confusion in the Congress(I) ranks was evident the moment the list was finalised. It was only at the last moment that the party decided to support the GNLF-backed candidate Inder Jit from Darjeeling. Confusion gave way to anger when Sachchidanand Shaw, who lost his deposit in the panchayat election, was given the ticket from Bolpur to contest against the formidable CPI(M) leader Somnath Chatterjee, and Mohammad Sorab, Vardhendu Naskar and Anwar Ali who had lost repeatedly were again favoured with tickets.

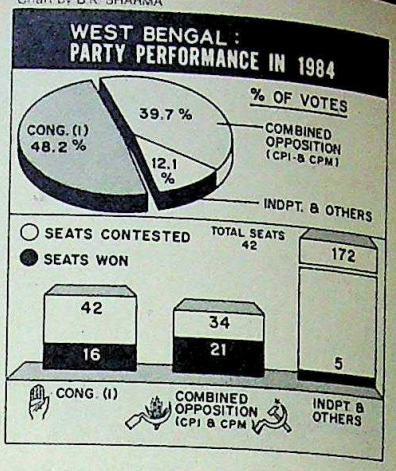
THE PCC(I) chief Ghani Khan Chaudhury worsened matters by declaring that no seat, not even his own, was safe in West Bengal. He later retracted this, but the truth of his words was soon evident. The sitting MP, Tarun Kanti Ghosh was heckled and his shirt torn by angry voters in Barasat, and Union Minister of State for Commerce Priya Ranjan Das Munshi was confronted by hostile crowds in Howrah.

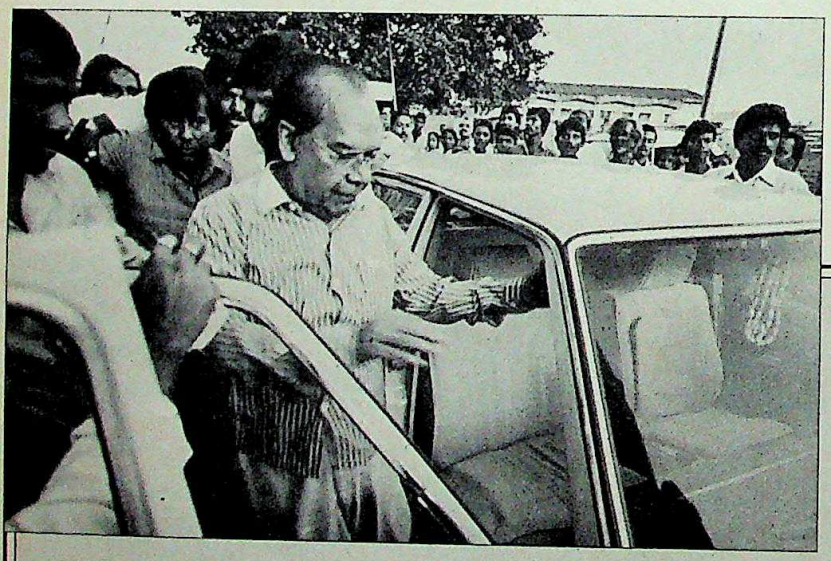
Even in Calcutta where the party had performed admirably in 1984, winning four of the five constituencies, it is facing a determined new-look team put up by the Left Front. In the traditional Congress(I) stronghold, Calcutta North-West, Asoke Sen who had won the seat last time is contesting on a Janata Dal ticket backed by the Left Front. In Jadavpur, the firebrand Congress(I) MP, Mamta Banerjee, is facing unexpected resistance from an unknown English teacher from Jadavpur University, Malini Bhattacharya. And in neighbouring South Calcutta, Bholanath Sen, sitting MP, has his back to the wall against the CPI(M) central committee member and noted economist Dr Biplab Dasgupta. Adding to the woes of Congress(I) candidates is the fact that the high command has given them only Rs 50,000 of the promised Rs 2 lakh per constituency.

The CPI(M) is confident of increasing its present tally of 18 seats and cutting into the 48.16 per cent votes and 16 seats the Congress(I) won in 1984. The 1987 Assembly polls showed that the CPI(M) had already cemented much of the cracks in its mighty edifice in Bengal. And, but for an unlikely consolidation of Hindu votes by the BJP, the edifice should get a new coat of red paint.

—FARZAND AHMED

Chart by B.K. SHARMA





CONGRESS(I)

Gloomy Mood

IF the mood in the Congress(I) headquarters is any indication, the party seems to have given up the fight even before it has begun.

Like Calcutta's winter mist, gloom has descended on the party headquarters near Haji Mohammad Mohsin Square. A week into the campaign, there were just five disinterested staffers there—two of them watching football on television.

The lone senior functionary in the office, Vice-President Nandlal Banerjee, displayed forced optimism: "During our movements including the fill-the-jail campaign and the siege of Writers Building, we got spontaneous support from the people. They will not go against the Congress(I)."

And in the rented rooms in nearby Nizam Palace, Somen Mitra, MLA and confidant of PCC(I) chief Ghani Khan Chaudhury, was trying to convince Mahila Congress(I) leaders of the difficulty in getting enough campaign material. "By serious efforts we can overcome weaknesses," he said putting up a brave face.

It is true that the election announcement left the state unit little time to put together its tattered phalanx. Bogged down in groupism, there was no coordination among the district units. And after the list of candidates was finally announced, there were wails of protests. Even Ghani Khan Chaudhury did not bother to visit the party headquarters a week after campaigning started, as he was busy desperately guarding his fortress Malda. With neither a popular leader nor a sense of direction, the party looks like a rudderless ship.

—FARZAND AHMED

Chaudhury: dispirited leadership

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MAHARASHTRA

Citadel Under Siege

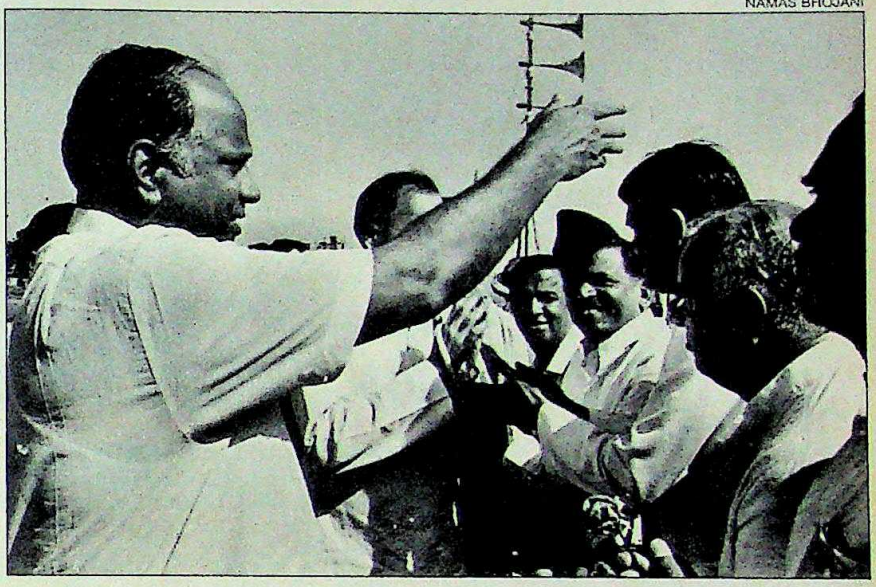
Dissidence and the Shiv Sena could pose problems for the Congress(I)

WILL the Congress(I) pick up a majority of the 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra, the state regarded as the ruling party's last bastion? As the campaign for the Lok Sabha elections gathers momentum, that question is troubling many Congress(I) leaders. In spite of the Opposition's failure to reach seat adjustments in most of the constituencies, Congress(I) candidates are facing tough contests even in the party's traditional strongholds.

Aurangabad is a case in point. Located in the centre of the state, this prestigious constituency has all the major regions of Maharashtra along its borders. More than 30 per cent of its 11.8 lakh voters are Muslims and Dalits, a factor which has helped the Congress(I) retain its hold over the constituency.

But the Congress(I) can no longer take Aurangabad for granted. Two years

NAMAS BHOJANI



Pawar with Rajiv at Aurangabad: dwindling crowds

BOMBAY

Close Fight

FOR the ruling party, Bombay, the city of its birth, presents a grim scenario. Even Bombay Regional Congress(I) Committee chief Murli Deora acknowledges: "Compared to the 1984 elections, the Congress(I) is faced with a tougher fight now." Rightist Hindu parties are flexing their muscles as never before. The Shiv Sena, which controls the city's rich municipal corporation, and the BJP have come together to take on the Congress(I). "The BJP-Sena combination can sweep Bombay," exults BJP General Secretary Pramod Mahajan.

The prospects for the saffron flag are brightest in the sprawling Bombay North constituency. Here, the BJP's Ram Naik is locked in a three-cornered contest with the Janata Dal's Mrinal Gore and the Congress(I)'s Chandrakant Ghosalia. Ghosalia got the Congress(I) ticket after the sitting MP, Anoochand Shah, declined to contest the elections. Shah's reluctance is a pointer to the Congress(I)'s prospects in the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls.

The ruling party faces only one straight contest in the city—in the Bombay North-Central constituency, where the battle is between Sharad Dighe of the Congress(I) and Vidyadhar Gokhale of the Shiv Sena. The two-horse race promises to have a photo finish.

Ironically, the Congress(I)'s safest bet is its most reluctant candidate—the sitting MP from the Bombay North-West constituency, Hindi film star Sunil Dutt. Dutt's simplicity and sincerity have endeared him to voters. Fed up of Congress(I) realpolitik and preoccupied with his daughter-in-law's illness—she is undergoing cancer therapy in the US—he had at first firmly declined to stand for re-election. "I explained this to the Congress(I) high command. But my daughter-in-law told me, 'Dad, they need you out there. I will be all right.'

MAHENDRA PARIKH

Sunil Dutt with street kids: glamour and sincerity

That is why I am back here."

Deora is the other Congressman who is expected to sail through in the elections. He is faced with an array of opponents. But Deora has other worries—he is responsible for the performance of the party in the city. If the Congress(I) is lucky, it may just succeed in retaining half the Parliamentary seats in Bombay—thanks in no small measure to disunity in the Opposition.

—M. RAHMAN

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ANIL BHOJANI

Thackeray at joint Shiv Sena-BJP meeting: posing a serious threat

ago, the Shiv Sena wrested control of the municipal corporation, and now it is giving the Congress(I) a run for its money in the Lok Sabha poll too.

The ruling party brought Rajiv Gandhi to Shivaji Maidan in Aurangabad to kick off its campaign. Rajiv was in the city last in December 1986, when he addressed a three-lakh-strong rally to mark Sharad Pawar's return to the Congress(I). He would have noticed the difference in the size of the gathering. Though it was enthusiastic, last fortnight's crowd was less than a third of the turn-out three years ago. Rajiv flew in in a helicopter and so missed seeing another startling portent—the road from the airport is awash with the saffron Sena flag.

The turn-outs at Sena chief Bal Thackeray's rallies are remarkable. Wherever he goes, thousands show up. He's become a charismatic leader and, extraordinarily, has begun to attract even Muslims, despite his militantly pro-Hindu stance.

Clearly, the Sena has stepped into the vacuum created by Pawar's return to the Congress(I), which left the Opposition without a statewide party or leader. In the Lok Sabha poll, the Sena is contesting only six seats, along with 33 seats by the BJP. Both parties are confident of sending representatives to the Lok Sabha this time. In 1984, the Opposition won only five seats, two of which were by Pawar's Congress(S). Now, even with the wily Pawar on the other side, the tally will definitely be much higher. "There is large-scale discontent among all communities and, as campaigning picks up, the vote will crystallise against the Congress," predicts Pannalal Surana, editor of the respected daily *Marathwada*. But the anti-Congress vote will be split, ruling out the possibility of the Opposition getting a majority of the seats.

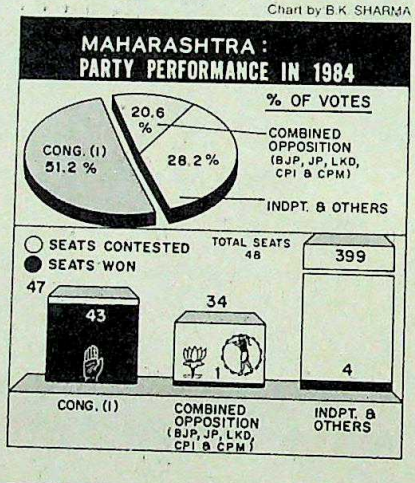
The chief minister is well aware that the Congress(I) is facing one of the toughest Lok Sabha contests in Maharashtra. Even though he insists that the party will win comfortably, he also admits that in at least 16 constituencies, the going could be rough. And predictably, the problems for the Congress(I) do not emanate only from the growing influence of opposition parties like the Shiv Sena. Every district has its quota of disgruntled Congressmen busy helping the Opposition with money and material to defeat ruling party candidates. In fact, the intelligence wing of the state police has drawn up a list of 77 prominent Congress(I) leaders who pose a threat to party candidates in 23 of the 30 districts.

Some party leaders have risen in open revolt after being denied Lok Sabha tickets. Rajiv's decision to give tickets mainly to sitting MPs affected Pawar's followers the most. After intense lobbying, Pawar managed to squeeze in just four of his men.

Obviously, the party high command is still suspicious of Pawar's loyalty. The feeling is constantly stoked by rival leaders like MPCC(I) chief Pratibha Patil and former chief ministers Shivajirao Patil-Nilangekar and A.R. Antulay. As Thackeray observed gleefully: "Today there is a wide crack in the Congress(I)."

Clearly, even in a state regarded as the Congress(I)'s best bet, all is not hunky-dory for the ruling party. Pawar, a wily, resourceful politician, will have to muster all his legendary skills to ensure that the party retains its predominant position. For even three-cornered contests could spell doom for the Congress(I) if the dissension within the party gets out of hand. —M. RAHMAN

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



- **The 1989 Oddball Award undoubtedly goes to Kalki Gaur of the 'Capitalist Populist Party' who has painted the walls of his south Bombay constituency with slogans like 'Hang CIA spy Morarji Desai' and 'Nationalise corrupt Marwari businesses'. Gaur is a Marwari businessman.**

- **The Congress (I) is losing its strongholds one after another. Wait for the assembly elections. We are going to win power.**
  Shiv Sena chief BAL THACKERAY

- **The favoured party is the Sena now.**
  SALIM ALI, petrol pump attendant in Jaina

- **I am not the policeman of this constituency.**
  MURLI DEORA

- **Mr Babasaheb Bhosale is a Trojan horse of the Janata Dal President Mr V.P. Singh.**
  A.R. ANTULAY in Roha (Raigad)

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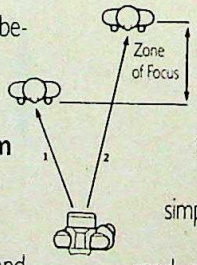

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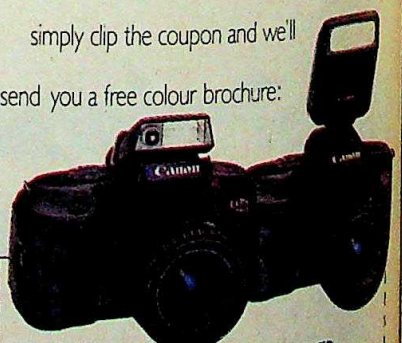

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GUJARAT

Nervous Pangs

The morale of the Congress(I) is low

AS the countdown to the ninth general elections begins, the ruling party in Gujarat is experiencing uncharacteristic pangs of nervousness.

In the 1980 elections, it won 25 of the 26 Lok Sabha seats, in 1984 it bagged 24, and in 1985, it netted a stunning 150 of the 182 assembly seats. Today, even the most optimistic Congress(I) member is hoping for no more than 15 seats. Explains PCC(I) General Secretary Nirupam Nanavati: "Those (the 1980 and 1984 victories) were Congress(I) hurricanes that swept voters off their feet. That hurricane is nowhere visible this time."

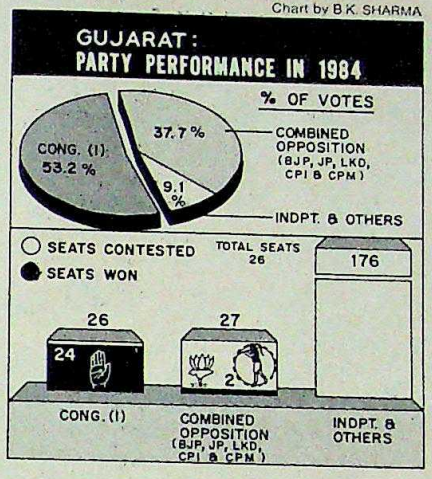
The reason for the low morale is not only the voters' disenchantment on national issues like the Bofors gun deal and the price rise. There are several local factors too. Primary is the state Government's inaction in the communal riots over the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue that recently rocked north and central Gujarat.

Then, crucial farmers' bodies like the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh and the Khedut Samanvaya Samiti that spearheaded a number of recent agitations, are opposed to the party. To cap it all, the state Congress(I) is riven by infighting over the selection of candidates.

But Bofors is uppermost. Says BJP leader Ashok Bhatt: "Congress(I) leaders spend more time defending Rajiv Gandhi against the Bofors kickback charges than doing anything else."

Recently, Union Planning Minister Madhavsinh Solanki, in a speech to party workers demonstrating how the Bofors attack could be warded off, emphasised the gun's quality and the fact that Rajiv had got its price reduced. And referring to state Janata Dal chief Chimanbhai Patel—who had to step down following the Navnirman stir against his 'corrupt' government in 1974—Solanki roared: *"Gandi savarni thi safal naa thaye"* (A dirty broom cannot remove dust).

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



- ***Rajiv Gandhi dhoka hai, Maaro dhakka mauka hai.*** **(Rajiv Gandhi is a fraudulent tout; this is the chance, kick him out.)** *Opposition slogan*

- ***Rajiv tum taqdeer ho, kal ke Hindustan ki; Nehru ke armaan ki, Indira ke balidaan ki.*** **(Rajiv you are India's destiny; you are Nehru's pride, the fruit of Indira's sacrifice.)** *Congress(I) slogan*

Nevertheless, the ebullience in the opposition camp refuses to be dampened. One reason is the poll adjustments on all 26 seats between the Janata Dal and the BJP. Said state BJP chief S. Vaghela: "The Janata Dal's *chakra* will prove to be the Congress(I)'s *kaalchakra* and the BJP lotus will herald the emergence of a new nation."

There will be straight contests in 24 constituencies. In Vadodara and Bhavnagar, former IPS officer Jaspal Singh and Jaswant Singh Sarvaiya, once prospective Janata Dal candidates, are contesting as independents. Among those fighting their first Lok Sabha poll are former Union minister Yogendra Makwana from Patan and BJP chief Vaghela from Gandhinagar.

Though the mood in the Congress(I) is downbeat, its position is not so bleak in its traditional stronghold of south Gujarat and parts of central Gujarat. In the tribal belt of south Gujarat (four seats), it derives its strength from the clout of Chief Minister Amarsinh Chaudhary and his political mentor-turned-foe Jinabhai Darji who have temporarily sunk their differences. However, the party faces a tough fight in Surat where former AICC(I) joint general secretary C.D. Patel is pitted against former Surat mayor, Kashiram Rana of the BJP.

For the Opposition, lack of resources is a serious drawback. And the state Janata Dal is facing its share of factional bickerings—a result of the strained relations between Chimanbhai and party Secretary-General Pravinsinh Jadeja, leader of the Jan Morcha faction.

In the ultimate analysis, the apparent opposition edge over the visibly shaky Congress(I) may only signify a win of a dozen seats. But for the ruling party in Gujarat, even that will mean a big climb-down from the heady '80s.

—UDAY MAHURKAR

PRAVIN GAJJAR

Rajiv with PCC(I) chief Prabodh Rawal and Chaudhary: backs to the wall

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SIKKIM

Fort Bhandari

The chief minister reigns supreme

NATIONAL issues don't count for much in Sikkim. Here, the electoral battle—for both the lone Lok Sabha seat and the 32 assembly seats—is being waged around the personality of Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari.

Ten years ago, Bhandari was a little-known schoolteacher. Today, he is a cult figure. His portrait adorns living-rooms; and his alleged extra-marital dalliances scarcely affect his popularity—they are taken to be proof of his manliness. In the last general elections, his Sikkim Sangram Parishad won the Lok Sabha seat, and it swept up 30 of 32 assembly seats. Now Bhandari is cockier than ever. Says he: "We'll win 34 of the 33 seats."

That may be an exaggeration. But Bhandari certainly has a lot going for him—organisational skill, money power, and powerful oratory peppered with ribald jokes. The combination should see him back in the saddle.

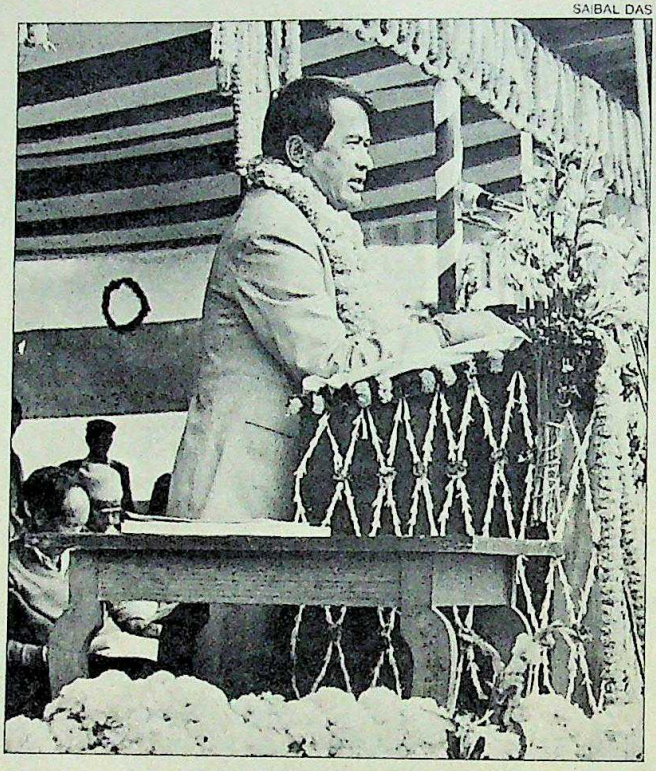
Still, it may not be smooth sailing. Two regional parties have emerged to challenge Bhandari's vice-like grip on the Himalayan state. His estranged wife Dilkumari is now on the other side—contesting the Lok Sabha election on the Congress(I) ticket. And there have been other desertions.

Posing a serious challenge to Bhandari are the year-old Rising Sun Party led by Ram Chandra Poudyal and the Denzone People's Chogpa registered in September this year. The Rising Sun is an unabashedly pro-Nepali party, while the People's Chogpa (People's Organisation) aims to defend the interests of the Bhotiyas, the Lepchas and other backward tribal groups.

Bhandari insists the two parties are insignificant, but privately, Sangram Parishad officials admit the party could lose quite a few assembly seats.

Nevertheless, with the Rising Sun and the People's Chogpa dividing votes, the battle, it seems, will finally boil down to one between the ruling party and the Congress(I). For the Lok Sabha election, the Sangram Parishad has put up a relatively weak candidate, Nandu Thapa, against Dilkumari, yet her chances aren't very bright.

SAIBAL DAS



Bhandari on the stump: impregnable position

Dilkumari is not the only one to turn against Bhandari. Another opponent, the speaker of the Assembly, Tulsiram Sharma, was expelled from the party. And the erstwhile state forest minister, Thukchup Lachungpa, too could be working against Bhandari, though not openly.

Nevertheless, the dissension in the Congress(I) camp is far more serious. The President of the Mahila Congress, Mrs Rinzing Ongma, quit the party because she was not given a ticket for the assembly elections. Another prominent leader to leave was K.N. Tobgay, state joint secretary, who joined the Sangram Parishad along with three secretaries. Says he: "Without her husband, Mrs Bhandari is a big zero."

Certainly, the most important factor in the elections is Bhandari himself. But he too is not invulnerable to attack. His rivals accuse him of widespread corruption. Says Lachen Gomchen Rinpochi, president of the People's Chogpa: "There is a joke in Sikkim. If you see a ruling party flag on top of a house, you know the household has been favoured with loans, jobs or contracts."

Bhandari has also been accused of manipulating the electoral rolls by including people who figure in the voting lists in Darjeeling and Kalimpong in neighbouring West Bengal. Another issue generating considerable heat in Sikkim's winter is the subject of stateless voters. The People's Chogpa contends that as many as 54,000 stateless subjects in Sikkim have been included in the voters' list. Says Pradhan: "They should not be allowed to vote. The Government of India too has acknowledged that they are not Indian citizens and that their citizenship applications are being processed."

The chief minister blithely brushes aside the allegation. Says he: "You can be a voter without being a citizen and a citizen without being a voter."

Insolent insouciance? Yes, but it's grounded in the confidence that today his position is virtually impregnable.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA in Sikkim

- **There is a joke in Sikkim. If you see a ruling party flag on top of a house, you know that the household has been favoured with loans, jobs or contracts by the Government.**
  LACHEN GOMCHEN RINPOCHI, President of the People's Chogpa.

- **It is going to be a one-party election. We will win 34 of the 33 seats.**
  Chief Minister NAR BAHADUR BHANDARI

- **Without her husband, Mrs Bhandari is a big zero.**
  K.N. TOBGAY, Congress(I) leader who joined the Sangram Parishad

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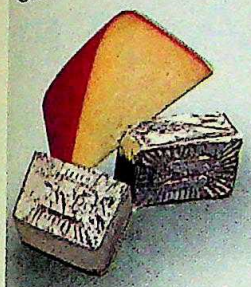

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GOES AROUND IN A JEEP ?

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One hesitates to deal with a man who does not conform to any of one's preconceived notions. The surface is cool, urbane,yet there's no mistaking that undercurrent of electric energy.

WITH A MAN WHO

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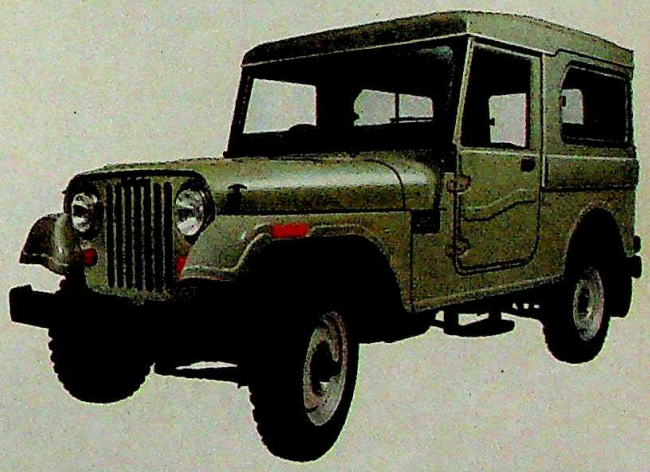
But don't mention it to him. He'll just react with a resounding laugh.



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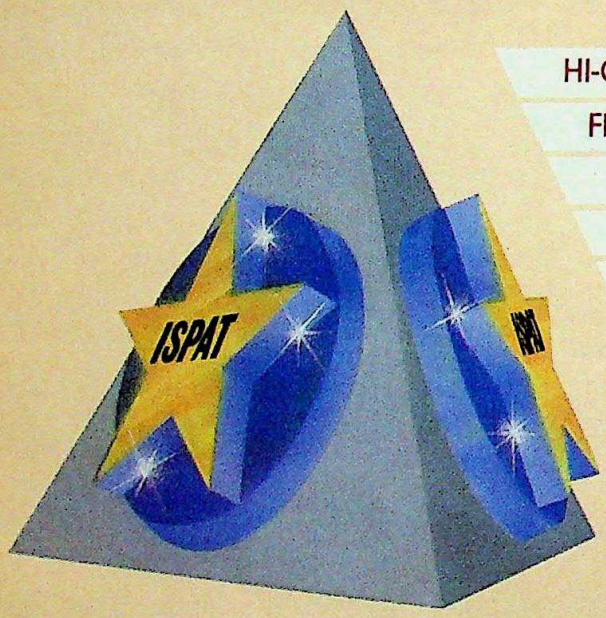

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Photographs by SHARAD SAXENA

Shekhawat campaigning

- *Bofors ke dalalo ko, joote maaro saalon ko.* (Pelt the Bofors' touts with shoes.)
  Opposition slogan in Rajasthan
- *Bofors ke teen dalal, Rajiv, Pilot, Natwar Lal.* (Bofors has three middlemen—Rajiv, Pilot, and Natwar Lal.)
  Opposition slogan in Rajasthan
- *Bharat Varsh ka pahredar. Buta Singh apka ummedwar.* (India's watchman, Buta Singh, is your candidate.
  Congress (I) slogan in Jalore

RAJASTHAN

Opposition Wind

Electoral unity boosts the Opposition's chances

IN the 1984 elections, the Congress(I) made a clean sweep of 25 seats in Rajasthan. This time, if there's any sweeping to be done, it won't be the Congress(I) which will be doing it.

For one, unlike in 1984, it will be facing a united opposition in 24 constituencies. For another, the Ramshila movement has got a tremendous response and the beneficiary is clearly the BJP. Together, the two factors—opposition unity and Hindu militancy—are a deadly combination.

Just how deadly it could be is obvious from the voting pattern in 1984, when there was a massive wave in favour of the Congress(I). Even so, the combined opposition votes outnumbered the ruling party's in five constituencies—Barmer, Bayana, Bharatpur, Nagaur and Jhunjhunu. With no split in their votes now, the Opposition is already counting these constituencies—four contested by the Janata Dal—as won.

In 1984, the BJP had polled the second highest number of votes in 15 constituencies. But with opposition unity uppermost on the agenda this time, it conceded the Sikar seat to Haryana Chief Minister Devi Lal, for his grudge-bout with Lok Sabha Speaker Balram Jakhar. The upshot is that the BJP is contesting 14 seats leaving 10 for the Janata Dal.

JALORE

Buta's Bid

EVEN 750 km away from New Delhi, in the villages of Jalore, Buta Singh cannot escape the Ayodhya controversy. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and BJP leaders have made it the main plank of their campaign against Singh in his constituency by arguing that the Sikh home minister is standing in the way of construction of the Ram temple.

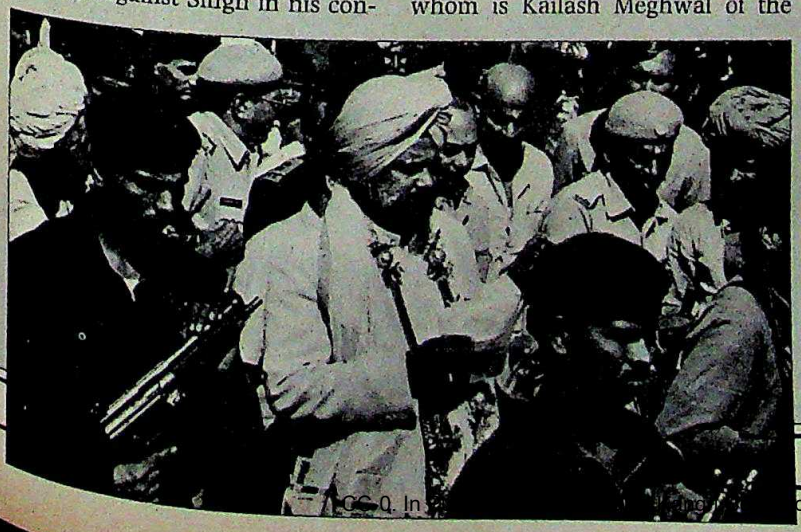
Says Singh, who is standing from Jalore for the second consecutive term: "It is an absolutely unethical campaign. They are using a religious controversy which I have to manage as the home minister." Aside from Singh, there are eight candidates in the fray at Jalore, the most notable of whom is Kailash Meghwal of the BJP—who also has the Janata Dal's support. Though Meghwal is not a political heavyweight, the shrewd home minister is aware that the emotive Janmabhoomi issue could upset all his electoral calculations. So Singh is not pulling his punches and is sparing no opportunity to lash out at the RSS-BJP-VHP triumvirate.

Singh has also pampered his constituency by opening guest-houses, schools, waterworks, dispensaries and an oil factory.

Singh is hoping that the development of the area and his high-profile image will undo the damage done by the religious campaigning and clinch the election for him.

Even if the BJP does not win the election from Jalore, it has won the preliminary round by giving the prime minister's right-hand man a tough fight, and tying him down to his constituency.

—PANKAJ PACHAURI in Jalore



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Even worse for the Congress(I), though the BJP and the Janata Dal only have an informal adjustment at the national level, in Rajasthan, the two parties have launched joint campaigns. BJP state chief Bhairon Singh Shekhawat exults: "It's like a *baraat* (wedding party). There is no difference between the two parties."

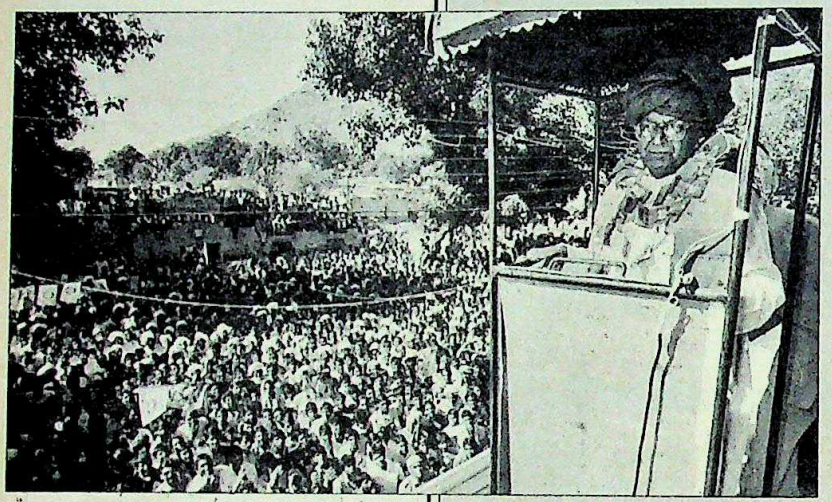
The Congress(I), on the other hand, is in a depressed mood. It's fielding candidates from all 25 seats, sixteen of whom are sitting MPs, including Union ministers Buta Singh, Rajesh Pilot and Ram Niwas Mirdha. But with two heavyweights—former chief ministers Harideo Joshi and Jagannath Pahadia—out on gubernatorial assignments, the party is short of star campaigners. Chief Minister Shiv Charan Mathur is unfazed. Says he: "Our party's strength is the worker. And we have plenty of them."

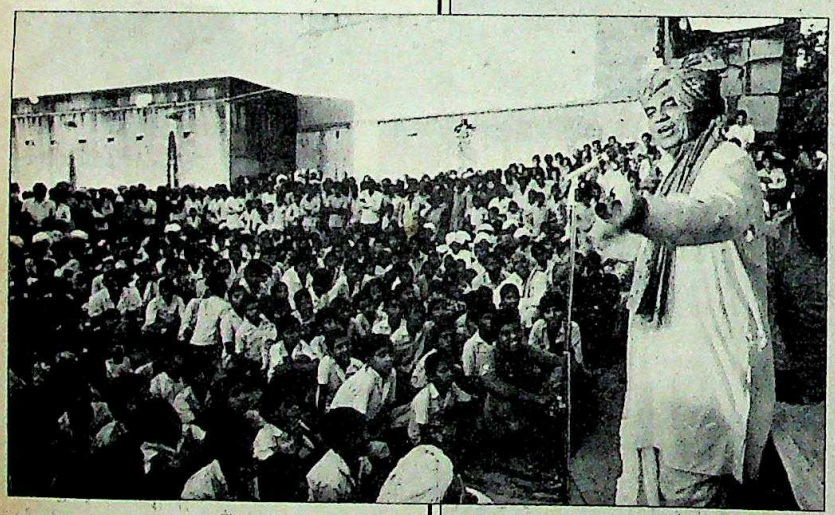
The ruling party's campaign is confined to one slogan: only the Congress(I)

SIKAR

Jakhar Jammed

THE battle for Sikar is clearly a one-sided affair. Frenzied crowds break into dance as Devi Lal's *rath* rolls into the Lok Sabha constituency. The drum beats reach a crescendo and he is showered with marigold petals.





Devi Lal (above) is all set to defeat Jakhar (below) comprehensively

Balram Jakhar gets petals too, but the spontaneity is missing. The garlands are not from the people, but from Congress(I) workers. Worse, the crowds are lacklustre, most having been bulldozed into coming.

Everywhere, thunderous applause greets Devi Lal's promises—waiving of all co-operative bank loans up to Rs 10,000; Rs 100 a month to graduate unemployed youth; Rs 300 to the first child born in Harijan households; and Rs 100 a month as old-age pension to all those above 65. Pointing to a group of old men, he says: "Don't die before November 22." Bursts of laughter greet the rustic witticism.

Encouraged, he continues: "Haryana's budget is Rs 1,349.99 crore and Rajasthan's Rs 2,368 crore. If I can provide so many facilities, why can't the Congress(I) Government. The Centre has a budget of Rs 84,000 crore. Let that money-making machine come into my hands and I'll shower you with currency." The crowd is ecstatic.

In contrast, his adversary's speeches are sombre. Says Jakhar ponderously: "My winning or losing this election is not important. The Opposition has 12 aspirants for the prime minister's seat, and in order to come to power they'll even sell the country."

The contestants are also fighting a personal battle. Months before the elections were announced, Devi Lal declared his intention to fight Jakhar, who is married to his cousin. To ensure that, he filed nominations from both Ferozepur and Sikar. Explains he: "As Lok Sabha Speaker, Jakhar was instrumental in allowing a debate on the death of my granddaughter-in-law (Supriya) even though it was clearly an accidental death."

To face the Devi Lal onslaught, Jakhar, who is seeking re-election by the 11.5 lakh electorate, has been on a gruelling campaign. His strategy is to cover every village in the constituency as opposed to Devi Lal's whirlwind tour.

Unfortunately, Jakhar himself is on the defensive. Pleads he: "I know I have not done all that I promised. But give me more time." A fertiliser plant and a hospital were promises that were not kept. Jakhar also fights embarrassment on the fodder scandal that has sparked off the popular slogan: *"Chara chor, commission khor, Sikar chhod Sikar chhod"* (Fodder thief, commission agent, leave Sikar, leave Sikar).

Expectedly, the despondency is percolating down to the Congress(I) ranks. Though Jakhar claims, "We will smash Devi Lal", the wind clearly blows in the Haryanvi Jat's favour.

—HARINDER BAWEJA

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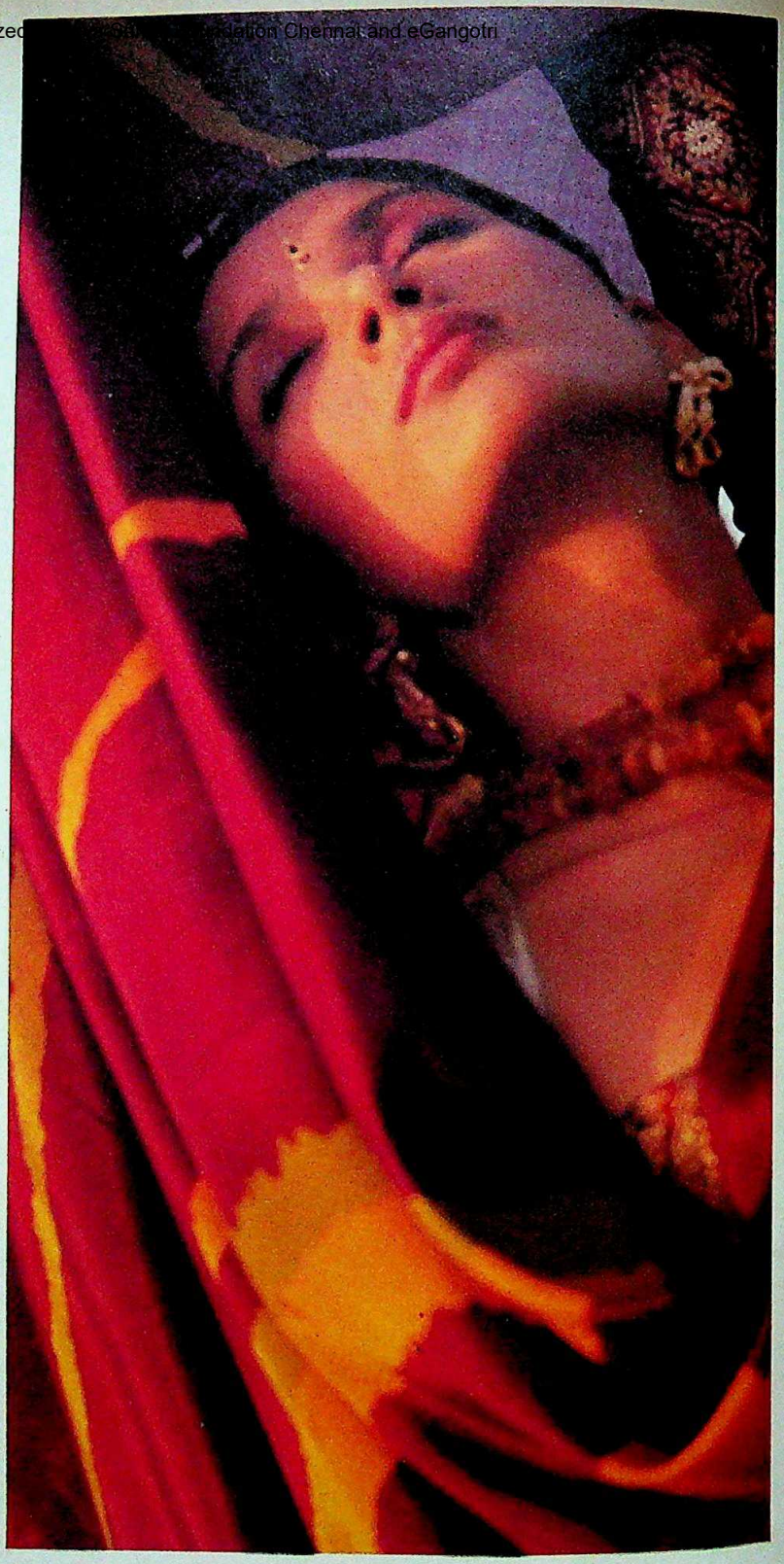
VIMAL



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A woman expresses herself in many languages. Vimal is one of them.

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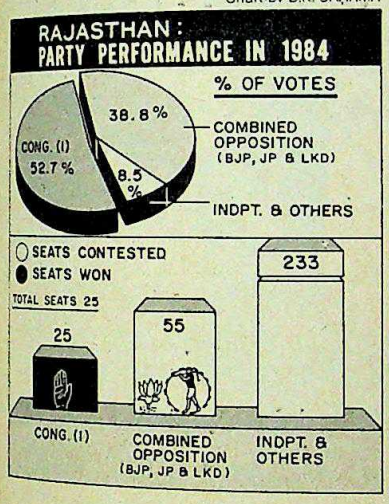
can keep the country together. The candidates drive home the message at their meetings. The target is obviously the BJP. "These people are instigating Hindus against Muslims," Buta Singh tells villagers in Jalore. "They want to break the country while we want to take it forward." In a Jodhpur state government colony, Ashok Gehlot, state home minister, rattles out details of all that the Congress(I) did during the drought. Says the former Jaipur prince: "In one year, the Government spent Rs 800 crore—more than what was spent in the past 40 years." But he too returns to the refrain of communalism: "The BJP says that Ramshila pujas have increased their votes by 5 per cent. Isn't it mixing religion with politics? They will create more Bhindranwales."

Some BJP leaders are directly targeted

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

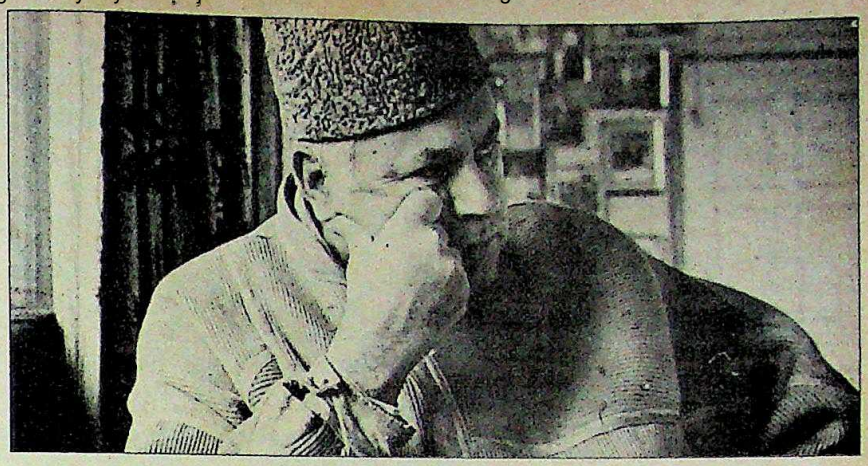


for attack. Guman Mal Lodha, for instance, the BJP candidate in Pali. A former high court chief justice, Lodha is currently the chief of the Rajasthan unit of the Ram Janmabhoomi Samiti. Says Gehlot: "It is an unholy alliance."

But the BJP too has worked out a strategy to counter the Congress(I)'s attack. While local leaders play on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue, senior leaders like Shekhawat turn the attack back on the Congress(I). As he said at an Ajmer meeting: "In my 32 months as chief minister, we had only one communal incident. In the last 12 months, we have seen 28 riots. The reason is that the Congress(I) instigates riots to get Muslim votes." He concludes with a slogan: *"Hindu-Muslim bhai bhai, Congress ki ho gai safai"* (Hindus and Muslims are brothers, the Congress is finished).

In Rajasthan, at least, that prospect—of defeating the Congress(I)—no longer seems as outlandish as it did just two months ago.

—PANKAJ PACHAURI



Farooq Abdullah's National Conference faces no opposition in Kashmir

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Silent Valley

Militants issue call for an election boycott

THERE are no posters, no party banners or flags, no speeches or election meetings. So successful has the militants' call to boycott the polls been that campaigning by political parties in the Kashmir valley is distinguished by its complete absence.

The National Conference (NC) is the only party to put up candidates for the three Lok Sabha seats in Kashmir—Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla. In Srinagar, the NC's Mohammad Shafi Butt, the only candidate, has been declared elected. NC nominees in Anantnag and Baramulla—Revenue Minister P.L. Handoo and Saifudin Soze—have not addressed a single poll rally to date.

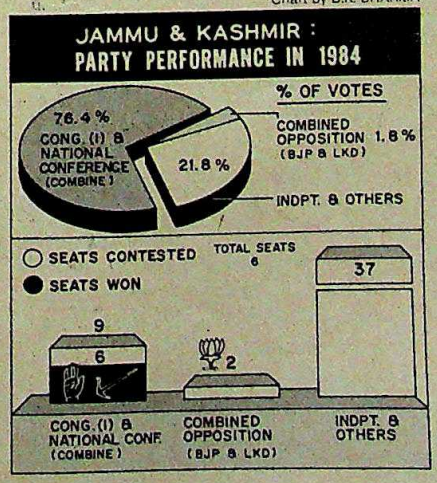
In contrast, frenetic campaigning is on for the two seats in the Jammu region—Jammu-Poonch and Udhampur. Both are traditional Congress strongholds but the party's image has declined. If it wins again, it will be due to the Opposition's failure to come to an agreement on seat-adjustments.

In Jammu-Poonch, the Congress(I)'s Janak Raj Gupta is the sitting MP. But both the BJP's Chaman Lal Gupta and the Janata Dal's R.S. Chib, who recently quit the NC, are strong challengers.

In Udhampur, the Congress(I)'s Dharam Paul faces heavyweights—Panthers Party chief Bhim Singh, BJP state unit chief Thakur Baldev Singh and Janata Dal Secretary-General Shiekh Abdul Rehman. But he might scrape through because of the division.

While it's hard to predict the outcome in Jammu, there is no doubt that the NC will win in Kashmir. But fear of the militants could keep the people from voting. In that case the NC's win will have a hollow ring. It'll be a mockery of the electoral process. —ZAFAR MERAJ

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



- **The work of an MP is not to get the drains and streets of a town repaired. But I have got that done too.**

  JANAK RAJ GUPTA, Congress(I) candidate in Jammu-Poonch

- ***Why has the Janata Dal not fielded any candidate in the Kashmir valley? Is it afraid of terrorists?***

  RAJIV GANDHI in Jammu

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PUNJAB

Bullet vs Ballot

The political process offers new hope

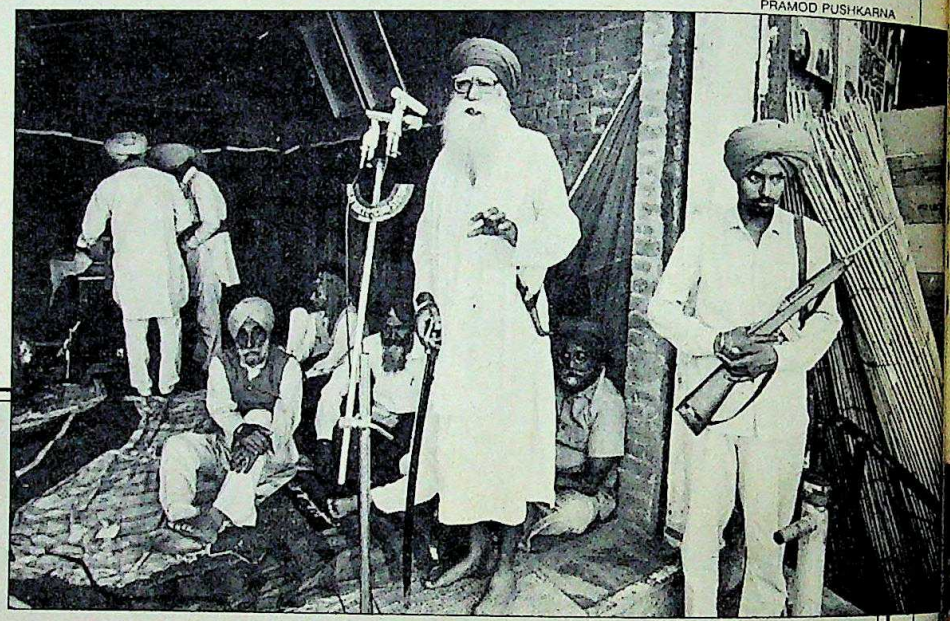
THE change in Punjab's skyline is dramatic. Hundreds of vehicles with party flags, loudspeakers and election posters once again dot the countryside. Fleets of vehicles leave trails of dust on the village roads flanked by golden mustard fields. Newspaper headlines too reflect the new spirit; news about terrorist killings have been relegated to the inside pages.

The election campaign has ushered in a new hope and optimism for the future, reflected in the slogan of the Janata Dal candidate from Jalandhar, former diplomat Inder Gujral: "Give peace a chance in Punjab." However, the shadow of the terrorist still looms large. Each of the 227 candidates for the 13 Lok Sabha seats has been provided with five armed guards.

The November 10 incident at Patiala where 18 students were killed and six injured by a group of terrorists brought the threat tragically alive. Five years of terrorist bloodshed have severely stretched Punjab's social fabric which is likely to cause a polarisation of votes on communal lines. Says Akali hawk, Sukhjinder Singh: "I told BJP leaders who came to discuss electoral adjustments that it was no use. Neither can you get us Hindu votes, nor can we make Sikhs vote for you."

Candidates like Gujral who are fighting for "Punjabi ektaa" are finding the going tough. Hardliners among Sikhs ask Gujral—who faces the twice-elected Congress(I) MP, Major-General (retired) Rajinder Singh Sparrow—to openly condemn alleged "fake encounters"

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



TARN TARAN

In the Lion's Lair

THE two cars, with lion-emblazoned saffron flags aflutter, stop near a group of students walking towards Rakseron village. An occupant holds out a bunch of pamphlets and asks the students to paste them in the village. "These are Simranjit Singh Mann's election posters," he says.

The students wave him off. "You don't need to spend money on posters for the villages which fall on the Manochal Highway," they say. The meaning is self-evident: these areas form the operational terrain of top-terrorist Gurbachan Singh Manochal; and here support for Mann, the former IPS officer now lodged in Bhagalpur jail, is taken for granted.

Mann's election symbol, a lion, is literally stalking Tarn Taran. And as if in fear, the Congress(I) appears to have slunk away. The fear is understandable. Tarn Taran is one of the most destabilised areas in Punjab. Bordering Pakistan, it has been a nursery of sorts for terrorism.

Mann's campaign is being orchestrated by his father, Joginder Singh, sister Daljit Kaur, and local functionaries of the Akali Dal(Mann) and the All India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF). Unlike 1986, when the Barnala group prevented the Badal group from putting up Mann for a parliamentary seat, this time he has the support of all Akali factions. Says Avtar Singh Boparai, office secretary of the AISSF (Manjit): "Winning is no problem—we want him to win by a record margin."

Expectedly, militancy marks Mann's campaign. On November 6 when it was launched, the hardcore Akalis dominated the scene. Among those who spoke were Jasbir Singh Rode, Baba Joginder Singh, and Trilochan Singh Tur, who won the Tarn Taran seat in 1985 and who has now withdrawn in Mann's favour.

Baba Joginder Singh and (inset) Mann

Ninety per cent of the constituency's populace consists of Sikhs. A traditional Congress seat, it was only in 1977 that the Akalis won it. Since then the influence of the Congress has waned. With no old timer willing to contest, the choice finally fell on Ajit Singh Mann, president of the Amritsar district (rural) unit. The candidate is handicapped by the uncertain conditions prevailing in the area. Surinder Singh "Kanwal", president of the Block Congress(I) Committee admitted it would be difficult to canvass openly for him.

For the past few years only the bullet has been relevant in the Tarn Taran area. It remains to be seen if the ballot is allowed to replace it; and if that proves a step towards sanity.

—KANWAR SANDHU

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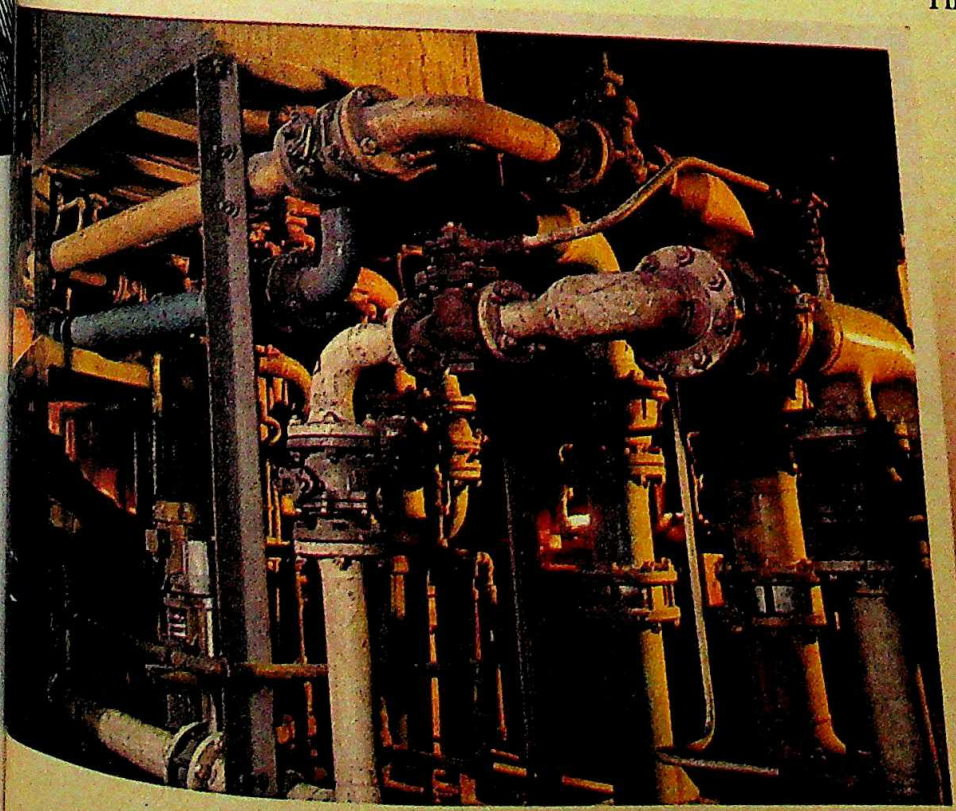

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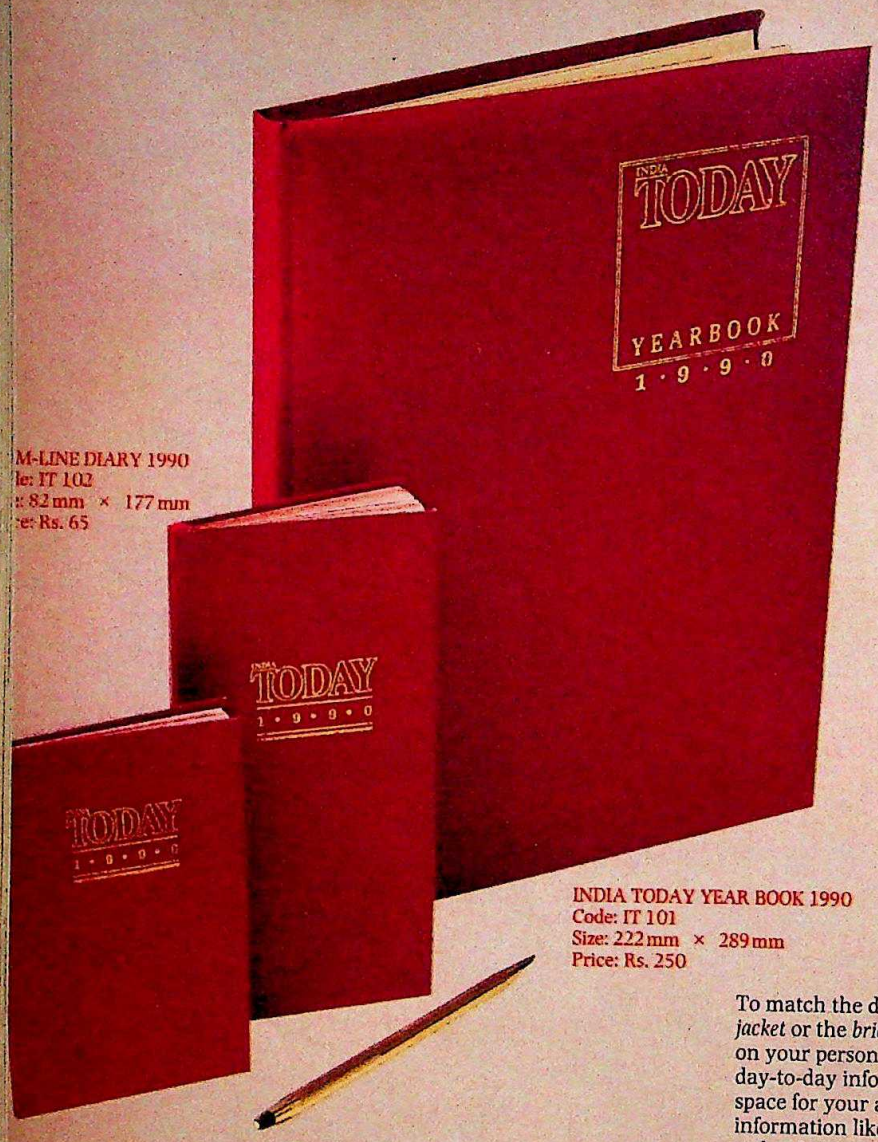

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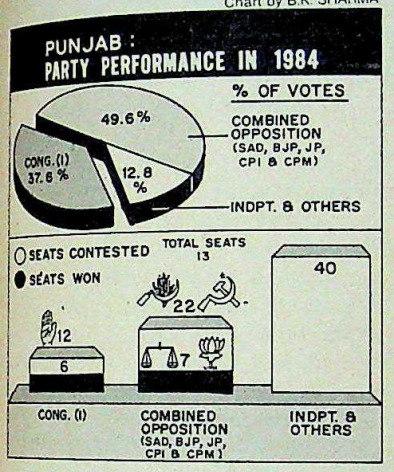
while handbills distributed by Hindu chauvinists ask him to clarify his stand on the Anandpur Sahib resolutions, "Khalistan", and attacks on Hindus by terrorists.

The Akalis are once again undermining their chances through disunity. All three major factions of the Akali Dal—Longowal, Badal, and Mann—have put up nominees, and virtually no understanding has been reached on consensus candidates.

The polarisation of votes on communal lines is also more pronounced this time because of the entry of half a dozen

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



alleged extremists or their relatives. Besides Simranjit Singh Mann from Tarn Taran, other alleged extremists in the fray include the jailed, self-styled chief of the Khalistan Liberation Organisation, Atinderpal Singh. Sucha Singh and Bimal Kaur Khalsa—the father and widow of Beant Singh, Mrs Gandhi's assassin—are also contesting.

Political observers feel the immediate result of this will be that many Hindus—who form 40 per cent of the population in Punjab—will not exercise their franchise. Says a shopkeeper at Kharar, near Chandigarh: "It is best to keep away as you either vote for the votaries of the bullet or face the bullet by supporting the Congress(I)."

As opposed to the 1985 elections when militant organisations advocated a complete boycott, this time most of them have announced a "limited boycott". While their members are not contesting, they are extending support to the candidates "upholding the ideals of Sikhism". In a majority of the constituencies, Sikh voters outnumber the Hindus. This time, 7.78 lakh people between 18 and 21 years of age will exercise their franchise; this vote will prove crucial.

Seeing the writing on the wall, the Badal group has incorporated in its election manifesto, the AISSF demand that state governors be elected by members of the respective assemblies and not imposed on the states by the Centre.

The moderates among the Akalis, such as Surjit Singh Barnala, have been marginalised during the election campaign. Though Atinderpal is unlikely to win since former MP Balwant Singh Ramoowalia is contesting against him, it will give people like him a measure of "acceptability", which will have a bearing on the transformation in Sikh politics currently underway. And if Mann and Bimal Kaur win, it will be a further shot in the arm of the emerging Akali Dal (Mann) faction.

The Congress(I) is hoping to benefit from the fact that Akali candidates of different groups have locked horns in seven of the 13 seats. But the Congress(I) is equally handicapped by infighting. Moreover, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is contesting 11 of the 13 seats. With Scheduled Caste votes in Punjab as high as 28 per cent, the BSP candidates will cut into Congress(I) votes.

With as many as 137 independents in the arena, Punjab's electoral scene is something of a free-for-all. But for most of the electorate, what is important is that it heralds the revival of the political process in Punjab. That alone offers the hope that Punjab may witness a reduction in extremist violence. In a state ravaged by five years of bloodshed and destruction, any ray of hope shines as brightly as the sun.

—KANWAR SANDHU

● The campaign headquarters of the Amritsar Congress(I) candidate, R.L. Bhatia, and the Tarn Taran Akali Dal candidate, Simranjit Singh Mann, are in the same building complex in Amritsar. After the day's electioneering, both sides sit together in a rare show of camaraderie.

● The security forces are worried as Mit Singh—who is contesting seven Lok Sabha seats—has refused to accept security guards. Not that he is thronged by crowds during his campaign. But in case he dies in a mishap, polling in all seven constituencies will be countermanded.

ORISSA

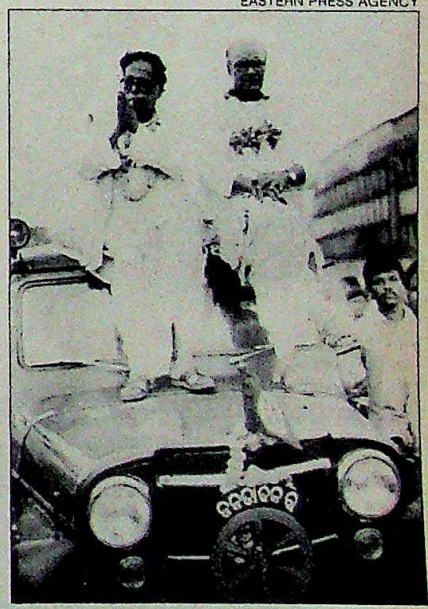
Patnaik vs Patnaik

Hunger for change favours Opposition

LAST May, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, impressed by the huge gathering at the All India Mahila Congress(I) conference in Bhubaneswar, enthused that there was not a wave but a storm in favour of his party. Six months later, when he flew down to launch his party's election campaign in Orissa's capital, the storm was still there. Only this time, it is blowing against the Congress(I). And the audience numbered hardly 5,000 compared to the 60,000 six months ago.

Congressmen themselves feel that Rajiv is no more a vote-catcher. Moreover, the Janata Dal's alliance with the communist parties has successfully put

EASTERN PRESS AGENCY



Biju Patnaik (right) in Puri

the Congress(I) on the defensive. Says J.P. Harangi, a schoolteacher, reflecting a common sentiment: "It is not because the Janata Dal in Orissa is in better shape than the Congress(I), but because people want a change, no matter who comes."

The desire for change has made the elections localised and personality-oriented, dominated once again by the Patnaiks; Chief Minister Janaki Ballav

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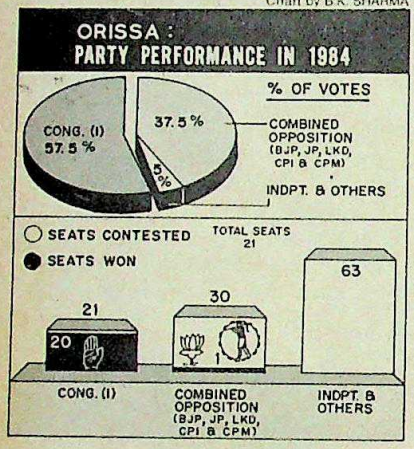
Patnaik and opposition stalwart Biju Patnaik.

Biju Patnaik promises the electorate that the moment he and his party comes to power, every single paisa earned illegally by Congress(I) MLAs and ministers would be confiscated, all farmer loans up to 10,000 written off. And the day after the results are announced, the state will get its second steel plant. Says he confidently: "The Janata Dal-communist combine is all set to capture 99 per cent seats."

The J.B. Patnaik strategy is to project the instability and chaos if the Janata Dal is voted to power, as he storms through the state with a fleet of cars and a helicopter. He says he is overwhelmed by the people's response.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



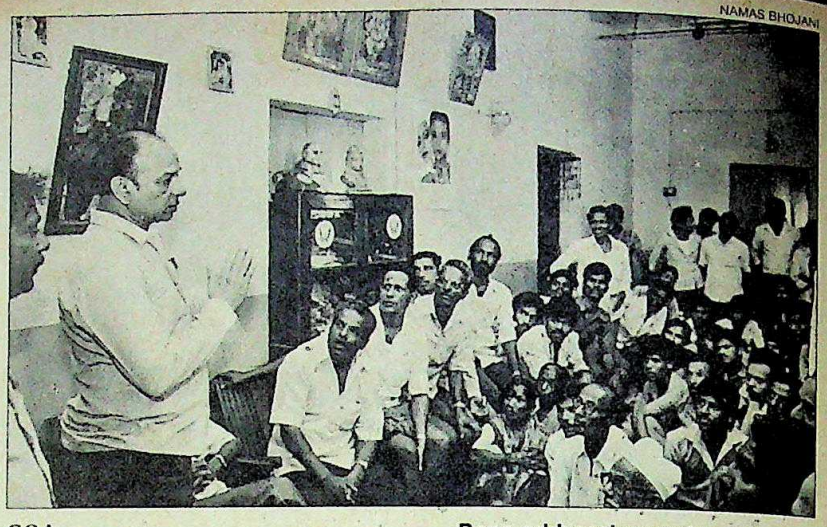
For the forthcoming polls, the Congress(I) has retained as many as 15 sitting MPs, underlining the serious infighting within the party. The chief minister himself faces opposition from two formidable groups, one headed by party boss K.C. Lenka and another led by former chief minister Nandini Satpathy. Even the Oriya daily *Sambad*, owned by the chief minister's son-in-law, has predicted that the Congress(I) might be wiped out this time, because of the candidates it has put up.

The Janata Dal too faces a similar problem. The list finalised by Biju Patnaik has angered many, including party General Secretary Hanti Das, who has joined the BJP in protest and is contesting from Bhubaneswar.

In spite of the squabbles in the ruling party, the Congress(I) is confident that the Harijans and tribals, constituting 39 per cent of the population, will back them. But the bottom line in the electoral equation is 'change'. After 10 years of ruling the state—the longest by any Congress(I) chief minister—J.B. Patnaik seems headed for his political Waterloo.

—FARZAND AHMED

NAMAS BHOJANI



Rane addressing party workers

GOA

War Within

Dissidence plagues two main parties

IT is the war within the two main parties—the Congress(I) and the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP)—that dominates the election battle in Goa for two Lok Sabha seats and 40 assembly seats.

The Congress(I) started off on the wrong foot by giving a ticket to the former speaker of the Assembly, Dayanand Narwekar who resigned on September 16 following allegations of attempted rape against him. Churchill Alemao also got the Congress(I) ticket even though there are several police cases against him.

Congress(I) Chief Minister Pratapsinh Rane, however, has his answers and promises ready. "The Opposition too has fielded anti-social elements. The Congress(I) is more interested in thinking about the future of Goa."

But it is infighting that Rane should be worrying about. In Benaulim, the constituency from which Churchill Alemao has been fielded in place of the sitting MLA Monte Cruz, advertisements questioning the wisdom of having fielded Churchill have been inserted by Congress(I) leaders themselves. And in Cortalim, Mauvin Gaudhino, the Youth Congress(I) president of the state is facing a tough fight from former joint secretary of Goa Pradesh Congress(I) Committee (GPCC-I) Francis Valladeras who quit the party to contest as an independent when he was denied a ticket.

The MGP faces similar problems. Its joint secretary and MLA Babuso Gaonkar who is contesting from Mandrem and has the backing of the Gawde community is facing rebels. The community has expressed its "unhappiness" over Babuso not being given a ticket.

Dissidence then will determine the electoral outcome. Congress (I) and the MGP candidates are fighting on two fronts—warding off the challenge of both rebel candidates and their opposition opponents.

—RAGHU NANDAN DHAR

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Chief Minister PRATAPSINH RANE

● The infighting in the Congress(I) is intense. So far as Goa is concerned, the Congress(I) advertisements showing the Opposition fighting for seats, apply more to itself than to the opposition parties.

RAMAKANT KHALAP, President, Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party

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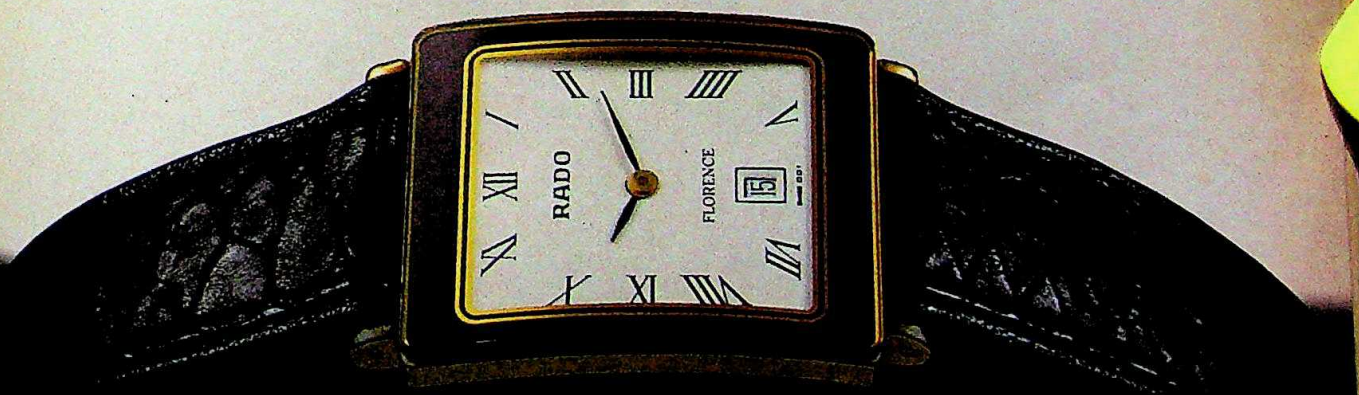

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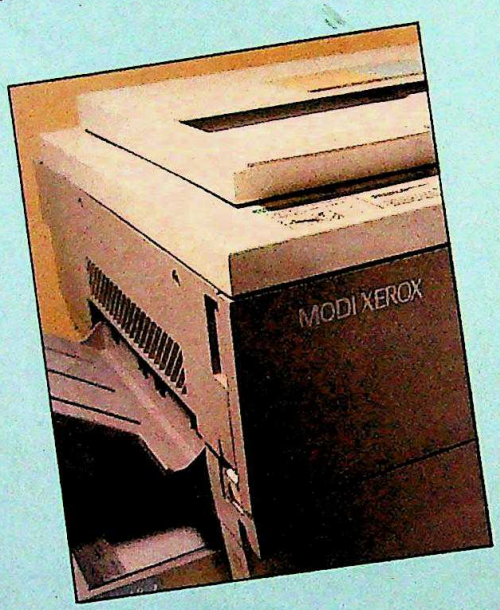

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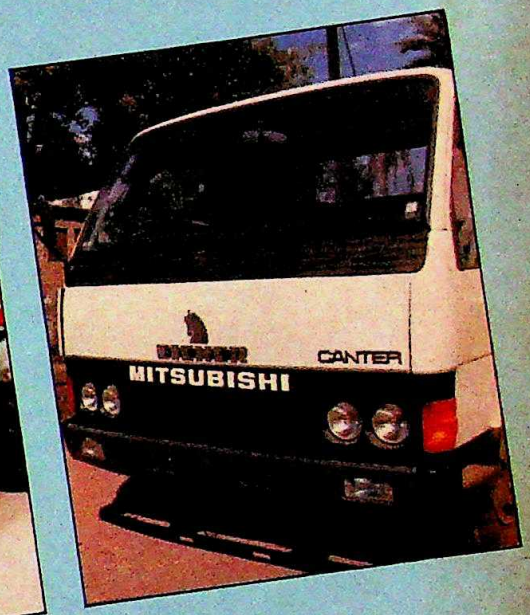

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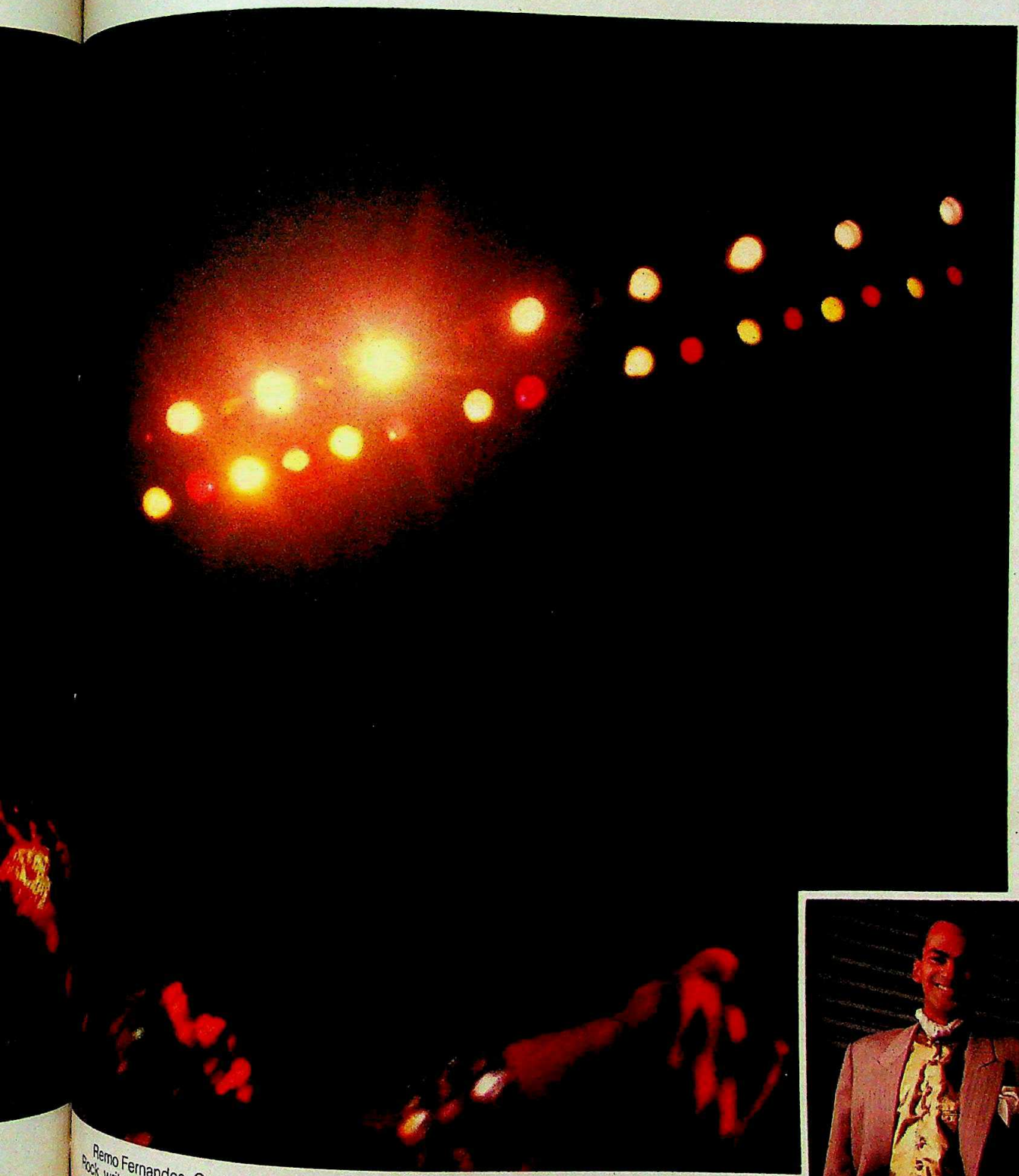

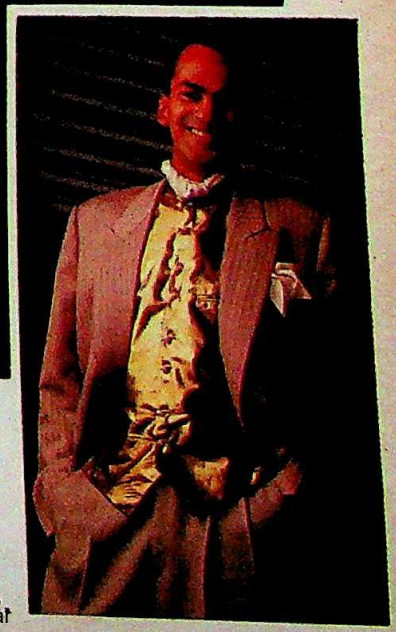

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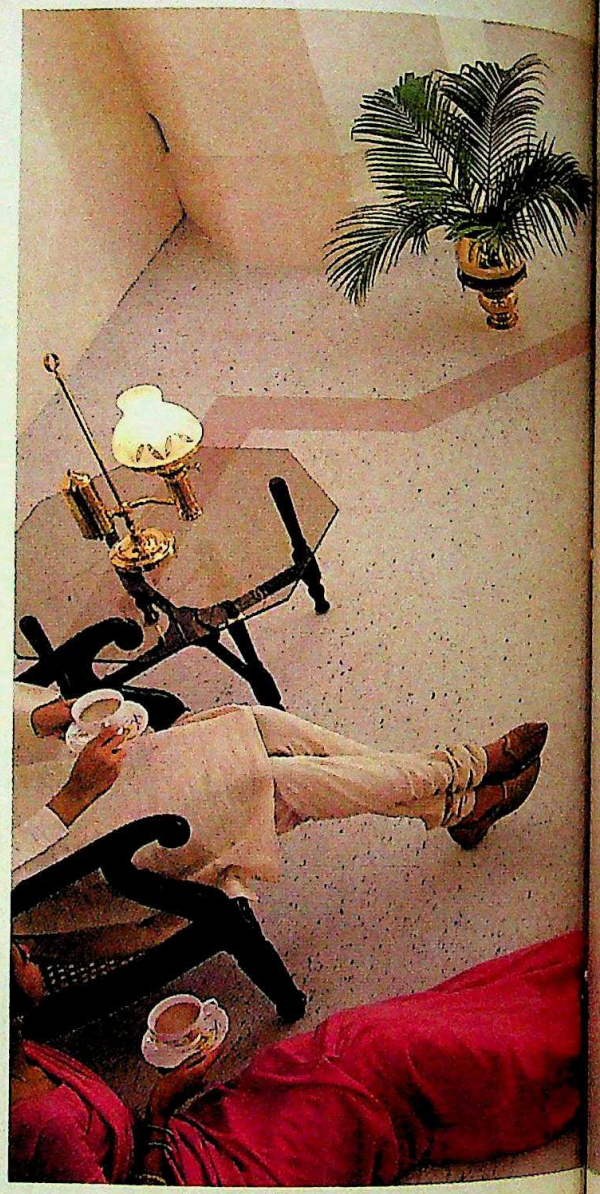

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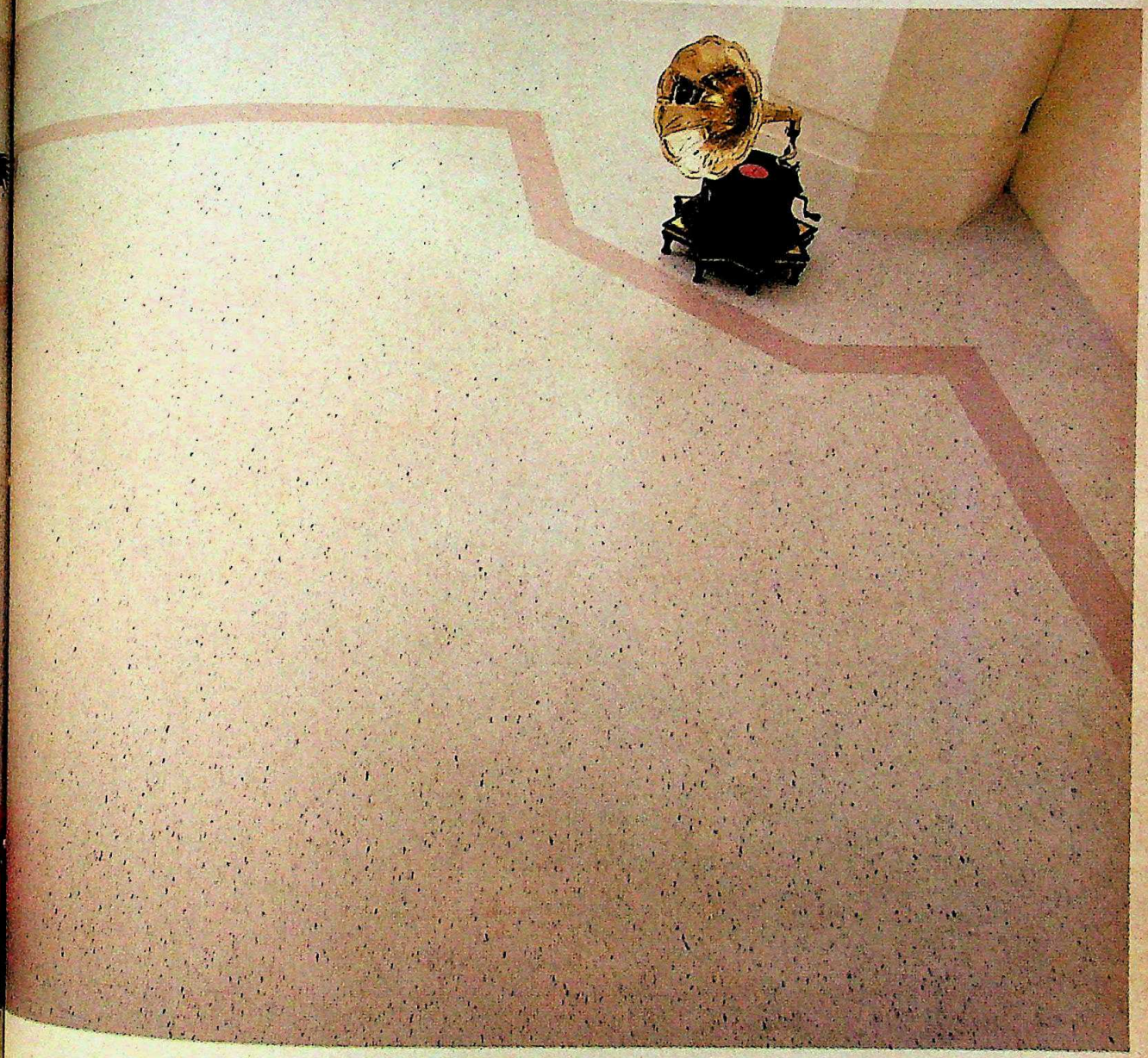

is seamless - like a single marble slab.

A master piece needn't cost the earth.

Carara is available in a range from Rs. 20 per square foot onwards - almost nothing - for floors as cold as marble. Carara retains the best of marble and adds to it features that readily distinguish it from every other floor, to make it quite extraordinary. Today, Carara rewrites flooring history. To transform your world. With marble.

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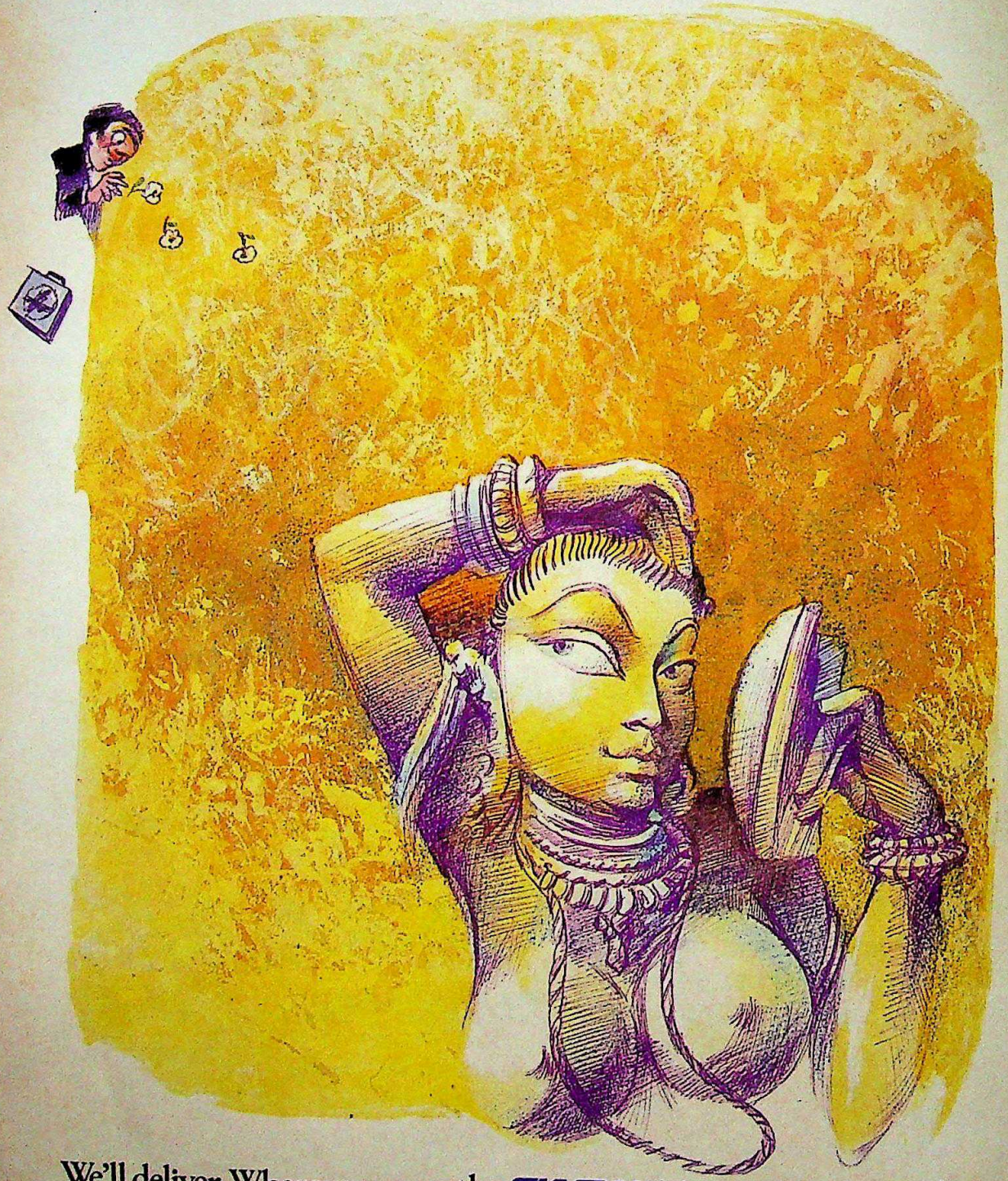
What did the Khajuraho
Surasundari say to the Skypak Man?
'You've roamed the world...
tell me, did you see
any woman more beautiful than I?



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DELHI

Capital Contests

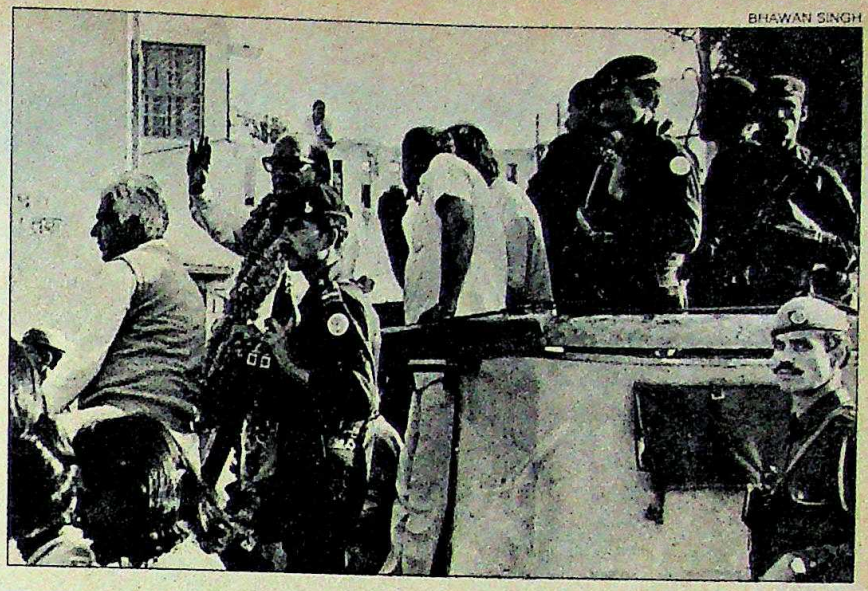
Clash of heavyweights

I have a political nose," says H.K.L. Bhagat, Union minister for information and broadcasting, "and I smell a Congress(I) victory in Delhi." K.L. Sharma, general secretary of the BJP, boasts of no such olfactory prowess. But he says: "There is a strong anti-Congress wave and we will win."

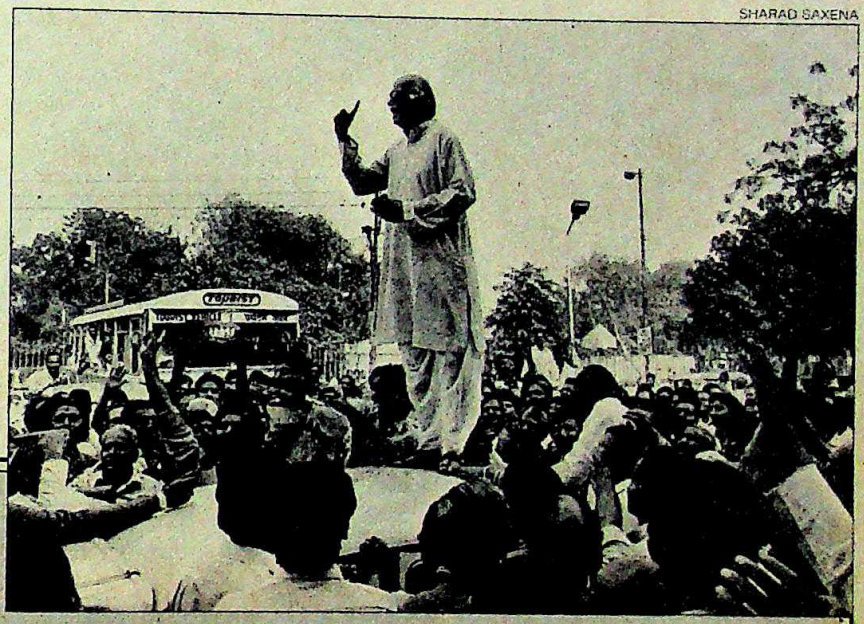
Apart from smells and waves there was a cacophony of sounds and a riot of posters that flooded the nation's capital. Though Delhi has just seven seats in the Lok Sabha, the candidates contesting make the battle for the capital important. Among those in the fray are Union ministers, Bhagat and Jagdish Tytler, BJP chief L.K. Advani and the Bahujan Samaj Party President Kanshi Ram.

And Delhi is proving demanding territory. Its old voter profile of govern-

BHAWAN SINGH



SHARAD SAXENA



Bhagat (above); and Advani: poised to romp home

L.K. ADVANI

No Hiccups

PARTY members regard him as an organiser and an idealogue *par excellence*. Now they want him to be their "mass-based" leader. Yet, as he candidly admits: "I hate to be in front of a mike giving a speech."

That's one reason why Lal Krishan Advani, 62, BJP president, had steadfastly refused to contest a general election. But now as his party's nominee for the New Delhi constituency, he is playing the role he least relishes. Last fortnight, standing atop a Maruti Gypsy with hired drummers belting out a bhangra rhythm and caparisoned horses leading the way, the garlanded Advani seemed more like a reluctant bridegroom than a seasoned politician.

As he waved to curious residents standing on their balconies—a sprinkling of women in their nighties and men in vests sipping their morning tea—he muttered: "It's a game I'm getting used to." Not quite. When he found party supporters trotting ahead and handing out garlands to bystanders to welcome him, he asked them to stop.

When it came to addressing election rallies, he showed no signs of mike-fright. His speeches were brief but hard-hitting. "We promise to give you a good administration not a Bofors-type," he said at one gathering, "*Bikau sarkar nahi, tikau hi*" (Not a saleable, but a stable government).

But he seemed to deliberately black out any reference to the National Front. His strategy: support any move to defeat Rajiv Gandhi but retain the BJP's identity, so that in the post-election scenario it can emerge as a major power broker.

In contrast, the Congress(I) seemed devoid of a game plan. With K.C. Pant, who won the seat in 1984, refusing to contest, the seat went to Mohini Giri, 51, daughter-in-law of the late president V.V. Giri. Her inexperience as a politician showed up in her lackadaisical campaign. And at one corner-meeting in Amar Colony, a dispirited Giri said: "Even if you don't vote for me from this area, I'll still come back to do social service."

Meantime, Advani's party workers campaigned door-to-door, and seemed confident of winning the seat in a canter. But Advani was circumspect. Said he: "Complacency could prove fatal." At the moment that seems unlikely. —RAJ CHENGAPPA

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Acqua Minerale Bisleri uses the same silver system used by NASA to purify water aboard space shuttles.

NASA scientists selected a silver system to purify drinking water aboard space shuttles after testing 23 different methods. Acqua Minerale Bisleri (AMB) also found silver to be the most effective water-purifying agent. Silver sterilised water inhibits the growth of bacteria through the oligodynamic effect. It is further treated with special anti-microbial processes and packed in disposable bottles. AMB is 100% pure drinking water. It is safer than boiled and filtered water which can get contaminated. In fact AMB is so safe that you can confidently give it not only to everyone at home but also to the sick and the convalescent and even to infants. Carry it with you while travelling too. On earth. Or in space.

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ment babus and Punjabi refugees has been radically altered in the past decade. Delhi's 5.6 million voters are today among the most cosmopolitan in the country. As Bhagat complains: "I now have to campaign for the south Indian, Bihari, Oriya and Bengali votes."

The Congress(I), which swept all the seats in 1984, seems to have the odds stacked against it. The Bofors scandal has provided the BJP, its main rival, fodder to feed the city's literate population. And the rise in prices is being used to woo the city's large slum population.

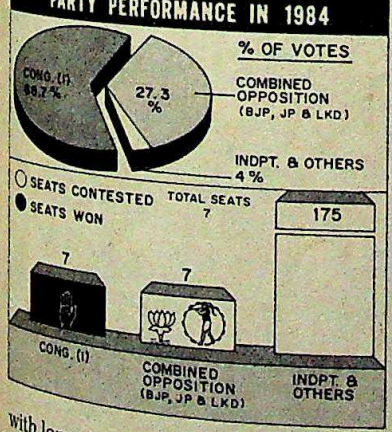
Moreover the ruling party has given tickets to lightweights like Subhash Chopra and Mohini Giri. And the nomination of Dharam Dass Shastri, whose name was linked in the 1984 riots, may see the party lose the votes of the city's substantial Sikh population.

The BJP is not free from bickerings either. With Madan Lal Khurana and V.K. Malhotra, both heavyweights of BJP's Delhi units, deciding to contest, younger leaders in the party complain of being sidelined. And in the two seats that the BJP allotted to its ally, the Janata Dal, trouble broke out. In East Delhi, two Janata Dal candidates, Chand Ram and Kishore Lal, fought over who was the real party nominee.

While the Dal candidates slugged it out, Bhagat, with a bevy of black-cats guarding him, went around his constituency in an air-conditioned Contessa, supremely confident. Tytler, though scouring his Sadar constituency on foot with lorry-loads of campaigners in tow, has a tough fight on his hands against the BJP's Malhotra. But the BJP's Khurana, atop a van mounted with a giant cut-out of his, is confident of winning the South Delhi seat. Claims he: "We are now talking only of my margin of victory."

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



TAMIL NADU

An Epic Battle

The ruling DMK faces an uphill task

THERE are in Tamil Nadu just 39 Lok Sabha seats up for grabs in the coming parliamentary elections. But for the three major political parties in the fray—the DMK, AIADMK and Congress(I)—the stakes are infinitely higher. If the ruling DMK loses, the opposing AIADMK-Congress(I) combine might use its central clout to dismiss the ten-month-old Karunanidhi Ministry. If it wins, the DMK can buy itself bargaining power in the event of a coalition snatching power at the Centre.

The party kingpin, Karunanidhi, strikes a confident posture on the campaign trail. Says he: "They say that if Rajiv Gandhi is returned to power, the DMK Government will be dismissed. That can happen only if he returns to power. But the next government at Delhi is going to be formed by the National Front of which the DMK is a part."

Easily the most responsive electoral issue is the Bofors scandal. Karunanidhi, a film script writer, has coined catchy lines related to the Bofors issue.

Despite that, he is finding the former film star and AIADMK leader Jayalalitha a formidable foe. She is using the current climate of rising prices and tariffs to telling effect. Says she: "Now that Karunanidhi has come to power there will be shortages and rising prices. No water, no power, no rice. And I am not saying this—the man on the street is."

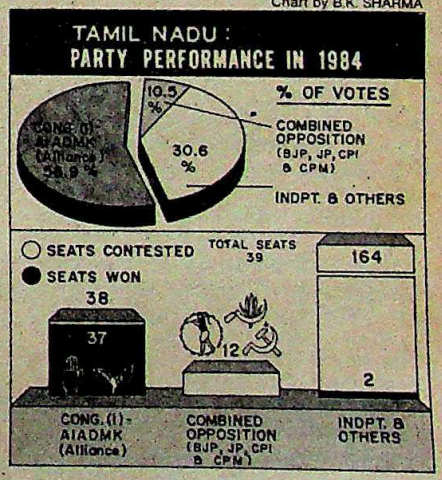
For Jayalalitha, after losing the assembly elections to the DMK last January, this is her last chance to win political acceptance. Although she is drawing rapturous crowds—more than either Rajiv or Karunanidhi—sceptics don't see this as proof of electoral backing. Says one: "They have come to watch the fun. They won't vote for her."

But that hasn't diluted Jayalalitha's determination. Beginning each speech with a nostalgic reference to MGR, she says that the Congress(I)-AIADMK alliance is not an opportunistic one like the

SHYAM TEKWANI

Karunanidhi on tour: close fight

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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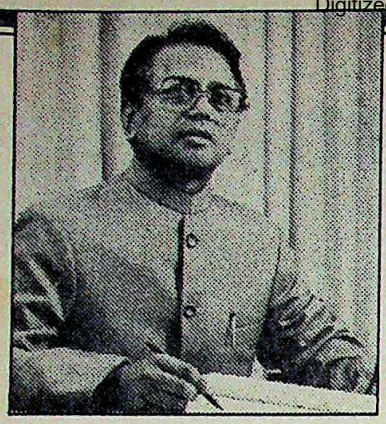

Excerpts from the speech of Chairman-cum-Managing Director, at the 6th Annual General Meeting held on 27.9.89.

Dividend

I am happy to inform you that the Board of Directors have recommended a dividend of 18% for the year 1988-89.

Financial Results

The year 1988 started under the strains of severe drought affecting the national economy. However, the subsequent bountiful monsoon set the stage for recovery. Both these factors affected your Company's operations. While the drought pushed up the cost, the heavy monsoon affected the progress of civil works at Chamera, Lakhwar and Vyasi Dams. At Sardar Sarovar site, while new infrastructural facilities are under installation, work continued with the existing facilities. The Cement Division scaled new heights of performance. Thus, despite some adverse factors, I am happy to say, your Company has been able to achieve a record performance. The Gross Operating Revenue reached Rs. 217 Crores (for 15 months period) against Rs. 120 Crores in the previous year and Gross Operating Profit Rs. 35 Crores against Rs. 19 Crores in the previous year, representing an increase, on annualised basis, of 45% and 49% respectively. Both the Engineering and Cement Divisions significantly improved their performance.

Current Outlook-Year 1989-90

In this month of September, 1989, the Engineering Division has been awarded Rs. 10 Crore Rock Fill Coffer Dam by Tehri Hydro Development Corporation Ltd., which is to be completed in 8 months. Your Company has been prequalified for World Bank aided Rs. 380 Crore Srinagar Dam and its Power House in Uttar Pradesh and World Bank aided Rs. 600 Crore Indira Sagar Dam and its Power House in Madhya Pradesh. Confirmation of your Company's prequalification for Rs. 670 Crore Nathpa Jhakri Hydroelectric project in Himachal Pradesh is expected shortly. Your Company will seriously participate in these tenders.

The Cement Plant continues to operate at above the rated capacity. In the last 5 months, capacity utilisation is 104%. Marketing network is being expanded and strengthened wherever it is necessary. The fact that the Cement Plant is able to sell the entire production, while maintaining its prime position in the market speaks volumes about the quality of the product and the sound marketing network.

With the order book of Rs. 866 Crores as on 1st April, 1989, your Company is anticipating a gross revenue of Rs. 180 Crores in 1989-90 from the Engineering Division (Rs. 70 Crores from Indian projects and Rs. 110 Crores from overseas projects). With the Cement Division contributing Rs. 130 Crores, your Company is expected to cross Rs. 300 Crore mark in Gross Revenue in the current year.

Second Million Tonne Cement Plant

You will be pleased to know that the orders for main plant and machinery have already been placed and delivery of equipment will commence from November, 1989. Civil works are in progress as per schedule to match the receipt of equipments. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the plant is expected to be commissioned by December, 1990. Special attention has been given to energy conservation and pollution control measures. Besides that, for the first time in the country, On Line Bulk-Analyser for raw materials is being introduced.

Looking Into The Future

With Rs. 866 Crores of construction jobs on hand, cement plant operating at rated capacity and the anticipated commissioning of the second million tonne cement plant by end of next year, suffice to say that your Company's future is very bright. Your Company has projected a turnover of over Rs. 400 Crores in the years 1990-91 and 1991-92. This does not take into account fructification of any of the tenders for construction jobs, about which I have mentioned earlier. **Your Company crossed the Rs. 200 Crore mark in 1988-89. In its sustained drive towards excellence, your Company will cross the Rs. 300 Crore mark in 1989-90 and Rs. 400 Crores in 1990-91, a growth which one can be proud of.** However, the optimism of your Company does not mean that there is a rosy scenario for Construction Industry as well as Cement Industry in general.

Construction

The Construction Industry in India has come of age. Today they can undertake any major developmental project. Jobs like the one your Company is handling at Sardar Sarovar involve procurement, installation, operation and maintenance of modern machinery, the value and intricacies of which compare favourably with equipment of any other industry. Still industry status is yet to be accorded to construction.

The major construction companies in the country are now in a position to handle more and more number of major developmental projects of very large magnitude, particularly in the field of river valley and hydroelectric projects and complete them in time. Quicker clearance to such projects in the pipeline would give not only a fillip to the Construction Industry, but also to the overall development of the country.

A number of Indian construction companies have created a sea of goodwill, particularly in the Gulf countries. The potential there is vast and immense. The Government may adopt suitable strategies to enable the Indian construction companies to bag a big chunk of these projects, to the advantage of the country. Basically the incentives given to the Construction Industry for foreign works need a second look.

According Industry status to construction, immediate review of incentives for foreign construction jobs, evolving strategies to bag as many jobs as possible from the Gulf area and quick clearance of river valley projects are the need of the hour.

Cement

Indian Cement Industry has come a long way. It has absorbed latest technology and is achieving higher capacity utilisation. The saturation level reached between demand and supply in cement is having adverse impact on the operation of the Cement Industry as well as its financial results. The signals are clear. The industry, which has stood up to its commitment in the past is under-nourished. The immediate task should be to provide adequate incentives so that export potential to the neighbouring countries is exploited to the maximum, which would ensure inflow of foreign exchange as well as maintaining the upward trend of capacity utilisation in the industry. Discussions have been going on, but decisions need to be taken promptly.

Quicker decisions on mammoth development projects, adoption of cement roads at least in the main arteries of the country and truly encouraging prefab housing in a big way could redeem the Cement Industry from its present status.

Newer cement plants, due to very high investment cost need special dispensation. Excise relief should be continued and extended to all new investments.

I have tremendous confidence in the polity of the country. Development is bound to take place which will need cement and more cement. Let not existing cement plants turn sick. Let not entrepreneurs feel shy of investing in cement. Let there be growth in cement in every sense. Let not the nightmarish experience of cement shortage be repeated. Let not posterity point an accusing finger.

Wish you all a very happy Deepawali and Prosperous New Year!

Lucknow **JAIPRAKASH GAUR**
27th September, 1989

JAIPRAKASH
INDUSTRIES LIMITED

This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the 6th Annual General Meeting.

LINTAS (DELHI)/JI/69/2417

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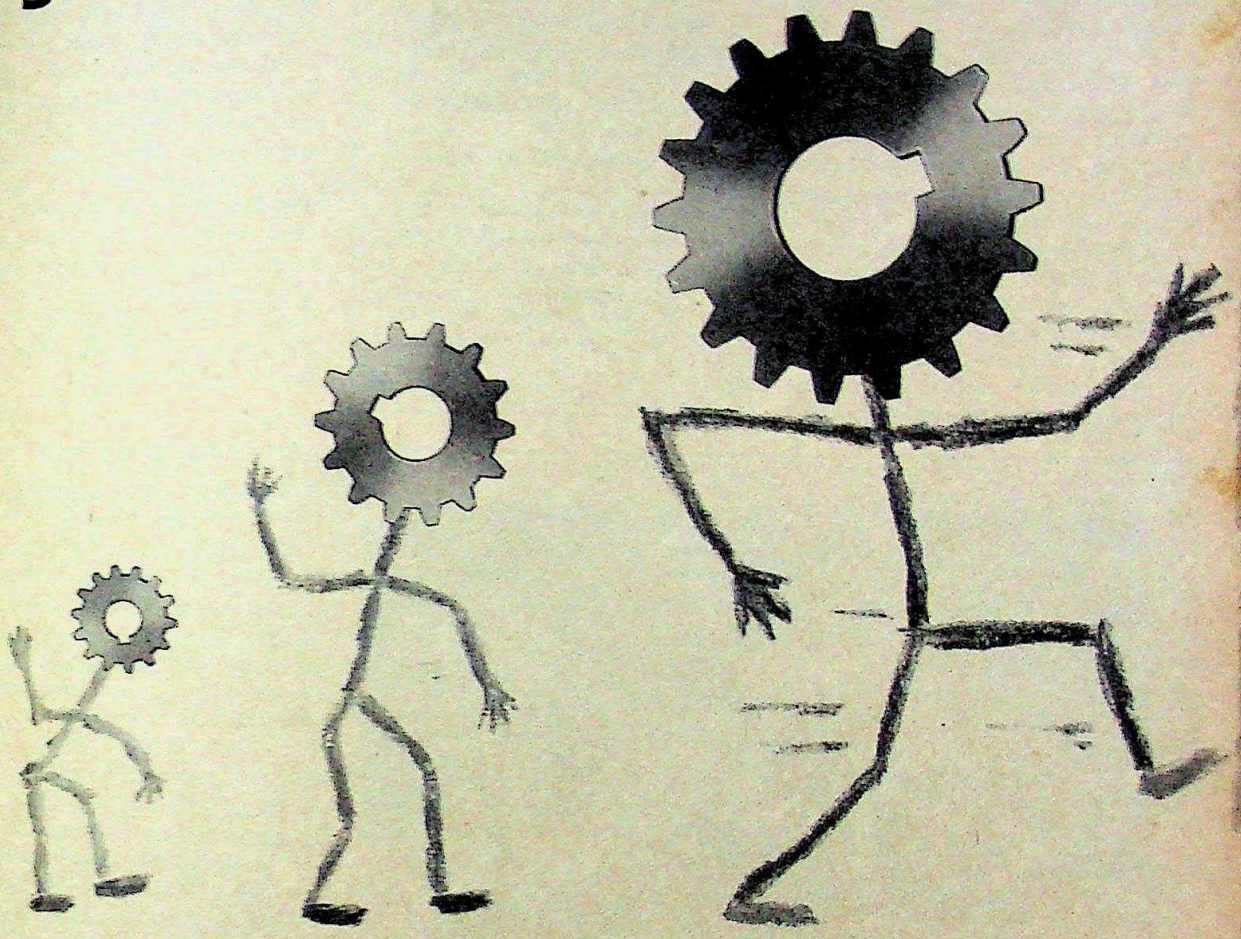
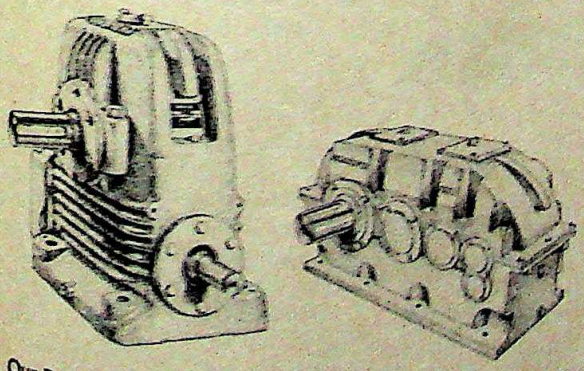
At Shanthi Gears customer confidence nurtures growth.



It is not surprising. Because customer confidence has resulted in increasing demand. And the only way to keep them confident is to grow. The result? our turnover has grown six-fold in as many years; we are poised to double it.

No wonder that Shanthi Gears is the first choice of diverse industries like Textile, Cement, Rubber, Steel, Coal, Chemicals, Sugar, Paper, Pollution Control and Thermal Plants – among others.



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National Front—which she calls "an alliance of mice and frogs". Traditionally, the Congress(I) has been Tamil Nadu's most favoured party during Lok Sabha elections. Even though the Congress(I)-AIADMK alliance is unlikely to repeat its 1984 electoral performance when it won 37 out of the 39 seats, it is certain to make inroads into the DMK's bastion.

The DMK is not taking any chances. It has fielded 30 candidates conceding just nine to its allies and played safe in seat selection; most tickets have gone to those who fetched the second largest number of votes in 1984—when the DMK won just two seats.

The DMK is also banking on the Achilles' Heel in the alliance armour—the in-fighting in the ranks of both the alliance partners. Jayalalitha's decision to concede 29 seats to the Congress(I) and its allies has caused considerable resentment in the AIADMK. Further, she has nominated just one sitting MP from her party and her choice of candidates has been questionable. One example: denial of a ticket to Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker Thambi Durai who was then fielded by the Congress (I).

The Congress (I), on its part, is crippled by factional feuds led by TNCC(I) chief V.K. Ramamurthy and G.K. Moopanar, with both sides unhappy with the lack of new faces in the poll fray.

In keeping with Tamil culture, it is building into an epic battle. Both sides are equally matched in terms of resources and electoral ammunition in the form of issues. The DMK cannot but improve on its two seat performance in 1984. For the Congress (I)-AIADMK alliance, there is little prospect of repeating its 1984 showing. But Tamil Nadu is nothing if not traditional, even in the electoral sense. And that puts the odds in favour of the alliance.

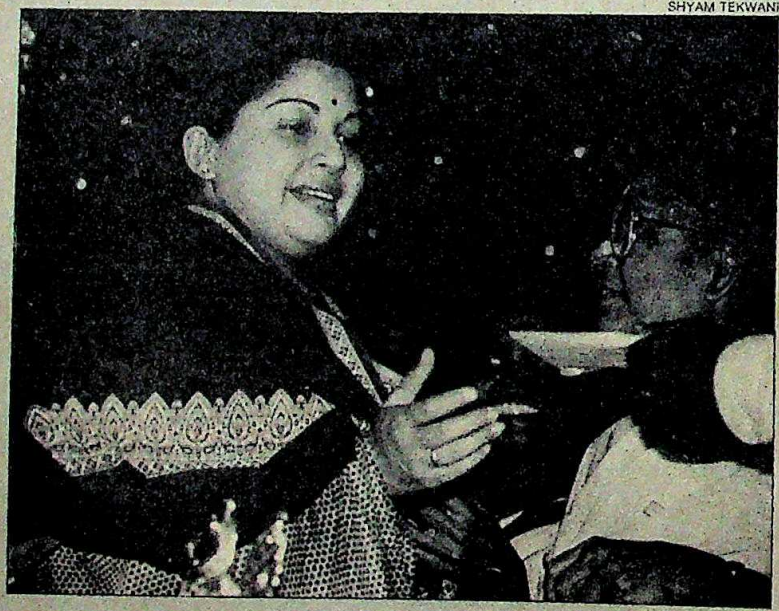
—KAVITHA SHETTY

- **You must use your votes like Gandivas (Arjuna's bow) to vote these modern day Dushasanas and Duryodhanas out of power.**
  JAYALALITHA's campaign speech.

- **Karunanidhi: They talk of an explosion if Rajiv wins. But the explosion took place in Delhi and all of you know what it is. What is it?** *Crowd*
  Crowd (instantly): Bofors.

- **This Karunanidhi is not like a mushroom that sprang up after yesterday's rain.**
  KARUNANIDHI's election speech, taking a dig at JAYALALITHA's political inexperience.

SHYAM TEKWANI



Jayalalitha with supporters

JAYALALITHA

Bouncing Back

THEY call her *Puratchi Selvi* (revolutionary maiden), a derivation on the title of *Puratchi Thalaivar* (revolutionary hero) bestowed on her political mentor, the late MGR. For Jayalalitha, anointed heir to the mantle of MGR, it is a formidable legacy to bear. Her defeat by the DMK in the last assembly polls, her subsequent period in the wilderness, the alleged attack on her in the Assembly, all combined to put a serious question mark over her political future.

But the former film star is now back—with a bang. The coming Lok Sabha elections in the state seem to have provided her with a political elixir. Suddenly, the 'revolutionary maiden' is riding high again, her electoral fortunes on a definite upswing. The chant by her supporters—"Long live the future chief minister of Tamil Nadu"—does not sound incongruous any more.

Her charisma—and glamour—draws crowds who are driven to frenzy as she descends from her Swaraj Mazda *Jayaratham* to be guided to the stage by party leaders bearing torches. The rapturous cries of "*Puratchi selvi Vaazhgai*" (Long live the revolutionary maiden), indicate that she is back in popular favour.

Though Jayalalitha rarely speaks for more than five minutes and that too in an expressionless monotone, she uses a clever mix of issues and symbols to sway the electorate. The supreme moment is when she lifts her hand and flashes the victory sign, synonymous with the AIADMK symbol of two leaves.

Her scathing attacks on the DMK Government's drawbacks like the rice shortage or price rise earn an emotional response, specially from the women. The high points are always her salvoes at Karunanidhi: "What has the DMK done since it came to power in the state? Karunanidhi has spent Rs 5 crore of public money on propaganda—that's all."

Her efforts seem to be paying off. The young men in the crowd she attracts might be there because of her glamour appeal, but they listen—and watch. And what they see is a woman of substance who shows every sign of being firmly ensconced on the comeback trail.

—KAVITHA SHETTY

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TITAN

REQUIRES

HEAD OF PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Titan Watches Limited, a Rs.80 crore TATA venture, has emerged as the leader in the fast growing Indian quartz watch market. The company expects to achieve sales of over Rs.75 crores this year. Its products are accepted world-wide and it has secured an order for export of 30 lakh watch movements over the next 3 years. Plans to export watches are under development.

Titan has put together an outstanding professional team. Its success has been achieved by adopting innovative approaches in different areas of the business and creating an environment which encourages creativity, teamwork and a high degree of commitment. Titan is setting new standards of excellence in product design, manufacturing, advertising, distribution and retailing.

At the heart of its success story is AN OUTSTANDING COLLECTION OF FINE QUARTZ WATCHES, comparable to the best in the world. Titan watches, in international styles appropriate to the preferences of the consumers in India, are available in a wide range of designs and at several price levels.

The product development department is responsible for the conceptualisation, development and implementation of this strategy. The head of this department reports to the Vice-President (Sales and Marketing) and is responsible for

- understanding the requirements and needs of different segments of consumers and developing products appropriate to each segment.
- monitoring new trends in the international market and adapting them suitably for the Indian consumers.
- interacting with the manufacturing and the marketing departments to ensure that the desired product reaches the consumer at the right time and at the right price.

The successful applicant will have a highly developed aesthetic sense combined with business acumen to be able to develop and sustain a product mix appropriate to the Indian market as also to the Company's marketing and business needs and profits.

The person, in age group 30 to 45 years, could be a graduate in engineering, liberal arts or fine arts and may even have a management degree. Experience in the management of the product development function or the marketing of fashion products or personal wear and accessories in a reputed company in India or abroad would be very useful.

The position and salary will be appropriate to attract the best talent in the country.

Please apply within 15 days to:

The Vice President (Sales & Marketing)
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Sona Towers, 71 Miller Road,
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Please superscribe the code: HPD-IT on the application and envelope.

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HARYANA

Devi Lal Wave

Jat leader seems to be unstoppable

THE symbolism is stark—and telling. As the massive bulk of Haryana's strongman, Devi Lal, slowly rises on a hydraulic lift till he finally emerges on the roof of his Vijay Rath, the crowd explodes in a cacophony of cheers. Two and a half years after ascending the chief minister's throne, Devi Lal still straddles the state like a colossus.

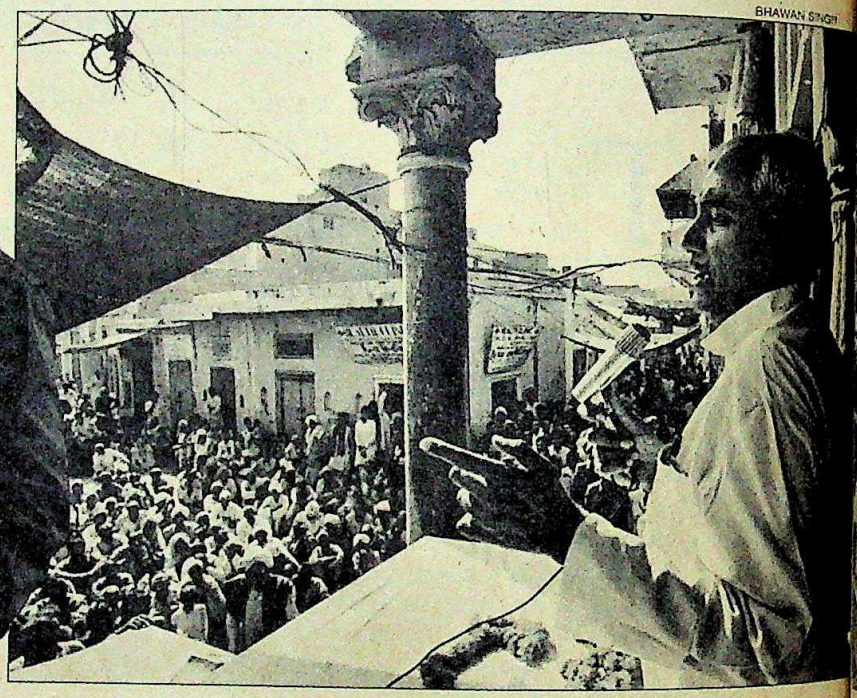
If anything, his popularity has reached a more frenzied pitch. Haryana may send only 10 members to the Lok Sabha. But judging by the electoral atmosphere, the number could easily be 10 times greater. More than at any time before, the wily Jat realises he is finally close to the ultimate *gaddi*—that of the prime minister.

He does keep stressing that V.P. Singh will be prime minister if the Opposition wins. But that is not the message being bandied about in his campaign. All over the state, the chief minister's election managers harp on one issue—Devi Lal as the future prime minister. No material gains are being offered, no promises being made, no local issues being raised.

"Kal ke pradhan mantri aaj aap ke beech mein baithe hein" (Tomorrow's prime

Devi Lal (left); Chautala addressing a public rally: popular support

BHAWAN SINGH



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

BHAJAN LAL

Tough Going

LOOT rajya nikalna hai, Bhajan Lal ko .lana hai," shouted a group of youngsters, dancing in front of the former chief minister's jeep as it rolled into Hodal (Faridabad), where he'd come to address an election rally.

Bhajan Lal himself didn't seem to share their enthusiasm. Having been virtually trapped by the Bansi Lal camp into contesting from Faridabad the Union minister is pitted not only against popular Janata Dal candidate Khurshid Ahmed, but for all practical purposes, against Devi Lal himself.

For, in a show of bravado, Bhajan Lal challenged the chief minister to face him in an electoral battle. Devi Lal did not file his papers in Faridabad but Bhajan Lal did, only to get stuck. The Congress(I) high command stopped him from withdrawing. Consequently, he faces a three-pronged attack—from Devi Lal, Ahmed, and enemies within the Congress(I). Bansi Lal's supporters convinced Rajiv Gandhi that Bhajan Lal should remain in the field otherwise he would spend his time damaging the prospects of other party candidates, and in engineering defections.

Bhajan Lal has indeed kept up his image as founder of the *aya ram gaya ram* culture. He kicked off his election campaign with Janata Dal MLA, Tayyab Hussain, in tow. Devi Lal promptly alleged that "Hussain has been bought for Rs 1.5 lakh." But clearly, Bhajan Lal has won the first round. For Hussain,

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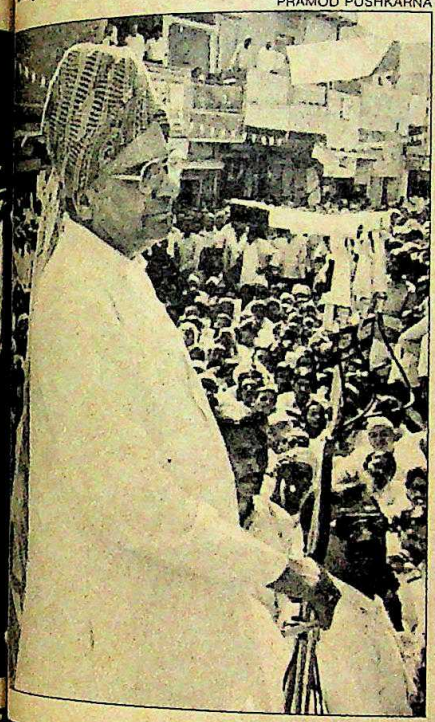
minister is in your midst today), thunders Professor Veerinder Kumar, MLA and state sugar cooperative chairman, to an excited gathering in Rohtak. Mangal Sen, deputy chief minister and state BJP chief, echoes the sentiment. "Haryana's chief minister today will change the fate of the country tomorrow."

Elsewhere, Om Prakash Chautala, Devi Lal's son and his chief campaigner, draws repeated applause when he declares: "Leading opposition members are plotting behind Chaudhary Devi Lal. The ticket-seekers flocked, not to anybody else's house but to our very own Haryana Bhawan." There is no mention of V.P. Singh in any of the campaign speeches.

Not surprisingly, the principal spokesman of the 'future prime minister' strategy is the Haryana stalwart himself. Perched atop his fancy Vijay Rath, he proclaims: "I started my campaign only after paying my respects at Gandhiji's samadhi at Rajghat, for, as he said, the country can prosper only when a kisan's son becomes the prime minister." The chord is struck. The kisans hysterically chant: *"Desh ka neta Devi Lal."*

Bhajan Lal at a rally: determined bid

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

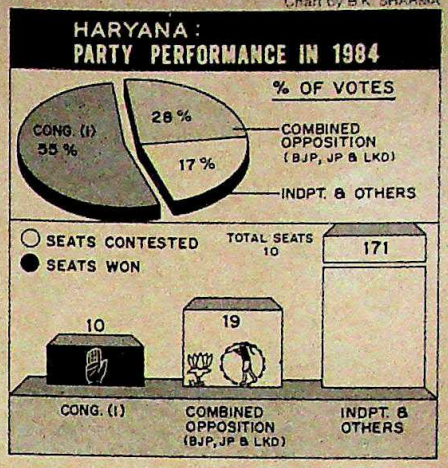


Devi Lal: You had a cup of tea today. How much did it cost?
Crowd: One rupee.
Devi Lal: You bought a beedi bundle. How much did that cost?
Crowd: Two rupees.
Devi Lal: So you have already spent three. All I ask for is one rupee every five years. Will you give it?
Crowd (shouting): Yes. Take more than one.

● Hamko jita do. Phir dekhna ham Devi Lal ki kya gat karte hain. (Vote for me and then see what we do to Devi Lal.)

BHAJAN LAL at Faridabad

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



In the state's electoral context, Devi Lal seems invincible. With Jats accounting for 20 lakh votes out of the 79-lakh strong electorate, the Jat leader has already won half the battle. In fact, for the first fortnight of the campaign, Devi Lal spent just four days in Haryana, a measure of his confidence.

The Congress(I) has only three Jat leaders in Haryana—Bhajan Lal, Bansi Lal and Hardwari Lal. But Bhajan Lal and Bansi Lal are individual, and not popular leaders. And in terms of mass support, they are no match for *Tau* (Uncle) Devi Lal.

The Congress(I)'s campaign focus is, in fact, on Devi Lal's sons. "Ranjit Singh conspires in Delhi's Samrat Hotel to bring down the Government and Chautala sits in Chandigarh, ordering bureaucrats and minting money from transfers," says Bhajan Lal, adding, "It's not *Ram Rajya* but *Loot Rajya.*" But Bhajan Lal, despite his public boasts of winning all 10 seats is himself battling for electoral survival in Faridabad *(see box)*. Factionalism within the Congress(I) is severely undermining Bhajan Lal, with half the state's cadres aligned behind Bansi Lal. Congress(I) dissidents are openly working against the party's nominees, particularly in Karnal, Kurukshetra, Ambala and Sonepat.

The BJP, a partner in Devi Lal's Government, is content with the two seats it has got: Ambala for Suraj Bhan and Karnal for Sushma Swaraj. They are confident of victory in both, thanks to Congress(I) dissidence in both constituencies.

But it is the Devi Lal juggernaut that dominates. Flags, banners, posters, audio and video cassettes have flooded the towns and villages. Rising above the din of election speeches and songs, is the fast catching on slogan: *"Tau pura tole ga, Lal Quila se bole ga."* (Devi Lal will get the measure right, and from Red Fort speak forthright.) In Haryana, at least, this carries an increasing ring of conviction.

—HARINDER BAWEJA

Khurshid Ahmed

Khurshid Ahmed, is a popular leader amongst the Meos who comprise a 4-lakh-strong vote segment in Faridabad.

The other powerful group consists of trade unionists and factory workers. And Bhajan Lal is leaving no stone unturned to woo them. His task is made easier by the fact that the union leaders are agitated with their managements who, they feel, are being dictated to by Devi Lal's sons.

Bhajan Lal is using precisely this weapon to win their votes. In meeting after meeting during his gruelling 20 hours-a-day schedule, Bhajan Lal was eloquent on Devi Lal's misrule and his sons' misdeeds. "Devi Lal has broken all the promises he made in 1987 and in turn has only looted the state," he thunders. "Vote for me and I'll send him packing to his Sirsa farm house."

While half his speech is a tirade against Devi Lal, the other half revolves around the possibility of rigging. "Don't let Devi Lal's goondas capture polling booths," he warns. His fears are not unfounded. Devi Lal's workers openly talk of resorting to rigging. *"Goliyan chalva dein ge, par Bhajan Lal ko jeetne nahi dein ge,"* they threaten. Between the ballot and the bullet, it's a tough fight for the Haryana Congress(I) heavyweight. —HARINDER BAWEJA

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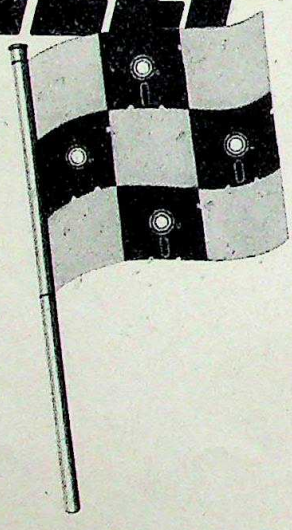

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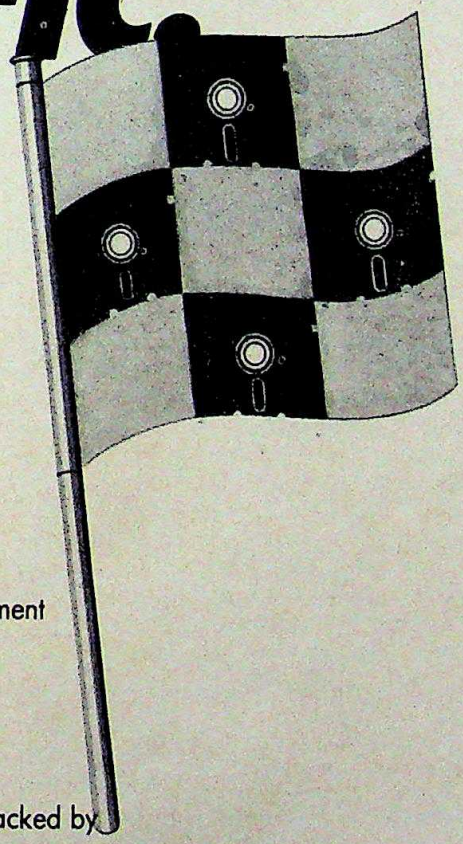

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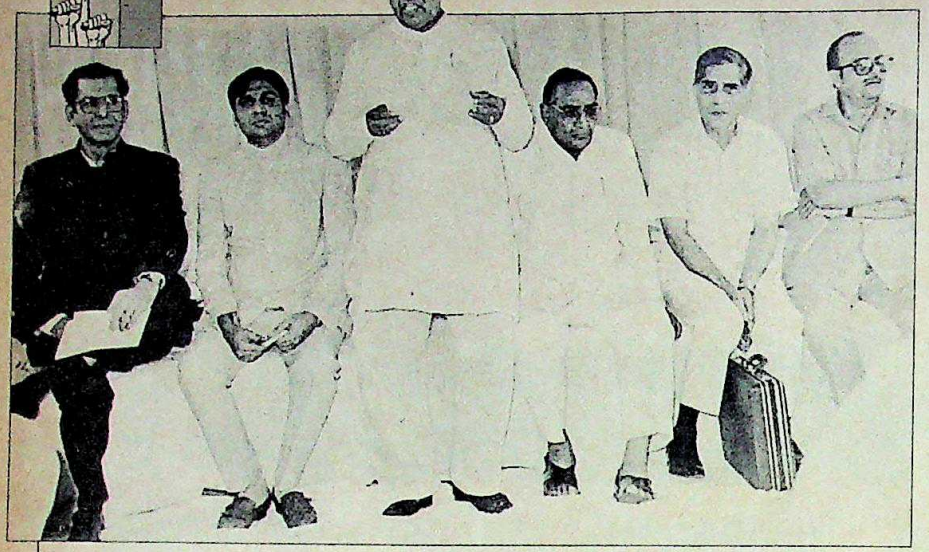

Solanki addressing press conference with S.C. Shukla, Vora and Arjun Singh

MADHYA PRADESH

Turn in the Tide

Congress(I) faces a debacle

AN anti-Congress(I) wind is blowing through Madhya Pradesh—a wind that, with each passing day, gathers speed and power, and threatens to turn into a swirling typhoon that will sweep away the ruling party in the coming Lok Sabha elections.

For the Congress(I), which has always regarded Madhya Pradesh as an impregnable bastion, that is a frightening prospect. Barring 1977, the state has always returned the Congress to power. In the 1984 Lok Sabha elections, the fragmented Opposition could not win a single one of the 40 parliamentary seats. And in 1980, it won just four seats.

Still, those may not be the right historical parallels. A more appropriate one would be the 1977 Lok Sabha elections—when the Opposition won 38 seats. Now, as then, the Opposition is united. Now, as then, there is an anti-Congress wave. Add to that the dissension in the ruling Congress(I), and history seems all set to repeat itself.

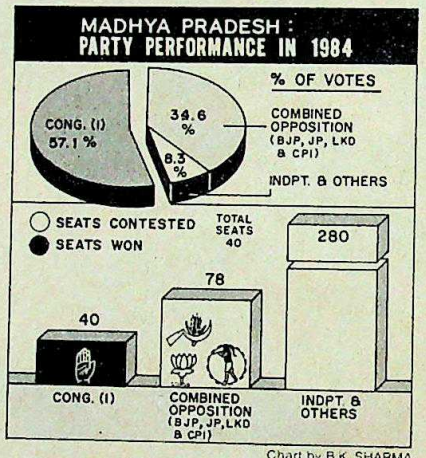

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

On the face of it, the electoral arithmetic would seem to favour the Congress(I). In the 1985 assembly elections, it polled 49 per cent of the votes while the combined Opposition secured only 35 per cent. But these are extraordinary times and electoral precedents don't hold water.

In itself, the anti-Congress(I) wave may not have been crucial. What has swung the scales against the ruling party is the emergence of an opposition alliance. In 37 of the 39 constituencies which go to the polls—in Shahdol the election has been countermanded on account of the death of the BJP candidate—the Congress(I) faces joint candidates put up by the BJP and the Janata Dal. In Bhind and Jhabua, the two parties are locked in what both describe as "friendly contests".

The Congress(I), in sharp contrast, presents the image of an army of generals—Motilal Vora, Arjun Singh, S.C. Shukla and Madhavrao Scindia—working at cross-purposes.

For the present, they have called a truce—at the insistence of the high command. Last fortnight, in fact, Vora, Singh and Shukla addressed a joint press conference along with MPCC(I) chief Shiv Banu Solanki to present a joint front. But it was clearly a facade. Declared Solanki: "We are here to demonstrate that we are one." But the fact that Arjun Singh, cut down to size by the high command, is clearly trying to establish his own base rather than help the party, makes a mockery of such efforts.

In the opposition camp, the BJP, led by state chief Sunderlal Patwa, by far dominates the Janata Dal led by V.C. Shukla who is contesting from Mahasamund. The BJP is contesting 31 seats versus the Janata Dal's 10. In the last assembly elections, the BJP won around 30 per cent of the vote while the Janata Party and the Lok Dal, the two main constituents of the present Janata Dal, together secured just 5 per cent. The two communist parties have always been insignificant in the state—polling around 3 per cent of the total votes.

Other parties too are in the fray but only in a handful of constituencies will the Congress(I) benefit significantly from the divisions in opposition ranks. In Bastar, the BJP has fielded a candidate although the CPI polled the second-highest number

- ***Rajiv Gandhi ka sandesh***
  Ek rahega Bharat desh
  (Rajiv Gandhi's message is: India will remain united.)

- ***Nai peedi ki nai umang***
  Sada rahe Congress ke sang
  (The new generation with new ambitions will always remain with the Congress.)

Congress(I) slogans.

- ***Bhrashtachar, commission khori,***
  Rajiv ki pakri gayi chori
  (There is corruption and also commissions; Rajiv has been caught stealing.)

- ***Mehangai na bhrashtachar, hum denge achchi sarkar***
  (There will neither be inflation nor corruption, we will provide a good government.)

Opposition slogans.

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of votes in 1984. The beneficiary will be Shankuram Sodi, the sitting Congress(I) MP. Similarly, in Kanker, where the radical trade union leader Shankar Guha Niyogi is fielding an independent, the Congress(I) stands to gain.

In Bhind, the Janata Dal candidate could even turn the tide against the Congress(I)'s Rajput candidate and in favour of the BJP by dividing the Rajput vote. But in Jhabua, the two parties could damage each other's chances. There were stumblings too within both the Janata Dal and the BJP over the choice of candidates—and, as a consequence, several rebels are in the fray. Still, these are just tiny blots on the by and large bright picture of opposition unity.

The Congress(I), on the other hand, has given up the idea of a united campaign. The principal leaders are concentrating on their own fiefdoms—Arjun Singh in the Vindhya region, Shukla in Chhatisgarh. Scindia campaigns in the Madhya Bharat region around Gwalior but his mother, Vijaye Raje, vice-president of the BJP, too has an important influence there. Vora, who has no regional base of his own, flits from place to place, making arrangements for Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the Congress(I)'s chief campaigner in the state.

That could cut both ways. For Rajiv is also the principal target of the Opposition's attack. Equally damaging for the Congress(I), Muslims are peeved by the handling of the Bhagalpur riots. In Bhopal, for instance, the Bahujan Samaj Party nominee, Rouf Khan, is likely to walk away with all the Muslim votes. And though the Congress(I) is openly playing the Hindu card, Hindus are unlikely to vote for it.

As S.C. Shukla says: "It is a no-win situation."

Or perhaps a big-loss one.

—N.K. SINGH

GUNA

Royal Battle

THERE may be very few tell-tale signs of royalty. But the battle Madhavrao Scindia is waging to prevent the Guna Lok Sabha seat from going to his mother, Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia, is unmistakably true to feudal tradition.

The bitter family war is not the only issue at stake. Madhavrao finds in these elections the opportunity to be the number one leader of the Congress(I) in Madhya Pradesh. In fact, with Arjun Singh still haunted by the high court indictment, Madhavrao has been extensively campaigning for party candidates close to him in as many as 25 constituencies. If he is successful, it may pave the way for chief ministership of the state.

But there is, ironically, only one person standing between him and his ambition—his mother. Though technically Vijaya Raje fights a protege of Madhavrao, Mahendra Singh, the challenge is directed at her son—who represented the constituency for 14 years before he was pitted against the BJP stalwart, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in Gwalior in 1984.

Not surprisingly, Madhavrao is mobilising all his resources to retain his pocket borough for the party. The youthful railway minister has even left much of the campaigning in his own constituency of Gwalior to his wife, daughter and son while he is concentrating on Guna.

In his offensive, Madhavrao holds one trump card—the party's contribution to Guna's development. Reeling off statistics, he points out the Rs 600-crore fertiliser factory, the petro-chemical project, a Vayudoot link, the Guna-Etawah rail link, the two low-power transmitters and 95 per cent rural electrification. The message: vote for the Congress(I) nominee and for further progress.

While his vigorous campaign is meeting with an enthusiastic response, Vijaya Raje, on the other hand, is putting up a tough fight. At the age of 71, she maintains a busy schedule. Her image is not of a sentimental, wronged woman, but an inspiring one. Urging the people to take to revenge, she says passionately: *"Ita ka jawab paththar se dena chahiye, hame jawab dena chahiye."* (For every brick, reply with a stone. We must reply.) Drawing upon the popularity of the televised *Ramayan*, she addresses the voter as *"mera* Hanuman" and prods him to be aware of his hidden strength and utilise it.

In her role as the archetypal mother, the Rajmata takes it as her duty to chide the audience instead of wooing them. Says she: "The situation is so bad that even this elderly mother has to come out in the field. If you have any regard for your mother come out to the battleground."

Her real son, however, does not empathise with that sentiment. Madhavrao thinks his mother has played into the hands of the BJP which is simply misusing her position. He chokes with emotion as he recollects how Vijaya Raje publicly condemned his daughter's marriage after having been given place of prominence during the ceremony.

In a rare moment of frustration, he breaks his reticence on the delicate subject: "What does she want? Has not there been development in Gwalior for which she claims she has utmost concern? Why is she in the fray though she is already a Rajya Sabha member?"

The answer to these questions lies with the electorate. But with the mother campaigning against the son and the son hell-bent on getting his mother defeated, today Jai Vilas Palace is in turmoil. One part is taking over the other.

—BHASKAR ROY

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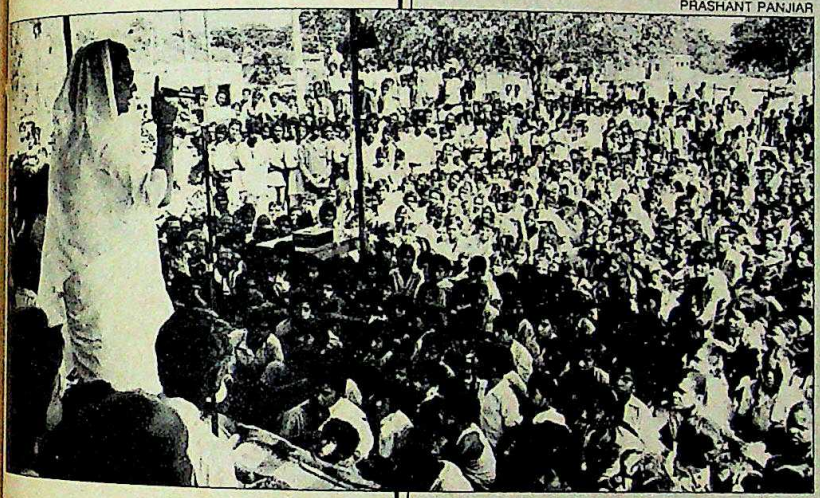

Vijayeraje Scindia addressing a meeting in Guna

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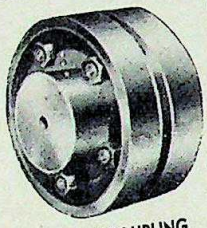

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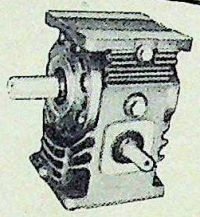

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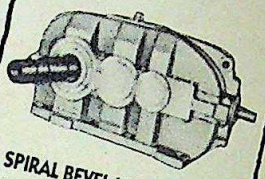

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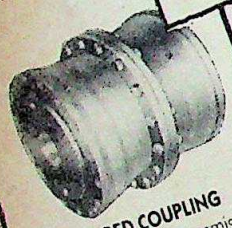

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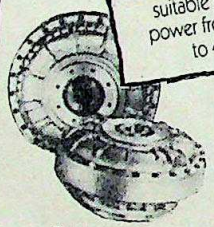

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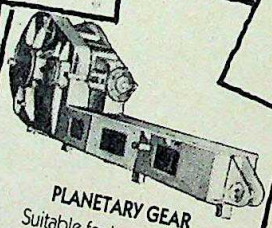

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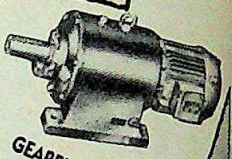

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KERALA

A Close Contest

The ruling LDF and the UDF are in a neck and neck race

NAIL-BITING contests have characterised the last few elections in Kerala. This time promises to be as exciting. Both the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the Congress(I)-led United Democratic Front (UDF) are waging a no-holds barred battle. Though the UDF won 17 of the 20 seats in the last general elections, it polled just 50.91 per cent of the votes compared to 42.30 per cent polled by the LDF.

Veterans are heading both election brigades. At 81, the CPI(M)'s E.M.S. Namboodiripad is criss-crossing Kerala, attacking Rajiv, the Bofors deal and communal politics. The UDF attack is being led by former chief minister K. Karunakaran who is trying to deflect attention from the Bofors scam and Rajiv's failings by highlighting local issues and the Left's failures. The UDF slogan: "*Azhimadikkaran Nayanarine Maatu, Keralam Rakshikku.*" (Remove corrupt Nayanar and save Kerala.)

The Congress(I) is contesting 17 seats leaving two for UDF partner, the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) and one for the pro-Christian Kerala Congress(M). As the All India Muslim League has merged with the IUML, the UDF has consolidated the vote of Muslims who form 19.6 per cent of Kerala's population. Similarly, Christians account for 21.4 per cent of the populace. Though the UDF has roped in the Kerala Congress(M), it has fallen out with the other faction of the Kerala Congress led by P.J. Joseph. As Joseph is now going it alone, the Christian vote will be split.

The BJP move to contest all 20 seats has added a new dimension. Though unlikely to win, it will cut into Congress(I) votes. Ironically, this will help the BJP's biggest enemies—the communists. Says state BJP chief Raman Pillai: "These polls will show we have become a force in Kerala."

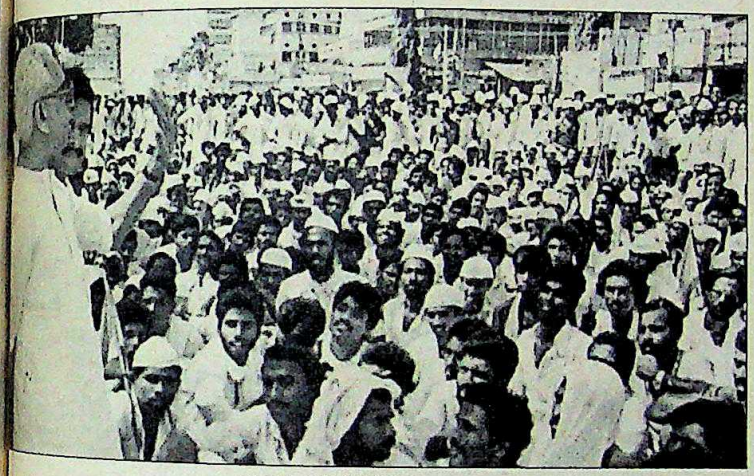
On close scrutiny, the LDF candidates are more impressive than the Congress(I) nominees. They are younger and most are achievers in their professions. The Congress(I) has renominated 12 of its 13 sitting MPs—an unimpressive lot with no achievements to their credit.

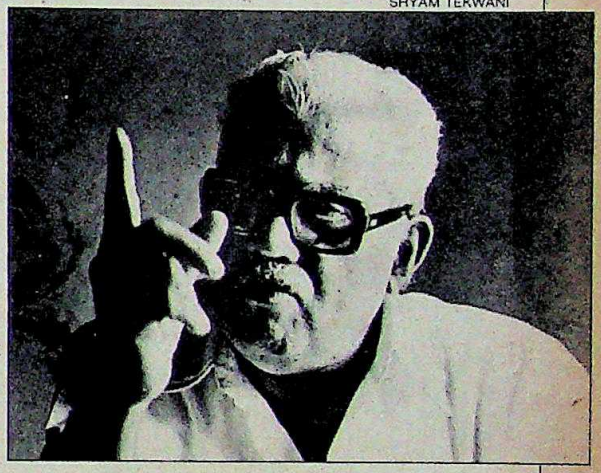
But ultimately, what may prove decisive is communal considerations. Karunakaran is confident that his relatively unknown son, K. Murlidharan, will win from Calicut not because he's a worthy candidate but because 33 per cent of the Calicut voters are Muslims—who are expected to vote for the UDF. And though Kottayam recently became the first Indian city to attain 100 per cent literacy, voting is likely to be on communal lines. Ramesh Chennithala, state Youth Congress(I) chief, hopes to beat Suresh Kurup, one of the CPI(M)'s most dynamic leaders, simply because he's a Christian and Kottayam is a Christian stronghold.

The real test is whether the literate Kerala voter can rise above the narrow communal confines which limit voters elsewhere.

—RAMESH MENON

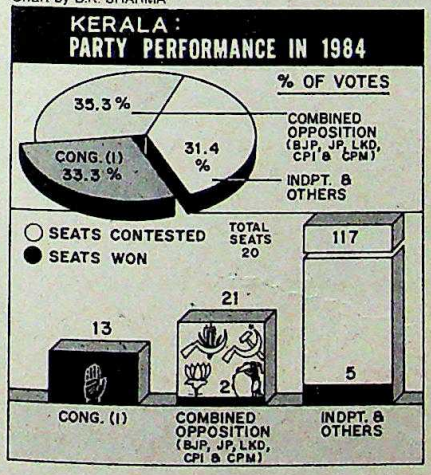
SHYAM TEKWANI





Karunakaran; (right) Nayanar: bitter fight

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



- **Auto driver Sudarshan, an independent, is demonstrating against Doordarshan for not allowing independents air time. But who's listening. His last electoral tally was 272 votes.**

- ***These elections will herald the end of the Nehru dynasty.***

  CPI(M) supremo E.M.S. NAMBOODIRIPAD.

- ***The CPI(M) has shunned idealism with its opportunistic policies.***

  KPCC(I) President, A.K. ANTONY.

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Politicised Press

ONE wishes that Indian newspapers, after the American tradition, would publicly declare themselves for particular candidates and parties. It would be a more honest way of supporting one side or the other in an election than through the doctoring and angling of news.

It is an indication of the devotion and animosity Rajiv Gandhi arouses that, outside the Emergency, Indian newspapers have never been as partisan or trenchant in reporting on the other side as in the run-up to the elections. Sometimes, it seems, newspapers are living in different worlds, united only by the common factor of love or hate for Rajiv Gandhi.

Take the five major English-language newspapers. Such has been the polarisation in the press that even the respected *Hindu* has swayed with the winds, ultimately to shake up the very seat of authority in the family business, the patriarch and editor, G. Kasturi.

It is ironic that *The Hindu*, rather than the *Indian Express*, should have walked away with all the laurels in unearthing the Bofors scandal layer by layer. The *Express*, as some other papers, was happy to play second fiddle in the bounty. *The Hindu*'s Associate Editor N. Ram chose to give them as part of his quarrel with his editor.

Perhaps inspired by Ram, *The Hindu* has taken a more anti-establishment line than expected. It made a frontal attack on Rajiv Gandhi for not resigning on the Bofors issue. It has also expressed intolerance of the perceived arbitrariness of the Centre on such issues as panchayati raj. But *The Hindu*, to its credit, has tried to be fair to all sides in its news columns, only occasionally straying from the straight and narrow path.

Ram played god in distributing his favours—among the newspapers kept out were *The Hindustan Times*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times of India*. Even more clearly, the litmus test of pro- and anti-establishment papers was the publication of the facsimile of the St. Kitts documents, allegedly related to the secret account of V.P. Singh's son, Ajeya Singh. To no one's surprise, *The Hindustan Times* and *The Telegraph* led the field.

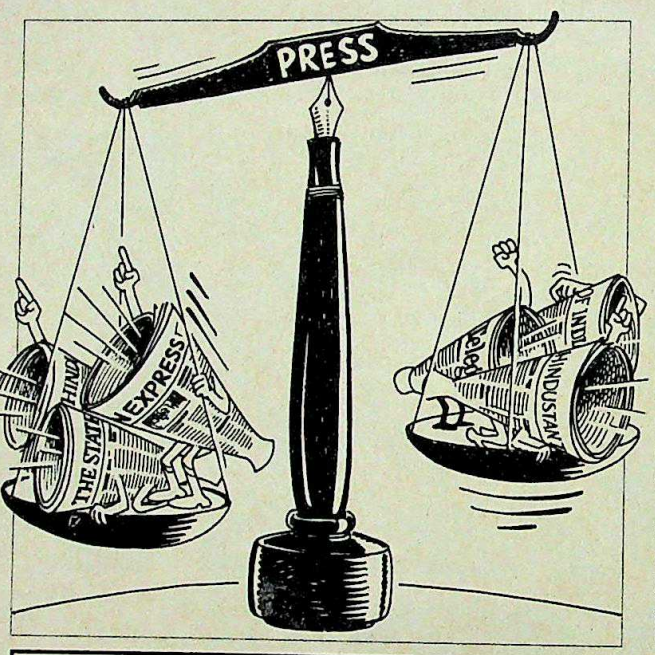
The Hindustan Times is, of course, a recognised pro-establishment paper. But silence, rather than support for the Government's indefensible positions, has helped mitigate to an extent the pro-government line expected of it.

The Telegraph has been fully for Rajiv Gandhi and what he stands for. The editor M.J. Akbar finally decided to throw his hat in the ring as a Congress(I) candidate while resigning his job.

The Times of India has been desperately trying to maintain a balance, its carefully calibrated criticism of the Government sought to be balanced by some hard-hitting anti-establishment stories.

The Statesman remains anti-establishment. But it has taken on an uncharacteristically strident and commentative anti-Rajiv line in news reports. This was particularly evident in the headings *The Statesman* chose to give the reports on Bofors, borrowed from N. Ram of *The Hindu*.

Above all, the *Indian Express* is the voice of the Opposition. There are no holds barred. The shrill prose, the hammer blows at the establishment are its hallmark. More effective than its traditional armoury has been the daily trumping of the Congress(I) advertisements by its new cartoonist, Rajendra.



> The healthy American practice of separating comments from news is lacking in Indian newspapers.

The *Indian Express* has self-consciously donned the mantle of tribune for the Opposition. With the announcement of elections, it is prompting the Opposition on its next moves, replete with pained appeals.

More clearly than in the opposition leaders' statements, the *Indian Express* mirrors the underlying sense of the Opposition's insecurity. Obviously, the *Express* is keeping its fingers crossed, hoping that the facade of opposition unity will not come crashing down.

Akbar is not the only journalist to have jumped into the election fray. Cashing in on his role during the Gorkha agitation in the Darjeeling hills, Inder Jit is not merely sponsored by the Gorkha National Liberation Front but has also obtained the Congress(I)'s indirect support. On the other side, Santosh Bharati, editor of *Chauthi Duniya*, is contesting on the Janata Dal symbol. So is Ajay Singh, editor of *Asli Bharat*.

There is nothing wrong with editors contesting elections as long as they declare their interests. Akbar properly resigned from *The Telegraph*. It remains to be seen how Inder Jit runs his Indian News and Features Alliance after his entry into politics.

Copying American newspaper practice has become the vogue in India, particularly in encouraging the new breed of activist publishers. It is a pity though that the healthy American practice of separating comments from news reports, as far as the quality press is concerned, should be so singularly lacking in Indian newspapers. In the run-up to the elections, professionalism is at a discount.

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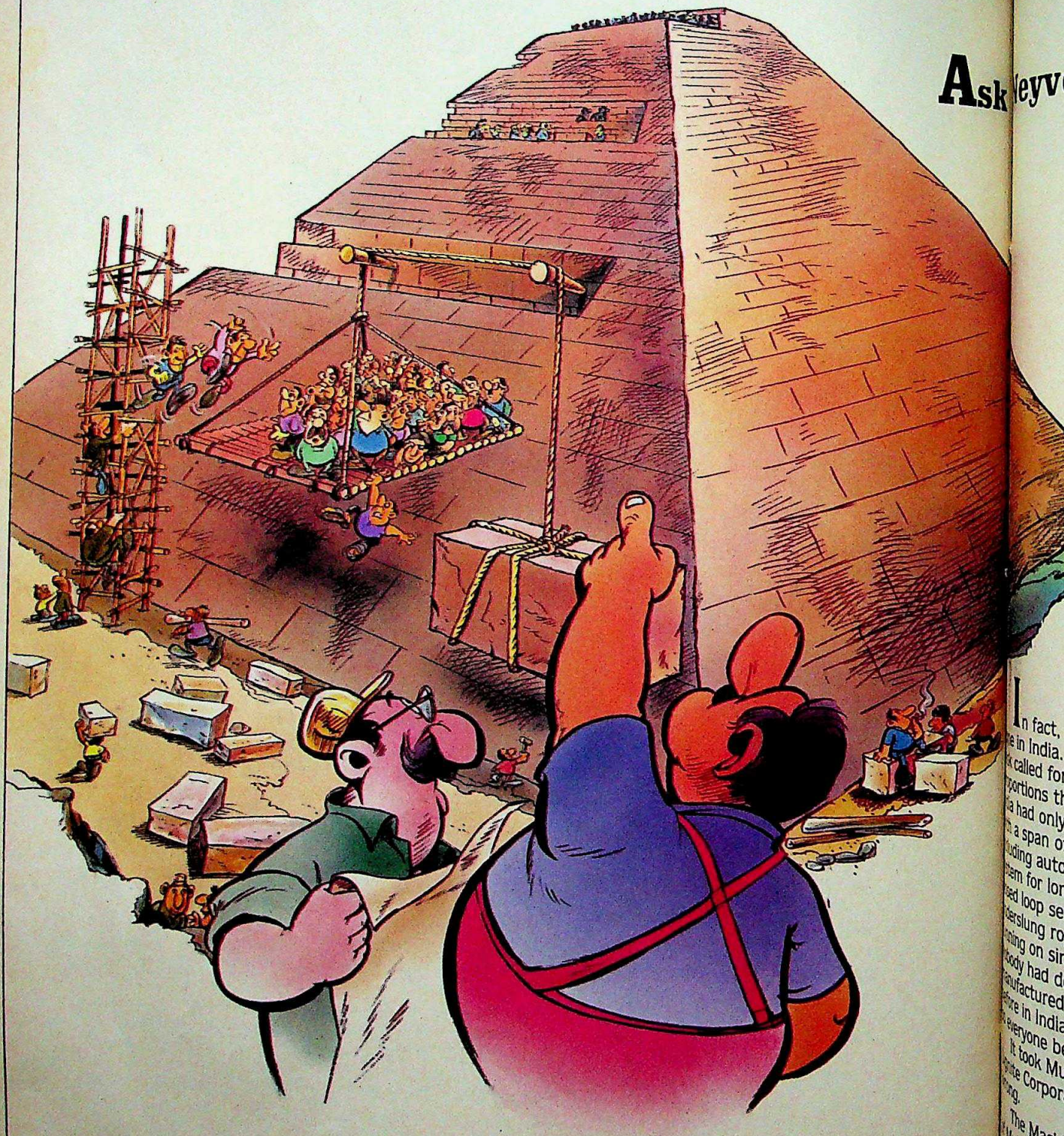

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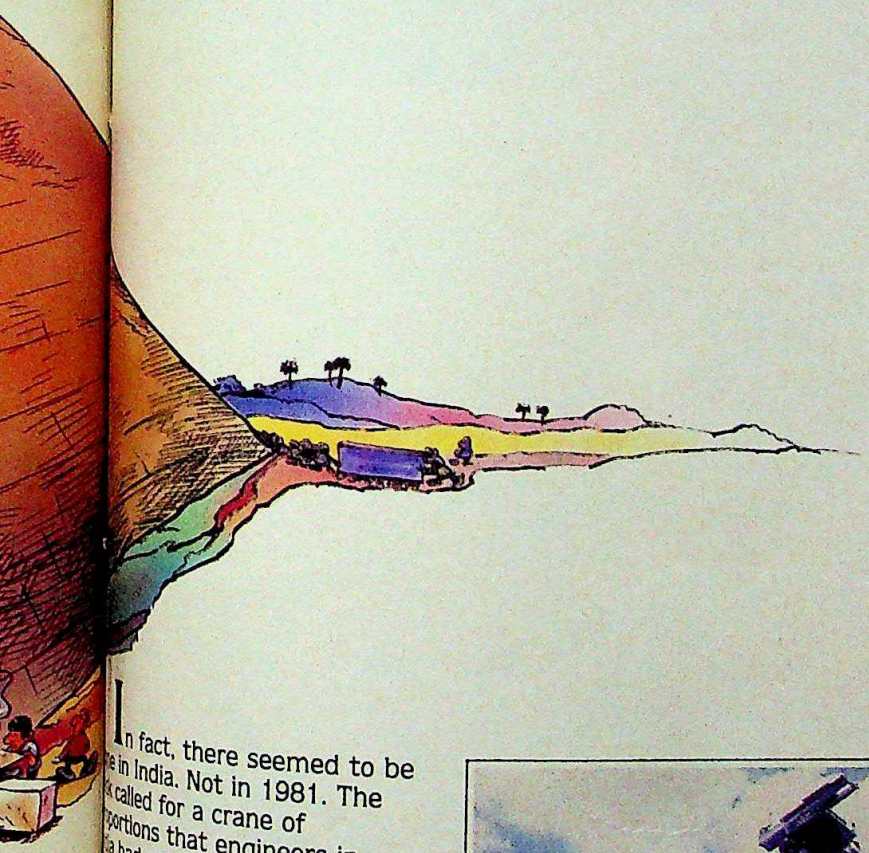

In fact, there seemed to be one in India. Not in 1981. The job called for a crane of proportions that engineers in India had only imagined. A crane with a span of 60 metres, including automatic skew control system for long travel drive with closed loop sensor device. And an undersling rope drum trolley operating on single box girder. Nobody had designed and manufactured such an equipment once in India. Nobody could. Or so everyone believed.

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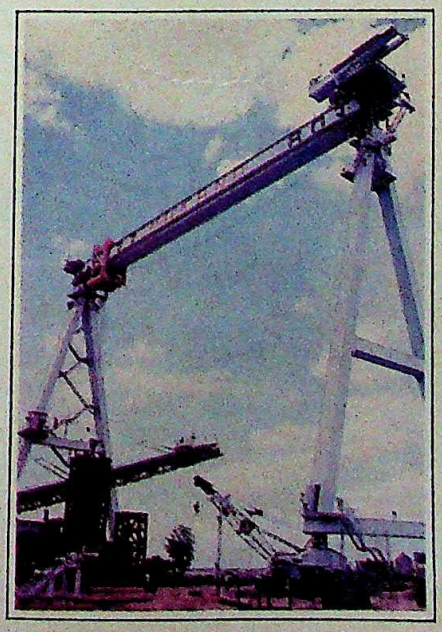

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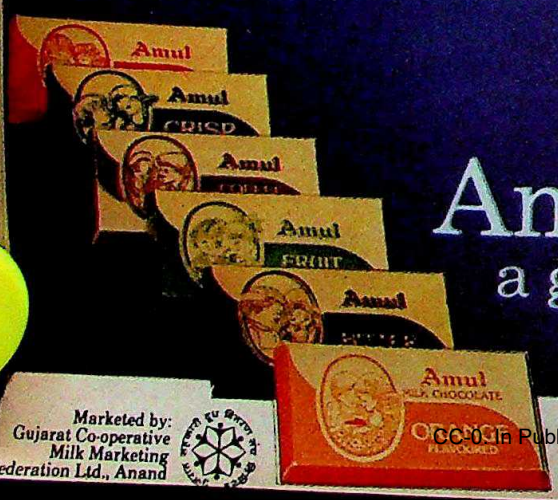

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MANIFESTOS

Dull Documents

All parties make similar promises

IT is a ritual that most politicians decry. "Manifestos," rasps Devi Lal, the earthy Janata Dal leader, "just tear the first page off and all of them read much the same."

His compatriots agree. L.K. Advani, the suave BJP chief, smiles and says: "In India it is usually one single emotional issue that sways an electorate. Manifestos are omnibus documents that try and satisfy everyone's demands." And Telugu Desam leader, P. Upendra, who helped draft the National Front manifesto, has a twinkle in his eye when he says: "They are usually full of noble sentiments and utopian ideals."

Yet, no political party will forego the chance of writing out an opus—full of rhetoric, tall promises and woolly concepts. Virtually nothing is left out—not even a dissertation on the state of Indian sports.

"The nation is in a whirlpool of crises," bemoans the National Front manifesto, "crisis of confidence, crisis of character and crisis of leadership." The Congress(I) forsees no such gathering storm. According to the party's sunny masterpiece: "Today's India is young, vibrant and innovative. What India thinks today, the world will think tomorrow."

The Congress(I) 'Mani-festo' (so nicknamed because Mani Shanker Aiyer, special assistant to party President Rajiv Gandhi, had a large hand in its formulation), even contains an A to Z charter of carrots. That Telecom chief Sam Pitroda had a finger in it too is indicated by the promise of a telephone and direct dial facilities in every panchayat. However, the immediate need was for a functional copier at the party headquarters. The manifesto's release by Rajiv Gandhi was delayed by an hour as the only copying machine had broken down.

The National Front's manifesto calls for a clean break from the past. But its promises have a familiar ring. It makes the same promises as the Congress(I) to decentralise administration and give wider powers to panchayats and nagarpalikas. Of course, the front believes that theirs would be "genuine devolution".

Strangely, the slogans of the two major parties have been reversed. In 1984, the Janata Party's battle-cry was "Power to the people." That's now been hijacked by the ruling party with a snide remark that the Opposition was only keen on giving "power to the power-brokers". And the Congress(I)'s 1984 slogan of a "clean government" has been lifted by the National Front which says that only it can provide "a clean and efficient government".

Saddled with Bofors, the Congress(I) makes inaudible squeaks about wiping out corruption. It states lamely that decentralisation would "rid the suffering people of India of corruption, inefficiency and neglect". The Opposition, predictably, goes whole hog on cleansing the system. Both the National Front and its electoral ally, the BJP, talk of hounding "those who have taken kickbacks from Bofors and other deals, and punishing the guilty". The BJP suggests appointing more lokayuktas and bringing even the prime minister and the chief ministers under its purview.

The Congress(I) is silent on another embarrassing issue: the price rise. Even the National Front, which weeps about "spiralling prices and man-made scarcities", is vague about how it plans to tackle the problem. It mumbles something about "firm control on deficit financing" and "austerity in public expenditure". The BJP is more definite: it would appoint a price commission to regulate prices. If that fails it has a neat solution: jack up salaries in both the public and private sectors to meet the price rise.

On secularism, the National Front and the BJP differ. While the front vows not to interfere in the personal laws of minorities, the BJP wants a uniform civil code for all religious groups—in line

WHERE DO THEY STAND

Will you	Congress(I)	Janata Dal
*Cancel the Bofors contract?	No	NC
*Give full autonomy to AIR & Doordarshan?	NC	Yes
*Allow India to have a nuclear bomb?	No	No
*Dilute the role of the public sector?	No	No
*Follow the policy of import liberalisation?	No	No
*Make public audit of political funds compulsory?	Maybe	Yes
*Write off loans to farmers?	No	Yes
*Abolish reservation system based on caste or religion?	No	NC
*Favour a negotiated settlement with extremists in Punjab?	Yes	Yes
*Support the construction of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya?	Not at disputed site	NC
*Support company donations to political parties?	Yes	No
*Prosecute any politician and bureaucrat involved in the Bofors deal?	Yes	Yes
*Re-investigate the Reliance and Ajitabh case?	No	Yes
*Discontinue army intervention in other countries?	India has never intervened	Yes
*Give the FERA directorate, CBI and DRI more autonomy?	No	NC

INDIA TODAY submitted a questionnaire to the Congress (I) and the Janata Dal. Anand Sharma replied for the ruling party, and Yashwant Sinha for the opposition party.

*NC: No Comment

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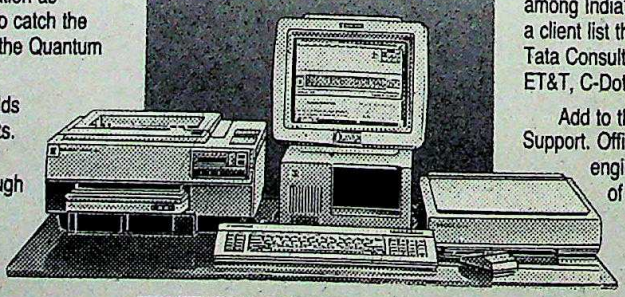

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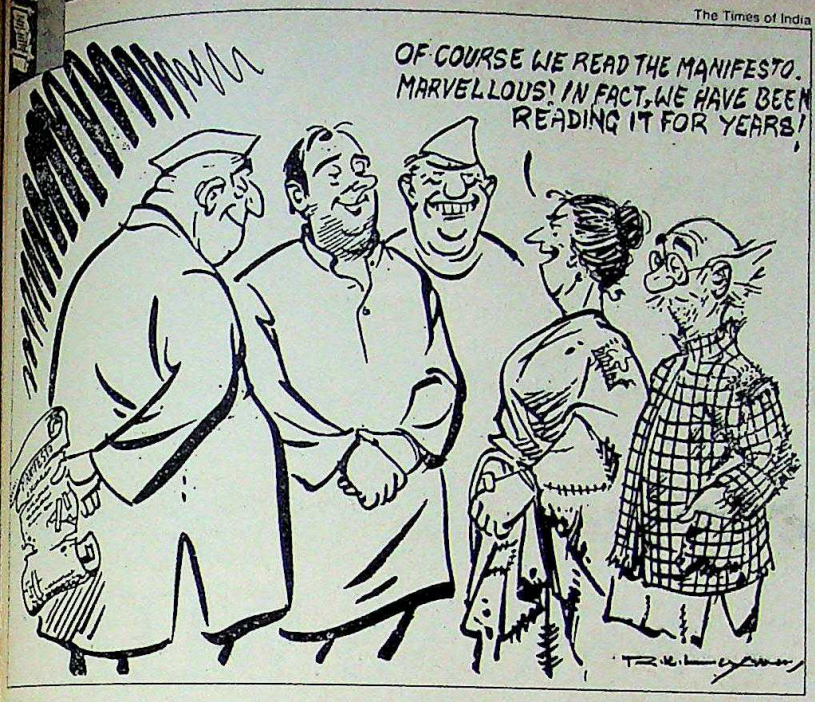
The Times of India



with its "appeasement for none" policy. The party even calls for "a total ban on slaughter of cows".

When it comes to goodies on the financial front, opposition parties take the cake. While the ruling party makes no new tax concessions, the front, with its eye on the middle class voter, promises to raise the income tax exemption limit. The BJP has its other eye on the rich when it promises to put a ceiling of 40 per cent on the income tax rate.

WITH the Congress(I)'s main success being on the economic front, its approach for the next five years is basically more of the same. In contrast, the opposition parties seem extravagant. While in one-breath they decry the mounting internal debt, elsewhere they promise to write off all loans to small farmers, landless cultivators and artisans. (The National Front puts a ceiling of Rs 10,000 but the BJP doesn't specify it.) Front members calmly estimate that such a move could cost Rs 10,000 crore.

If the Opposition comes to power, big business is in for big knocks. Both the National Front and the BJP want the emphasis to shift to the small-scale sector and cottage industries. Multinationals would be booted out of making consumer goods. Pepsi would have a hard time surviving. They are also averse to the Congress(I)'s computer mania. And the left parties would resist moves bringing "automation" to industry that could reduce jobs.

All the parties make the same noises about agriculture. But on the sensitive issue of population control, barring the BJP, all are strangely silent. The Congress(I), bitten by its 1977 experience, makes no special mention. The front acknowledges the problem but glibly side-steps solutions by saying: "Development is the best contraceptive." Only the BJP talks seriously of adopting a national population policy.

On employment, again there is plenty of tongue-clicking, but the solutions are the same. The Congress(I) with its two rozgar yojanas has already set the ball rolling for sops. Opposition parties follow suit with various proposed employment guarantee schemes. They are keen to make the "Right to Work" a fundamental right under the Constitution. At best, such a move may result in a few jobs for those drafting the law.

The Congress(I) grudgingly agrees to make Doordarshan and AIR into corporations but "it would be government owned". Opposition parties are expansive. Full autonomy for the electronic media. And knowing the value of a friendly press, abolish levy on newsprint.

The pithy statements are reserved for conclusions. The Congress(I) dubs the Opposition as "the self-same false prophets, the self-same false gods that reappeared to give birth to new illusions." The BJP is more direct: "Throw out this corrupt and incompetent government." And the front attempts what is an apology to Nehruvian prose when it concludes: "At last the hour of change has struck. It is for the people of India to ring it in with their votes." By then, voters are probably fast asleep.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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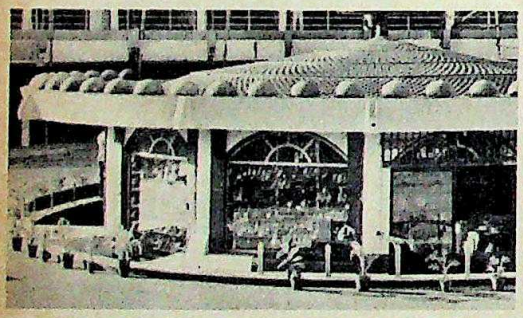

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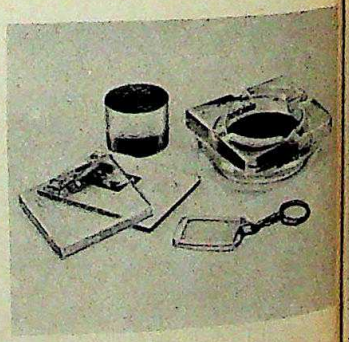

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Raking it in

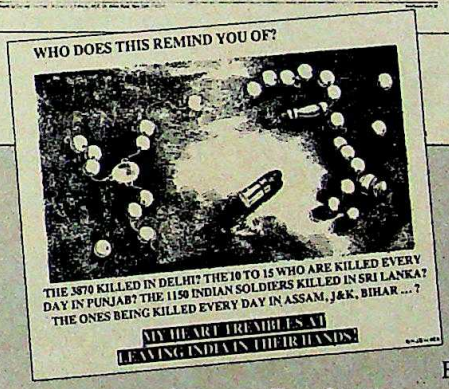
But Congress(I) ad campaign flops

READYMONEY Terrace which houses the head office of Rediffusion Advertising, is a shabby building in Worli, central Bombay's business hub. The city's advertising fraternity says that Readymoney Terrace—home base of the ageing whiz-kids of Indian advertising, Arun Nanda and Ajit Balakrishnan—is appropriately located. Reason: the agency's cash registers are ringing thanks to the controversial and highly visible Congress(I) advertising campaign which started on October 26 and will end two days before the polls.

Though it has been the target of considerable ridicule, the cost of the campaign is no laughing matter. In 1985 the party spent Rs 8 crore on the election advertisement campaign by Rediffusion. There are several estimates on the bill that Rediffusion will present to the Congress(I) for the present campaign. An agency insider points out that the budget is more than Rs 20 crore. Speculates a senior executive of another New Delhi-based agency: "The Congress(I) budget for press advertising alone is Rs 1 crore a day. That works out to around Rs 25 crore for the entire campaign." Other sources claim that Rediffusion has placed election advertisements worth Rs 1.10 crore with *The Times of India* and Rs 70 lakh with Rajiv's *bete noire*, the Indian Express group. Conservative estimates place the budget in the Rs 15 crore to 18 crore range. But the agency's suave Managing Director Arun Nanda has refused to comment on the campaign's budget. And Congress(I) election mandarins are tightlipped on the subject. Predictably, rumour mills are working overtime.

Nanda: image problem

All newspaper groups have accepted the campaign but for the Shiv Sena-owned Marathi daily *Saamna* and



RAJENDRA DHODAPKAR

Acid Strokes

THERE is a silver lining to every clouded imagination. If Rediffusion's campaign for the Congress(I) caused revulsion across the land, it also spurred some brilliant ripostes.

While acidic cartoons appeared in more and more newspapers —*The Telegraph*, *The Times of India*, *Indian Post* and *Newstime*—in the corridors of *Indian Express*, a star was born. Editor Arun Shourie, a bitter critic of the ruling party, coordinated a hard-hitting counter-campaign of cartoons and Rajendra Dhodapkar, 32, a little-known cartoonist, became an overnight celebrity. Commented his predecessor at the *Express*, Ravi Shankar: "The cartoons are better than the ad campaign."

Congress(I) advertisement (top); *Express* cartoon; and Dhodapkar

In most cases, a neat change of blurb turned the advertisement's illustration into a lethal boomerang. The generally reticent Dhodapkar's desk became a milling centre of activity, as friends and colleagues dropped by with ideas, many of which were incorporated in the cartoons. A cartoon sent in by a reader was used only with a slight alteration.

Dhodapkar has come a long way. He dabbled in poetry and painting while practising as a government doctor in Bhopal in the early '80s. In 1985, he left Bhopal for the glamour of Bombay, where he wrote scripts for TV and short films. By late '87, he found himself in Delhi, cartooning for *Jansatta*, the Hindi paper of the Express group. When Ravi Shankar left the *Express* a few months ago, Shourie decided to try him out.

It's been a process of growth from "the high-brow circles" of Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal when he used to think of journalism as "non-serious", as opposed to his art. Now, he has come around to the view that one's intellectual convictions manage to permeate one's work even as one tries to provide the readers fun. "Shakespeare was a popular artiste," as he notes.

Dhodapkar is now concentrating on his calligraphy and basic drawing skills, which certainly need honing. However, his daily dose of medicine to the Congress(I) has already earned the relative amateur an enviable following.

—DAVID DEVADAS

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LAND FOR 5-STAR AND 5-STAR DELUX HOTELS IN DELHI

DDA is planning to dispose of hotel sites in Delhi/New Delhi for construction, setting and running of 5-Star Hotels/5-Star Delux Hotels with all related facilities conforming to standards laid down by the Ministry of Tourism & Civil Aviation, Govt. of India.

Land will be made available by the DDA with defined terms of collaboration agreement with the Party.

Pre-qualification Notice for Disposal of Hotel Sites

For this purpose it is proposed to draw a select list of renowned professional Hotel Groups with specific background and experience and from parties having collaboration (a tie up) with reputed Indian/international hotel chains possessing adequate expertise in the setting up and running of 5-Star/5-Star Delux Hotels. The parties fulfilling any one or more of the following qualifications will be considered for enlistment :

(1) The Indian 5-Star Hoteliers having atleast one well-known established 5-Star Hotel/5-Star Delux Hotel with minimum annual turn over of Rs. 25 crores.

(2) 5-Star Hoteliers who are foreign based should have at least 5 established 5-Star Hotels/5-Star Delux Hotels in different parts of the world.

(3) Indian entrepreneurs who are having arrangement/ collaboration with the Hoteliers satisfying conditions stipulated above in (1) or (2) or both.

(4) Non-resident Indians who are willing to make investment in the country by arrangement/ collaboration with the Hoteliers satisfying conditions stipulated above in (1) or (2) or both. They would be required to remit foreign exchange for financing the project as required/permissible under the Rules.

The applicants are required to give necessary data in support of their financial soundness, proven track record in any organised industry and trade, standing in the hotel industry, collaboration with the reputed world chains of the hotels and arrangement of financing the project including foreign exchange etc.

The selection will be made from the offers received in response to this advertisement and only those who are found eligible would be allowed to participate in the final tenders/auction/collaboration for disposal of the hotel sites.

DDA reserves its right to exclude any or all the applications without assigning any reasons whatsoever for the purpose of drawing up the select list of eligible hoteliers.

The Bio-data complete in all respects may be sent to the undersigned (by name) by or before 30th November, 1989 either personally or through registered post so as to reach by the due date.

(M.G. GUPTA)
FINANCE MEMBER,
DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY,
VIKAS SADAN, NEW DELHI-110 023

DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Proudly we build the Capital of India.

The Statesman. Fearing that if the party loses, it may not pay for the advertisements, as it has done on many other occasions, the Indian Newspaper Society asked all members to take advance payment.

But as far as costs go, the advertisements in the press are just the tip of the iceberg. Says a Bombay-based advertising agency chief: "The press campaign only constitutes 40 per cent of the party's budget. Along with printing of posters and pamphlets, production of video and audio cassettes, the budget will balloon to Rs 50 crore. And Rediffusion has a piece of the action in every segment of the campaign."

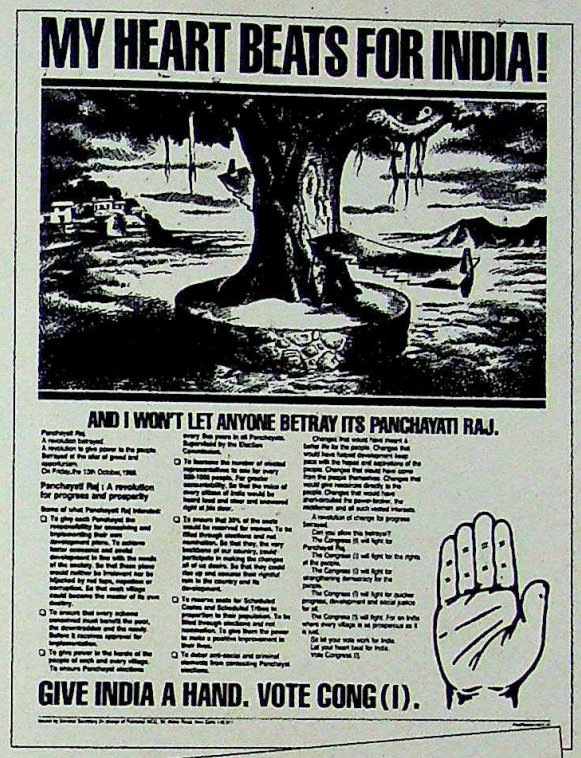
The Congress(I) campaign was originally meant to be divided among four agencies: Rediffusion for the press campaign, Clarion for advertising in the eastern region, Tara Sinha Associates to handle video publicity, and Graphic-aids for printing posters and pamphlets. Jaisons, a Bombay-based agency, also made a presentation targeted at the 18-21 age group.

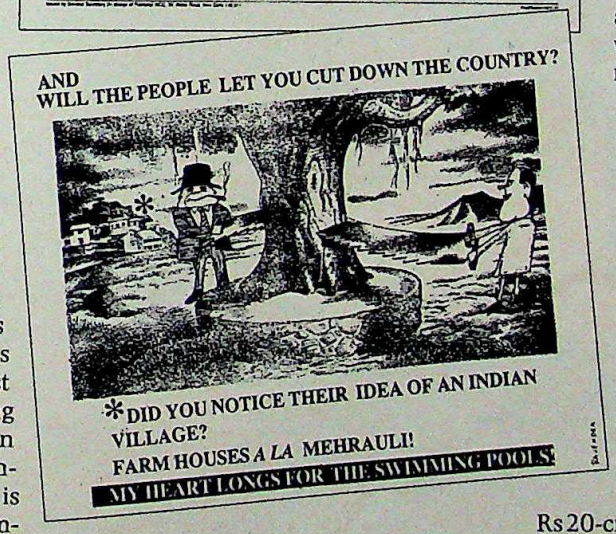
Insiders say that Clarion used a senior executive's family relationship with a Congress(I) bigwig to try and grab a part of the campaign. It had even set up a separate design task force in Delhi. But Rediffusion walked away with a major slice of the campaign, as a 'crack force' of 15 of its executives secretly worked on it for three months.

When the account was up for grabs, Arun Nanda was placed in a unique position as Rajiv's principal adviser on election advertising strategy. Rival agencies, such as Clarion and Tara Sinha Associates which bid for the campaign but lost out in the election advertising sweepstakes, felt they had been short-changed. Now, Clarion Managing Director, Amit Sengupta, is rumoured to be working on a campaign for the BJP.

Ironically it was Arun Singh and Arun Nehru who introduced Arun Nanda to the Congress(I) when they requested Nanda to do the election campaign in 1984. Nanda knew both the Arunns even before they had joined the Congress(I)—during their Reckitt and Coleman, and Jenson and Nicholson days, when Rediffusion was the advertising agency for both the companies.

Rediffusion has come a long way since then. But Bombay's advertising community does not mince its words on its Congress(I) blitz. Comments an agency chief: "Blood and gore are not my cup of tea. Using violent imagery like dismembered toys and scorpions is sheer over-kill. The campaign is a disaster." Sajid Peerbhoy, chairman of Speer Advertising, is equally critical. Regarding the campaign as a "prime example" of bad advertising, he says: "It lists out everything that is wrong with the country. By implication that means the present government has not done anything to solve the problems. It actually damages the credibility of the ruling party." He adds that the campaign "only offers problems, not solutions".





Campaign and counter-campaign: lethal boomerang

The general opinion in the industry is that Rediffusion should have concentrated on the achievements of the Rajiv regime. Asks the chief executive of a leading agency: "With the Indian economy shaping up so well under Rajiv, why couldn't the campaign have focused on liberalisation instead of disintegration?" Adds a former Rediffusion executive: "I think they were not briefed well. It is a negative campaign primarily because the research most probably did not point to any discernible positive trend for the party."

The reaction of Mani Aiyer, managing director of Ogilvy & Mather (O&M), was more muted. Though he declined to comment on the campaign, his reason for doing so made a statement by itself: "I don't know what brief Rediffusion got. Any ad campaign is a manifestation of the client's brief." Adding that political advertising is a complex business, he says: "If the campaign addresses itself to people's problems it will definitely work."

Another point being made is that the campaign lacks focus. Says Enterprise Advertising's Mohammed Khan: "In the West, the issues surrounding an election campaign are clear. Here advertising is not helping the voter make up his mind. It does not focus on any single issue."

Since the campaign was launched, it has been the target of considerable lampooning with the *Indian Express* parodying the advertisements daily *(see box)*. Says an advertising agency chief: "The Janata Dal, thanks to Rediffusion, is using the front page of *Express* to retaliate against the Congress(I)—free of cost."

Despite the strident criticism, the Congress(I) campaign will definitely boost Rediffusion's billings. The Rs 20-crore-agency is expected to double its billings, placing it in the big league of agencies. But Rediffusion is also suffering an 'image' problem of its own: once reputed for its creativity, the agency has lost some of its lustre in recent years. Competitors uncharitably suggest that the agency is in the same predicament as the Congress(I). The ruling party can salvage its image with a victory at the polls. But if it loses, Rediffusion's heart will certainly skip a beat.

—S.N. VASUKI

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NEW TIMES

A Soviet Weekly of World Affairs

The Soviet Union is making global waves, daily.

The USSR is indeed amidst her own "new times" today with an avalanche of sweeping reforms and changes.

The most appropriate journal to obtain an insight into these developments is NEW TIMES. It's a matchless weekly magazine in English, coming out of the Soviet Union.

SOVIET PERIODICALS FESTIVAL SEASON OFFER

52 issues free SAVE 33%

Take advantage of special offer NOW
for THREE YEARS
YOU PAY FOR THREE YEARS
AND SAVE 33%
YOU GET 52 ISSUES FREE
OFFER VALID TILL NEW YEAR

Enclosed is my DD/MO receipt for **NEW TIMES**
Your Choice
☐ 3 Years (156) issues only Rs. 55.00
☐ 1 Year (52) issues only Rs. 28.00
(Please strike out whichever is not applicable)

My Name .....
Address .....
.....

Send this advertisement and payment to :

NAVCHETAN BOOKS (P) LTD.
5-E, Rani Jhansi Road
New Delhi-110 055.

NEW CENTURY BOOK HOUSE (P) LTD
41-B, Sidco Industrial Estate
Madras-600 098.

MAGAZINE CENTRE
M.C.D. Building, No. 2
Dr. Shyama Prasad Gupta Road
New Delhi-110 055.

VIJAY ASSOCIATES
Commissariat Building, 1st Floor,
231 D.N. Road, Fort, Bombay-400 001.

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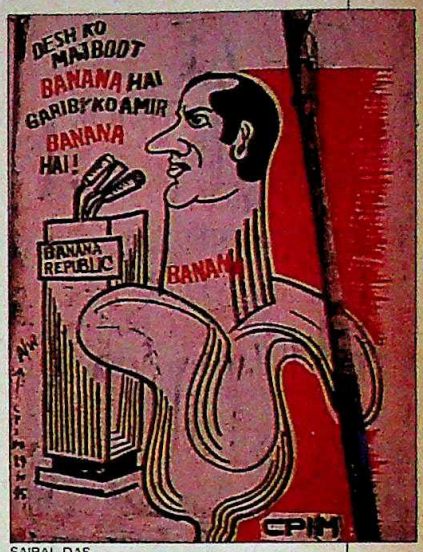
GRAFFITI

Campaign Carnival

THE elections seem to have brought out the unsung latent talent in poets and painters across the colourful campaign trail. For every couplet created by one party, there was a counter. In the often funny wall-war Rajiv Gandhi was the favourite target, twisted into as complex shapes as the issues involved. For many, the battle at the hustings has dissolved into a carnival-like competition in literary and artistic expression. Long after the illuminated symbols are switched off and rain and sun wipes off these creations, some of them will remain etched in memory. Perhaps, these elections will be remembered only for their slogan output and caricature campaign.

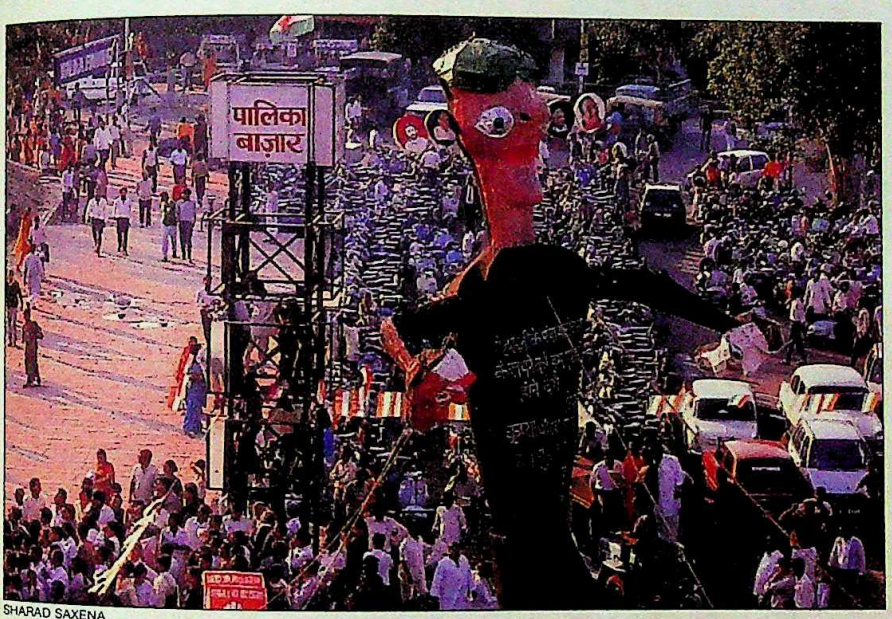
PRASHANT PANJIAR

The Janata Dal chakra



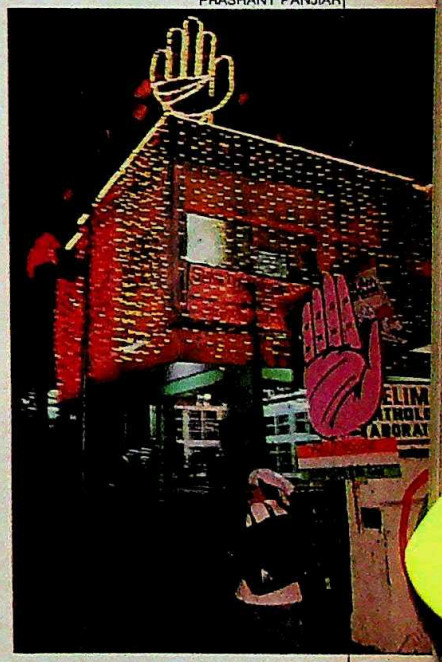
SAIBAL DAS

Graffiti on a Calcutta wall

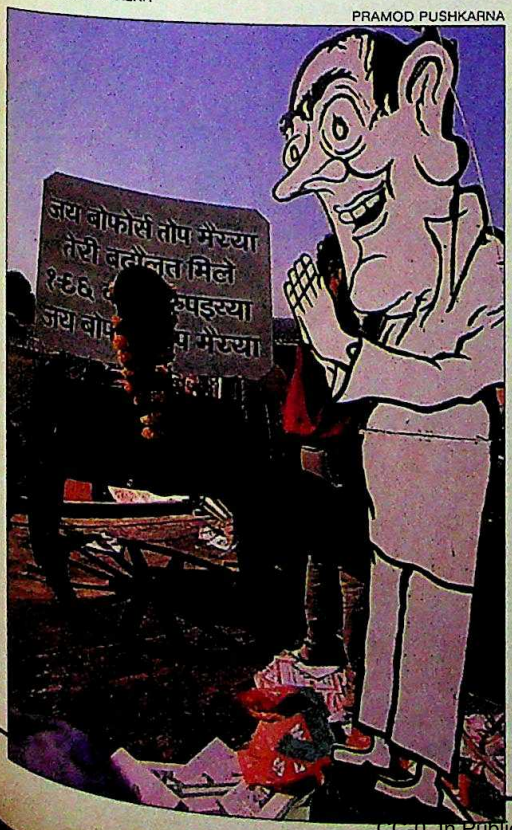


SHARAD SAXENA

PRASHANT PANJIAR

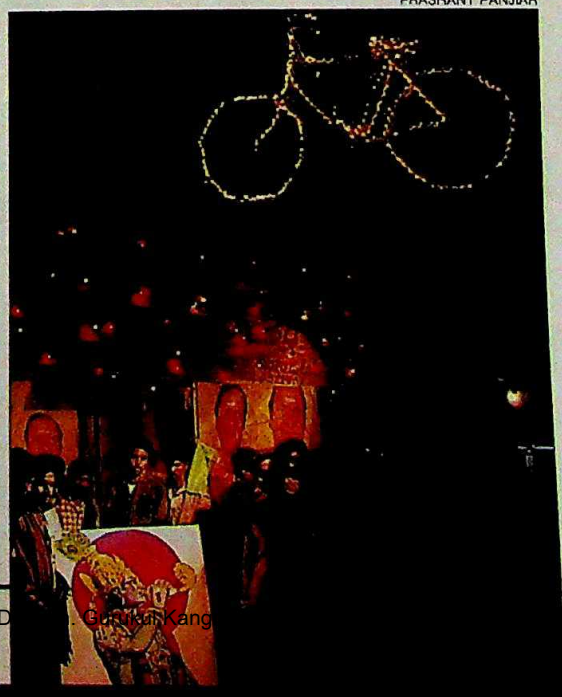


PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



The Opposition's Ravana before it was burnt in New Delhi; and (left) a BJP display

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Illuminated Congress(I) symbol

The Telugu Desam symbol looms over an Andhra Pradesh town

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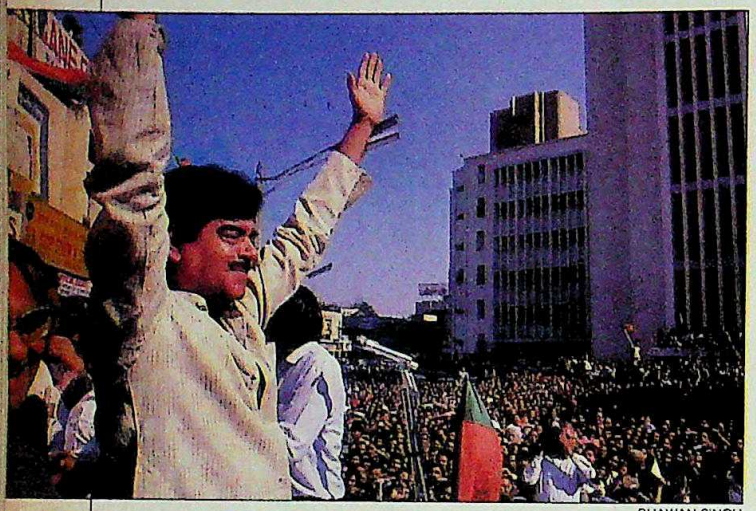
The New Persuaders

Many well known personalities are canvassing vigorously



BHAWAN SINGH

SHOTGUN APPEAL

AFTER V.P. Singh, he is probably the Opposition's biggest draw. Macho stars attract more crowds than chocolate box heroes. Campaigning for the Opposition, armed with gimmicks like cut-outs of the Bofors gun, adds another dimension. To top it all, **'Shotgun' Sinha** live, in person, and giving the performance—and dialogue—of his life.

Yes, Bihar's favourite prodigal son is back doing what seems to come naturally—delivering snappy one-liners like, 'this Congress symbol of a hand, it should have a slogan with it: sleight of hand'; playing to the electoral gallery and drawing rapturous crowds wherever he goes.

But for Sinha this is no joke—he obviously takes himself seriously. In self-righteous tone, he says: "Opposing the powers-that-be is an act of courage and only those who have a clean record can do it." The allusions to those in glass houses—whether in politics or films—are obvious. And the attack is not just smart rhetoric. The desire to dislodge Rajiv seeps through with almost missionary fervour. He explains his enthusiasm for the opposition bandwagon: "They will do good after coming to power." But, what if they don't? The tone turns sombre. He warns: "Then, they will face my ire." Sinha is obviously confident of his political power.

Challenging the mighty is his forte—whether in films or politics. If the Bachchan was Shotgun's pet bait earlier, now his target is the irrepressible Congress(I) loudmouth K.K. Tewari. Dismissing him as the 'professor of obscenity', he boasts: "I'll personally ensure that he loses his deposit."

What does seem difficult to believe is Sinha's assurance that he will never enter the electoral vote-race. Such sacrificial fervour is useful in projecting Shotgun as the Opposition's king-making messiah. If the Opposition does win, it seems Shotgun will assuredly achieve his ambition—of being a real-life hero.

CAMPAIGN CANNON

ASIDE from Bofors, the DMK has a *Prachara Beerangi* (Campaign Cannon)—or Tamil actress **Radhika**, so christened by the party. *Beerangi* also means howitzer.

Her assembly campaign in-

spired DMK bigwigs to use her to counter Jayalalitha. She says: "My image isn't of a sex-bomb. Crowds come to see me for what the DMK stands for." Or what *Beerangi* stands for.

FILM SATIRIST

WE'VE heard of advertising wars. But film wars? Seems an expensive way to fight an electoral battle, but in N.T. Rama Rao's land anything goes. While the chief minister's plans to release his epic *Brahmarishi Vishwamitra* before the elections were nipped in the can by Rajiv Gandhi, his local nemesis. Telugu film director K.B. Tilak, is gunning for him in reel life.

Tilak's crusade against Rama Rao has now reached its climax. With the ensuing elections, Rama Rao is now at his vulnerable worst. Tilak is hoping that his films like *Naa Pilupe Prabahnjanam* and *Gandipeta Rahasyam*, biting political satires on the chief minister, will be a ballot box success. If not, they sure seem to be slated to be box-office winners.

DIVINE MESSENGER

NITISH Bharadwaj, of Krishna fame, is having a hard time on the Congress(I)'s campaign trail. He has to say his *Mahabharat* dialogues before recognition dawns. Obviously, the party hasn't learnt a lesson from the Arun Govil episode.

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BHAWAN SINGH

CINE CRUSADER

THE fiery voice of feminism in new wave Indian cinema is hot electoral property this year with all parties—except the Congress(I)—wooing her with more ardour than her on-screen lovers. The speculation was intense: would she take on H.K.L. Bhagat because she lashed out at him at the International Film Festival at New Delhi last year; or would she contest from Azamgarh, which is her home town. But, **Shabana Azmi**'s response was the same for everyone—whether it was Mrinal Gore, V.P. Singh or Swami Agnivesh. Said she: "I am not interested." The actress-activist prefers her independence as a thinking individual, choosing to align herself with issues rather than parties. Shabana has decided to lend her campaign weight only to secular candidates.

The impatience with communalism is transparent. Says she: "Unfortunately, some Hindus think that Ram exists only in Ayodhya . Likewise, Muslim leaders seem to think Allah is only in Babri Masjid."

Explicably, for one so immersed in issues profound, election results are mundane trivia. But then, she is committed to her political role. Typically, she is scornful of her fellow inhabitants of tinsel town who have restricted their rhetoric to the sets. Says she: "We should have taken this step long ago for we too have a duty towards the nation. Any film star who doesn't carry out this duty is an offender."

CROWN PRINCE

FILM star **Balakrishna**—Rama Rao's fifth son—is all set to ease into his father's Telugu Desam sneakers. Last fortnight, he was projecting the Desam cause in a modern version of NTR's Chaitanya Ratham. All the 23 Prachara Rathams sported Rama Rao cut-outs together with those of Balakrishna—depicted as Harishchandra. The hard-sell hit hard but not true. Gimmickry can hardly buy political experience.

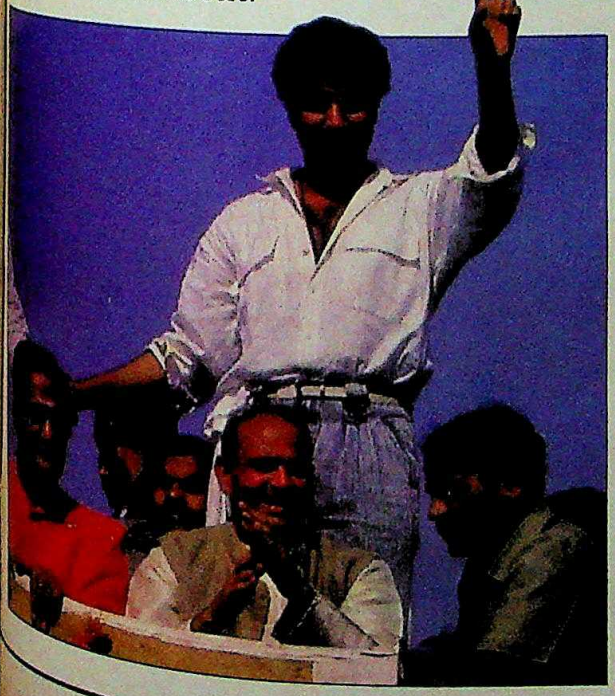
So, maturity gave way to rash exuberance. Even before his electoral baptimism was complete, he opened his mouth too wide. Balakrishna shocked Telugu Desam activists when he publicly admitted that his two brothers-in-law, N. Chandrababu Naidu and Venkateswara Rao were feuding. By confirming speculation about the family feud, he had managed to embarrass Rama Rao. But then, he patronizingly added: "I will try to patch up the differences." And that sent the message home.

For most Telugu Desam activists, that was sign enough that the heir-apparent had been chosen. The cue has already been taken with the hurried setting up of an NTR-Balakrishna Fan Association in New Delhi. But then, fans may not be voters.

The problem will be how well the party performs in the Andhra Pradesh elections. If it fares badly, the crown prince could wind up looking like the clown prince.

DRAMATIC ROLE

IF Shotgun Sinha is one barrel of the opposition gun, Raj Babbar is the other. And it's far from being a double-bore. The dusty hamlets and grimy faces may be a far cry from the plush environs of Bombay's Beverly Hills, but Babbar plays the role of a campaigner with far more conviction and elan than his screen ones.



Not a hair out of place on the handsome head, he paces the electoral stage oozing energy and righteous ire. "Rajiv Gandhi wants to make India a Nehru Private Ltd company," he thunders, every sinew quivering in protest at the prospect.

The actor in him often takes over. The rhetoric spews melodrama: "The Congress(I) is like the Kauravs. Duryodhan is ruling—and Bhishma, Dhroncharya and Kripacharya are sitting idle. I am with the Opposition—who like the Pandavs—are fighting for the truth." The Opposition, like the long-lost brother in Hindi films, can do no harm. "In 1977, they harmed themselves, not the country," he says dead pan. With the faith of the true believer, he promises to fight till the last breath for the long-lasting underdogs of Indian politics.

RATHIJIT GHATAK

SINGING PRAISE

HE has played a politician in *Aaj ki Awaaz*. But real life is a different proposition altogether. The romantic hero of the '70s, **Rajesh Khanna** was a bit peeved at not being given a Congress(I) ticket to contest the Lok Sabha elections. But he does not seem to have taken the snub to heart. For Khanna is campaigning and singing praises of the ruling party: "The rest are just cut-outs," he says. Cut.

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Bushillusion.

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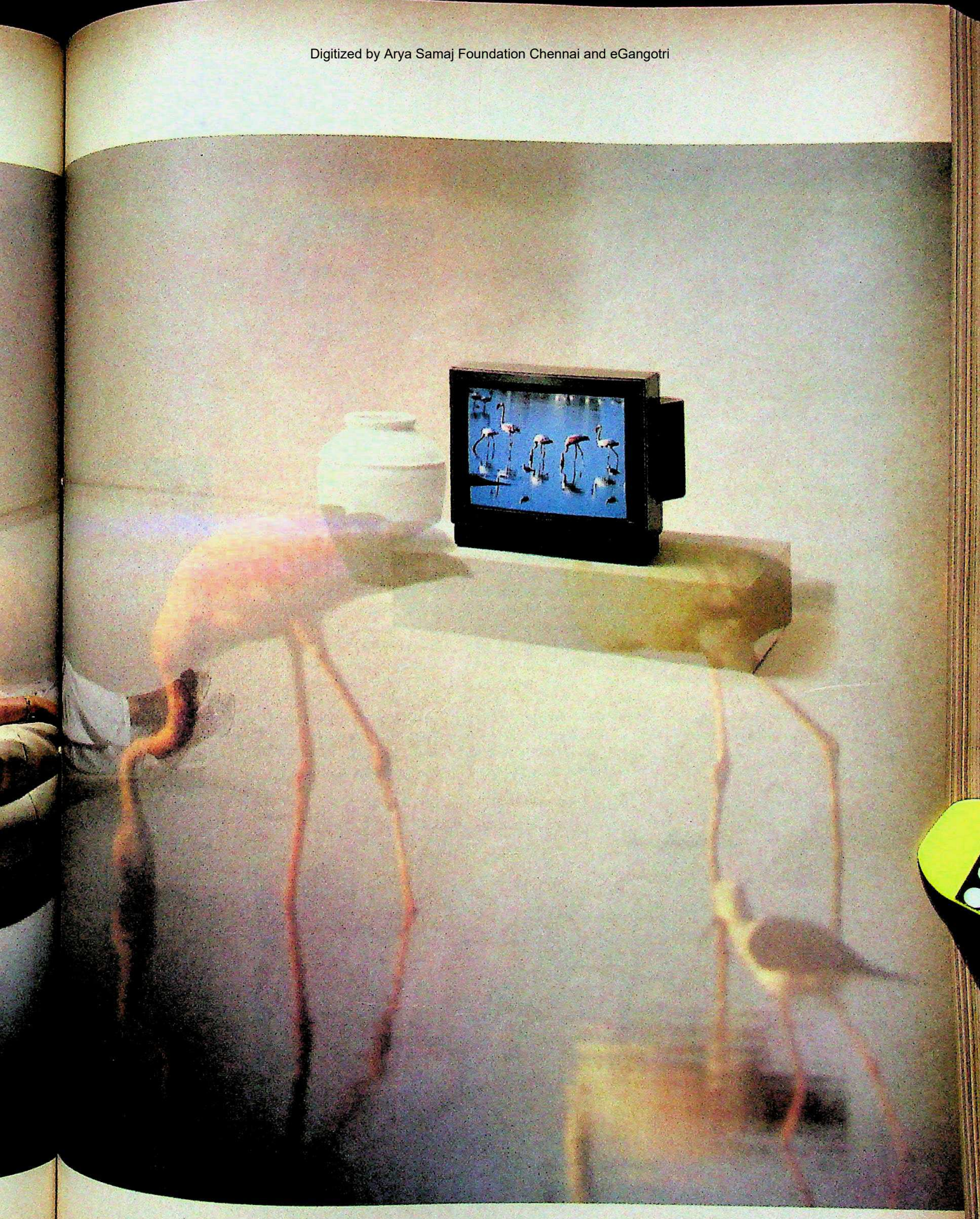

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Breaking into Politics

Several well known citizens have jumped into the electoral fray

POLITICAL NOVICE

AS electoral qualifications go, his are pretty thin. He started studying law but dropped out and began peddling lubricant oil instead. But **Murlidharan** does have one qualification that seemed to be enough for the Congress(I) to give him a ticket—he is the son of former Kerala chief minister, K. Karunakaran.

Murlidharan's selection hasn't pleased members of the ruling party. He has been awarded the prestigious Calicut seat that several Congress(I) heavyweights were eyeing. Angry telegrams were shot off to the party headquarters in New Delhi by the disappointed aspirants but his political credentials were apparently

enough for the high command.

Meanwhile, Murlidharan is on a new high. The prime minister visited Calicut last fortnight to canvass for the young hopeful. Thrilled at the large crowd that Rajiv drew, Murlidharan gushed: "I am definitely going to win." The reality is that he could wind up being a political drop-out as well.

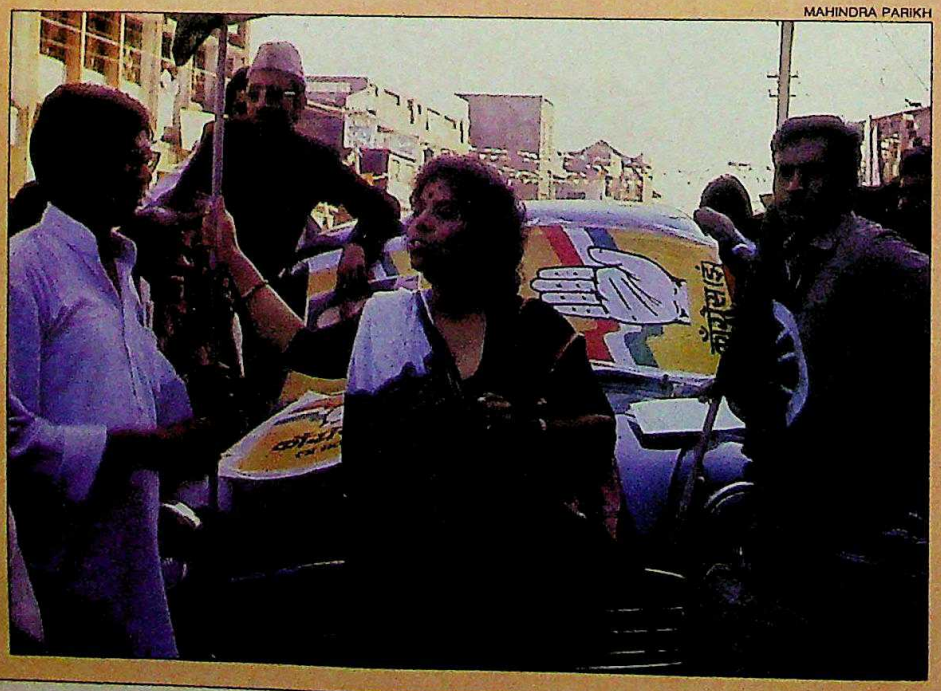
COURTING VOTERS

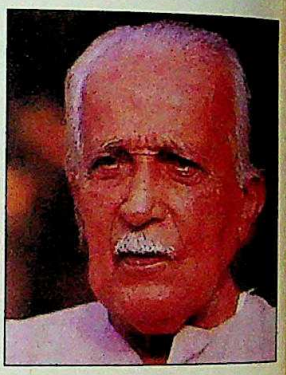
IT does seem to run in the family. But while celebrity lawyer Ram Jethmalani is content with throwing satirical 'Bofors birthday' bashes, it is daughter, Rani, who is doing all the running this time—for a Lok Sabha seat. Contesting as a Janata Dal candidate from Daman and Diu, the high-profile Supreme Court lawyer will need all her legendary courtroom skills to convince the people that she is a better bet than her rivals, Gopal Dada and Devjibhai Tandel. As an outsider, that could lose her the race. A popular local saying goes: *"Ghar ka ghoda, bahar ke ghode se achcha."* (A local horse is better than an outside one.)

And Rani's family connection is not proving to be an advantage. Her opponents are backed by the powerful smuggler lobby, even though many have been her father's clients. Two prominent smugglers, Jogi and Bhulabhai, state categorically: "Our old connection with Ram Jethmalani cannot make us withdraw our support for the Congress(I)."

Rani, is unfazed, even lyrical about her chances: "In a mystical way, I believe things happen to me. I think people have a sense of history, and they want a change." But unless her rivals split the votes in Daman and Diu, Rani could find herself electorally damned and bidden adieu.

MAHINDRA PARIKH





UNUSUAL PLANK

HE could be making history, instead of writing it. If K. **Shivarama Karanth**, the grand old man of Kannada letters, wins the Lok Sabha seat he is contesting in Karnataka, it will signal the arrival of the Green Movement into India's political calculations.

The Albert Einstein look-alike is, at 89, the oldest contestant in this election. His campaign plank is unusual, if predictable: environmental issues. Belonging to Karnataka's Kanara district famous for its thick virgin forests, Karanth has been leading the struggle against projects like the Kalga nuclear plant and the Sea Bird naval base.

Winner of the prestigious Jnanpith Award, Karanth is attracting a surprisingly large following not to mention the various activist environmental groups who have sponsored his candidature.

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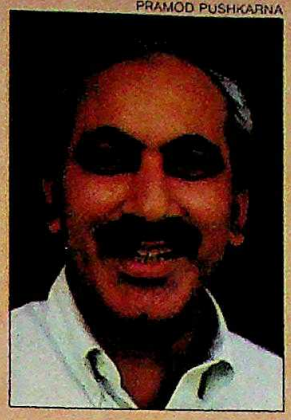
HERO IN THE FRAY

ANDHRA Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao seems to have made a lot of enemies during his cine career. Yet another popular film star turned politician, an electoral newcomer, has hopped onto the anti-NTR bandwagon.

Fifty-four-year-old Krishna has been a bitter critic of Rama Rao ever since his film days. But since the 1984 Lok Sabha election, he has taken the battle to the streets. He campaigned for Congress(I) candidates in different parts of Andhra Pradesh and even starred in a film, *Naa Pilue Prabhanjanam*, a spoof on Rama Rao before the 1985 assembly elections.

Now he is back, contesting for the Eluru Lok Sabha seat. Krishna faces a tough rival in Bolla Bulli Ramaiah, an industrialist and sitting member of the Telugu Desam party. But active Krishna Fans Associations in different districts have despatched volunteers to make sure of their hero's victory. "I went to college in Eluru and it is like a homecoming," says Krishna.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



BRASH BRAVURA

BYLINE is a far cry from bylanes. More so, if the bylanes happen to be in the dusty interior of Kishanganj in Bihar. When asked what he needed in terms of resources, high-profile editor and unabashed Rajiv fan, M.J. Akbar, who quit *The Telegraph* to stand for elections, told the AICC(I) to send supplies of Odomos mosquito repellent.

It is another kind of repellent he will need if he wants to make his political career as successful as his journalistic one was. His biggest problem seems to be the perceptible rift between his yuppie, jean-clad managers and local Congress(I) workers. Says one worker: "In a Lok Sabha campaign, you cannot afford to call it a day at seven in the evening."

But Akbar plays by his own rules, elections or no elections. After he retires to a PWD inspection bungalow with a few trusted lieutenants, his brigade leaves behind a video van fitted with an enlarged screen to propagate the ruling party's achievements. Vinod Dua's creative unit provides feedback and artistic inputs.

But more than modern communications may be needed in the communally-charged atmosphere. Though Akbar admits Muslim alienation, he remains optimistic. "Luckily for the Congress(I), the Muslims' anger against the BJP is as much," he says.

Akbar's confidence, unfortunately, is not matched by his new political colleagues. That he is an outsider is a serious drawback. But Akbar, as always, has the last word. Asked about the possibility of defeat, he says: "I hate losing."

ELECTION MEDICINE

SHE thinks she is finally ready. But so far, it's only in name. After a 12-year-stint abroad, **Dr Geeta Reddy** has returned to her native Andhra Pradesh to add a new dose of tonic to state politics. A practising doctor, Reddy is combining the red cross with the hand as the Congress(I) candidate for the Gajwel (SC) assembly seat in Medak district.

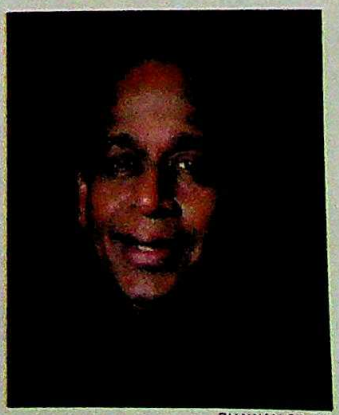
Her campaign strategy is to send out medical teams in ambulances plastered with posters of Rajiv Gandhi to provide medical care to the poor in the villages. Says Reddy: "Whatever may be the criticism against the Congress(I), there's no denying that it's the only party concerned about the rural poor."

Reddy is, however, making her electoral debut and she will need much stronger medicine to overcome that particular handicap.

COCKY MOVE

Call it A.P. Venkateswaran's revenge. The former foreign secretary—undiplomatically dismissed by Rajiv—is bidding for a Lok Sabha seat to get his own back.

Venkat is contesting from south Madras as an independent candidate. His main opponent: the Congress(I)'s star contestant, Vijayanthimala who many predict will dance rings around the former diplomat.



BHAWAN SINGH

But Venkat has handled too many diplomatic crises to let a little thing like that worry him. Puffing on his customary cigars, he conducts his campaign the way he knows best—hosting dinners at the city's plush Taj Coramandel or lunches at the Connemara for selected businessmen, industrialists and intellectuals.

That five-star strategy could prove fatal. But the ever-cocky Venkat simply says: "South Indians are not making their voice heard in Delhi and we will change that."

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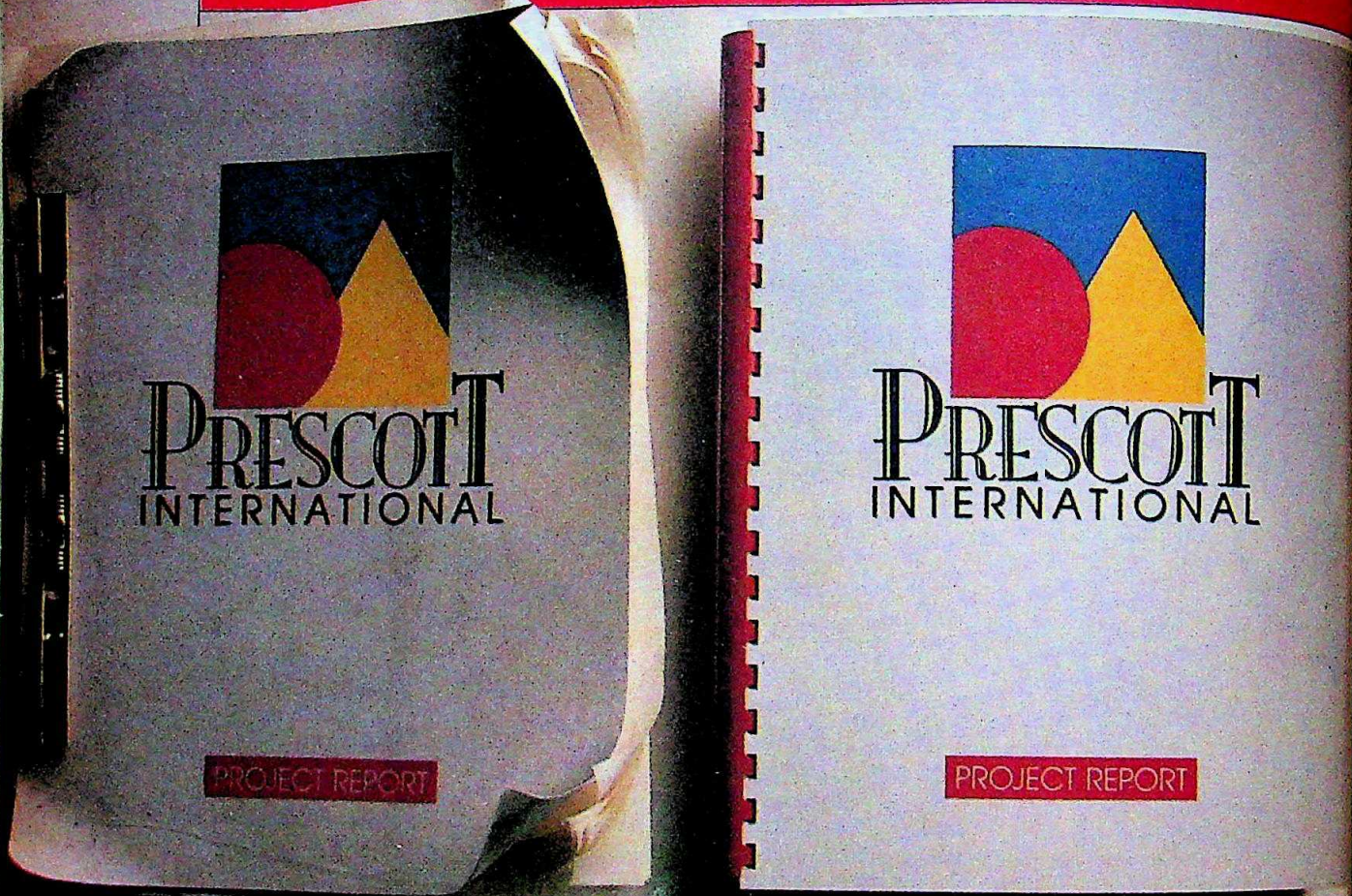

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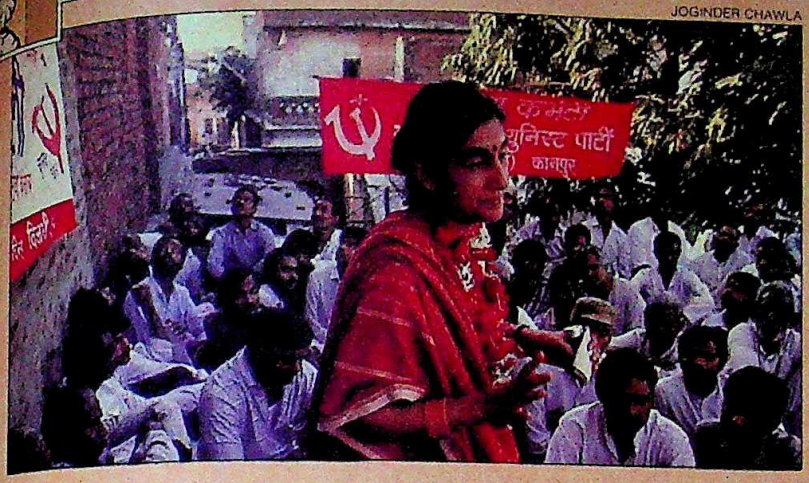
JOGINDER CHAWLA



RED AND REVOLUTIONARY

It's quite literally the case of a lightweight taking on a heavyweight. The tall, thin and delicate-looking Subhashini Ali, a long-time CPI(M)labour activist in the Kanpur industrial belt, is in the fray for the first time, taking on the short, rotund Congress(I) veteran Naresh Chandra Chaturvedi. But the debutante's slight build can be misleading. She has led many a strike as a labour leader and is well known among the city's industrial labour as "*didi*". She moves from street to street, canvassing for votes in a distinct yellow-topped Maruti Gypsy but often has to switch to a bicycle to negotiate the narrower lanes in the city. But she will have to do plenty of homework. The last and the only time the CPI(M) won a seat in Uttar Pradesh was in Varanasi in 1967.

Subhashini also happens to be the wife of well-known film director, Muzaffar Ali and her parents, Colonel Sehgal and Captain Lakshmi Sehgal were famed soldiers in Netaji's Indian National Army. But Subhashini is not one to flaunt her connections. "I am a woman candidate contesting in my own right, not as somebody's wife or sister or daughter or mistress," she says in true revolutionary style.

JUDGEMENT DAY

AFTER years of delivering judicious judgements, the shoe is on the other foot. Subramanian Potti, former chief justice of Kerala and Gujarat high courts, now awaits the electoral jury's verdict on his candidacy. An independent candidate from Ernakulam supported by the CPI(M), Potti's erudite campaign has aroused widespread interest.

SHYAM TEKWANI

SAIBAL DAS

BALLOT WRITER

A Delhi Punjabi, with no political background, contesting from Darjeeling under the banner of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF)? Sounds like a man-bites-dog story. But not if it appears under the electoral byline of Inderjeet, the well-known columnist. Inderjeet is equally well-known as the broker who got the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and GNLF boss Subhas Ghising puffing the peace pipe.

Now, ignoring the journalistic code of not getting involved with the subject, he, a stranger, is the GNLF candidate in Darjeeling. Stranger still is his reasoning. "Destiny", he says, somewhat ominously. That, and his hero Ghising. Waxing eloquent on what he calls Ghising's "broad vision and national approach", Inderjeet has his head in the clouds. Literally. Strolling down the hill station's cobbled streets, resplendent in suit and tie, Inderjeet resembles a tourist out to see the sights rather than a serious candidate.

Meanwhile, the hero, Ghising, is busy keeping Inderjeet's former colleagues at arm's length. That may not be such a bad idea. At his first, halting, election speech in Kurseong, Inderjeet confessed to being 'nervous'. But journalism's loss will be Darjeeling's gain. The *khukri* is clearly mightier than the pen.

REEL FIGHTER

KARWAR'S electorate has to choose between emoting and environment. Can popular Kannada actor Anant Nag bring to his campaign the passion he brought to acclaimed films like *Manthan* and *Nishant*? Well, his opponent and eminent environmentalist Shivarama Karanth must be hoping not. But Nag has played this role before: part of Hegde's charmed circle, he entered politics when he joined the legislative council as a Janata Dal member last year. Hegde prizes him as his star-campaigner. And Nag exudes confidence: "I am better qualified to represent the constituency." That's getting the act right at least.

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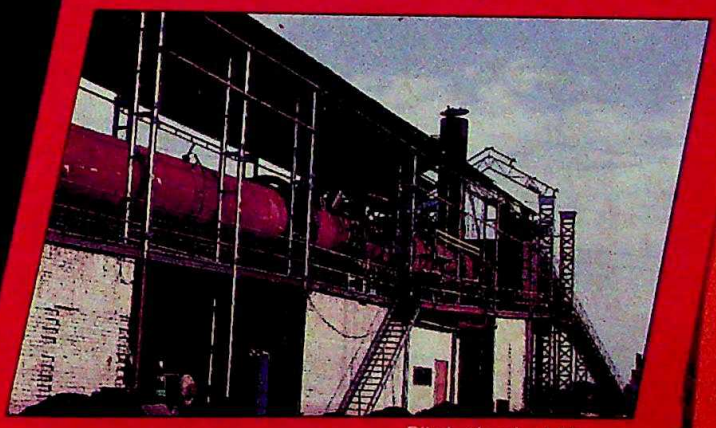

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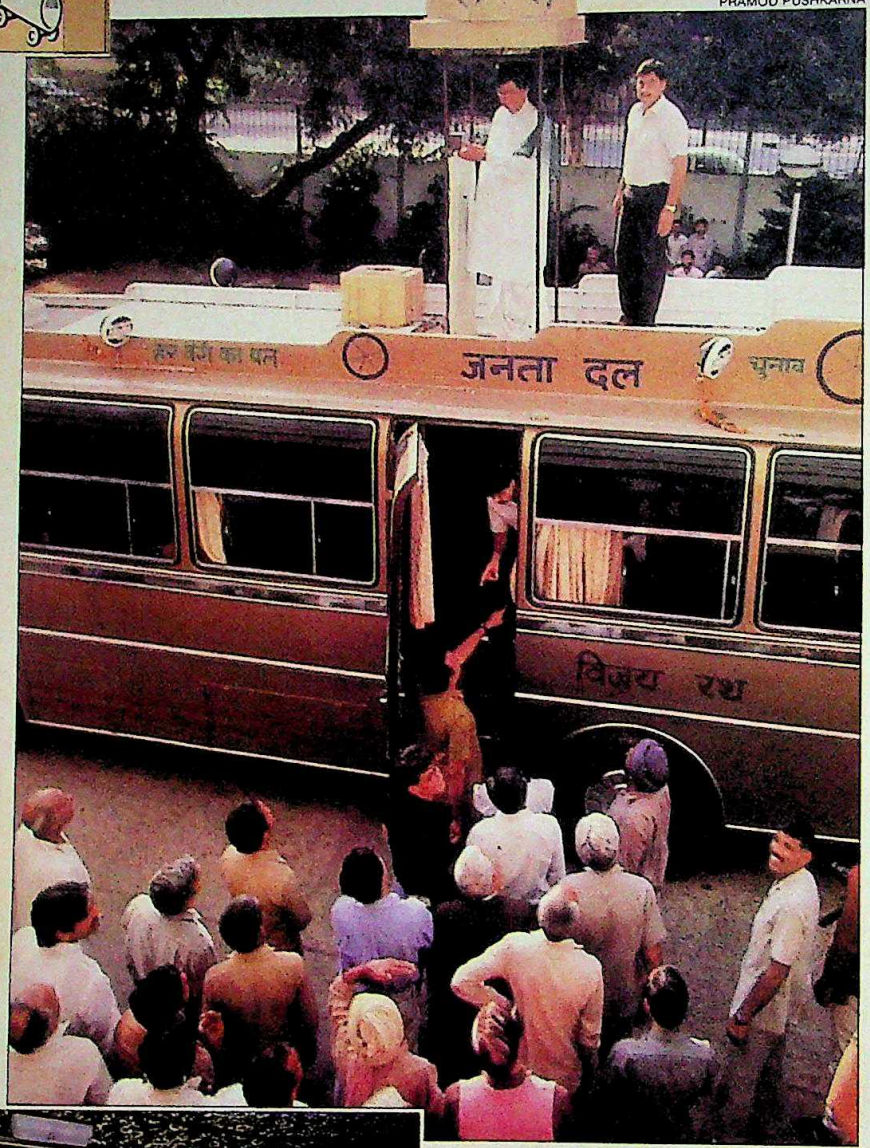
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



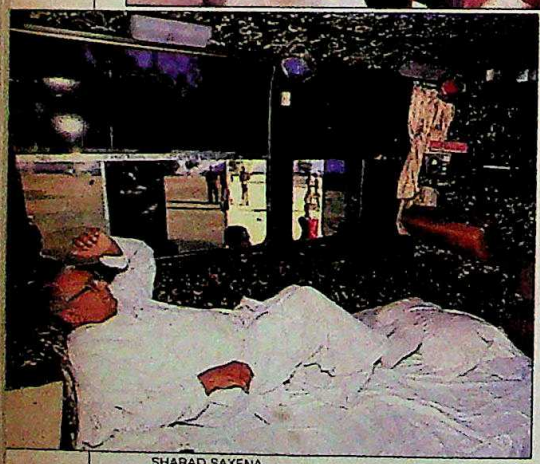
The Chariot Brigade

Raths, combining comfort with utility, are in style

BATTLES are fought on land, sea and air. That seems to be literally happening in this year's parliamentary contest. If Rajiv Gandhi is trying to bomb many an electoral base in his special IAF aircraft, a bevy of opposition leaders seems to dominate the battle on the ground, firing their political bullets from a convoy of raths which have become the showpieces of the 1989 election brigade.

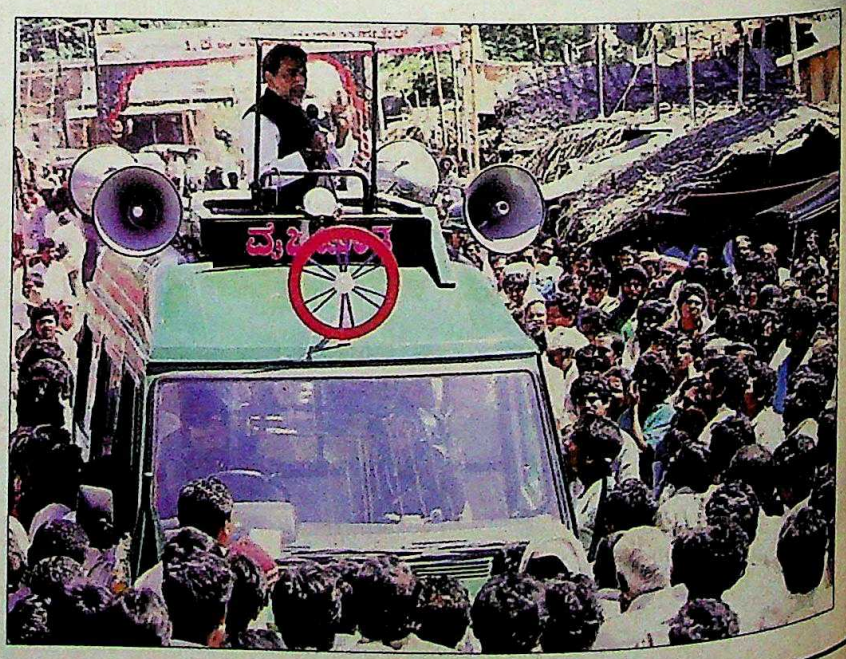
The raths have been built with care. Extravagant in comfort and dramatic in political imagery, the effect of these modern caravans is often hypnotic. For instance, at a Haryana rally, an expectant crowd cheers lustily as it waits for Devi Lal. A sudden hush descends as the green-turbaned Jat leader emerges, chakra in hand, out of his Vijay Rath—hauled up by a hydraulic lift. He rests his 105 kg-frame on the throne atop the golden brown bus and says: "The Vijay Rath—as the name implies—will take me to victory."

In a situation of tele-starvation, most opposition leaders have joined the rath yatra, realising that such symbols are often the political message. N.T. Rama Rao, who pioneered the showbusiness of Indian politics with his Chaitanya Ratham in 1983, has despatched 23 Prachara



SHARAD SAXENA

Devi Lal on his Vijay Rath (top); and inside it: campaign chariot



R.K. Hegde campaigning in Karnataka on Jaya Vahini

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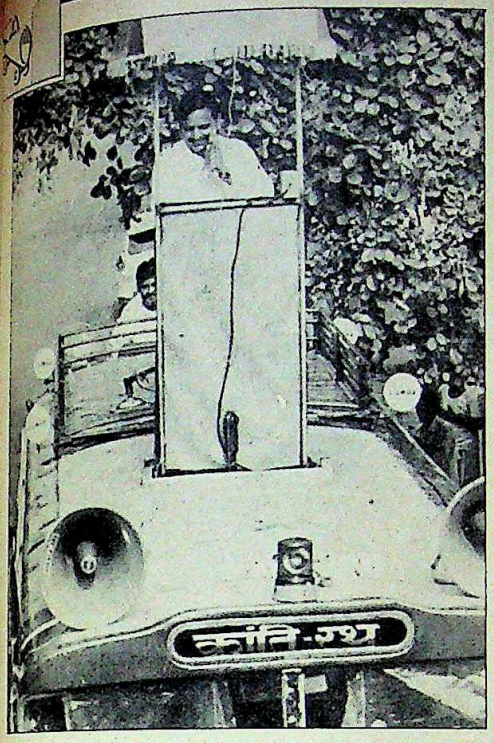
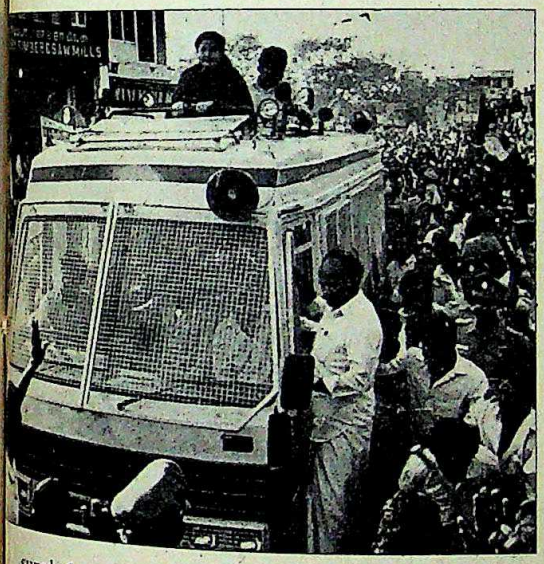


(Anti-clockwise from above) Deve Gowda with his Janata Vahini; Mulayam Singh atop his Kranti Rath; Jayalalitha on the campaign trail



supply from an overhead tank. The rath has a Pal-Secam video, a portable Sony TV set, a quartz watch and a National stereo system with Clarion speakers.

The AIADMK's Jayalalitha has a cushioned bed in her air-conditioned Swaraj Mazda, besides reading lamps and an upholstered chair. The rath is equipped with special suspensions to minimise jerks for the "leader of the poor" on the bumpy electoral terrain.

The Karnataka Janata Dal leader, S.R. Bommai, has an air-conditioned room at the back of his Mazda T 3500 Vijaya Chakra, which has a wardrobe, writing table and washbasin. The cushy interior was designed by his son keeping in mind the former chief minister's known propensity for siestas.

The MIM's 22 ft-vehicle called Shaheen—the legendary bird in Mohammad Iqbal's poems—not only has a bedroom but a dining-room and kitchenette. Buta Singh is the only one who doesn't use his rath for resting, but then, he has a special air-conditioned Isuzu van for quick relief on the dusty tracks of his Rajasthan constituency of Jalore.

If the raths can provide a night's rest, they are also equipped for a morning's work. Devi Lal's rath has a carpeted conference room with a semi-circular sofa for his security officers, doctor, secretary and local leaders. The MIM's Shaheen goes a step further. It has a closed-circuit television system. And Hegde's van—whose rear is separated by a glass partition—has an intercom.

EVEN in the actual process of political propaganda, the raths are proving useful. Rama Rao's 46-year-old Chevrolet is a trusted rath-horse by now, having earned its spurs on Andhra Pradesh's campaign trail. Devi Lal's Vijay Rath has six 2000-watt speakers on the roof which blare out Haryanvi songs, eulogising the Jat leader and decrying Rajiv's regime. The message is: *"Savdhan ey Congression, hum aa gaye hein* (Beware Congressmen, we have come)." Hegde's rath is fitted with a hydraulic lift which raises him through a hatch to address crowds through a built-in public address system. And it's equipped with a special lumbar chair to take care of his back problem. Eight bright lamps in Jayalalitha's rath define her in sharp focus as she speaks from her pedestal atop the van, using the loudspeakers and microphone installed within.

Both Buta Singh and Rama Rao are also discovering that the raths can entertain even as they persuade. So, the home minister has a portly Delhi boy on his rath roof with a *jee saheb* puppet—which was popular on Doordarshan's morning telecast—mouthing film dialogues. Rama Rao has song and drama troupes celebrating Telugu glory just before he asks voters to stamp his party's symbol. At night, Buta Singh's rath has video showings, with him delivering speeches amongst farmers and saluting police parades. He also airs Indira Gandhi's and Rajiv's voices in his bid to win votes. And punches them with canned patriotic music which also proves effective in muffling the voices of protest at times.

The raths have become a status symbol on the electoral circuit today. They mark the leader's clout underwritten by his money power. So, Devi Lal has built his rath for Rs 8 lakh while Hegde's van cost him Rs 2.6 lakh. Deve Gowda didn't even have to pay for his Janata Vahini—it was a present from the coconut farmers of Channarayapatna. While only a few stalwarts could afford the rath this time, it has been appreciated across party lines for its pragmatic utility. What seems almost certain is that the rath is here to stay as a permanent fixture of India's electoral culture.

—SHANTANU DEY with bureau reports

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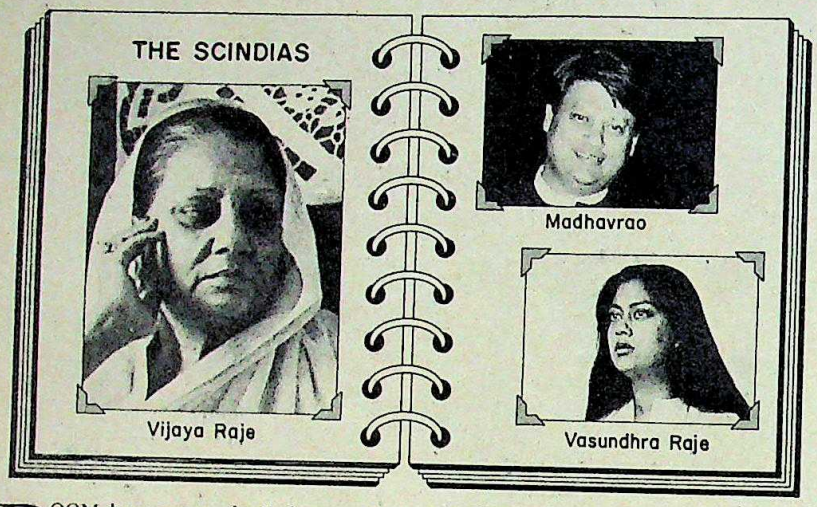
Of Kith and Kin

A plethora of politicians' relatives enters the electoral fray



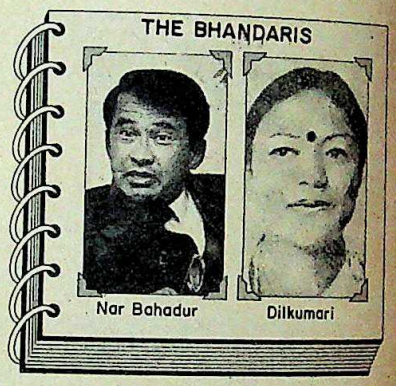
BOOM, boom, goes the Bofors gun in constituencies around the country. But in Gwalior and Guna in Madhya Pradesh, the 155 mm howitzer can barely be heard. The battle here is, quite literally, a royal one and corruption takes a back seat.

In Gwalior, Union Railway Minister 'Maharaj' Madhavrao Scindia takes on Seetla Sahay (BJP). In neighbouring Guna, his mother 'Rajmata' Vijaya Raje Scindia (BJP) is pitted against Mahendra Singh (Congress-I). But the real battle is between mother and son.

At every meeting, Madhavrao plays on ancient royal links. In Paresen village, he says: "My grandfather married a girl of this village. *Yahan to sab mamalog baithe hain*" (Everyone here is my maternal uncle). In Guna, his mother emphasises the lack of development. At one village, she says: "Ask your maharaj why he is working for a corrupt prime minister. At whose cost is he flying the helicopter? It is your money."

Another chapter of the family feud is being fought in Rajasthan where Madhavrao's sister, Vasundhra Raje, of the BJP, takes on the Congress(I)'s Nirmala Kumari in Chittorgarh. The RSS cadre is backing her and a win seems likely. That could make it three for the Scindia family. Though the family may not see it that way. ■

IN the Himalayan state of Sikkim, elections to the 32-member state Assembly may by and large be under Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari, but it is in the solitary Lok Sabha seat that the family affair sours. For opposing Bhandari's nominee is his estranged wife, Dilkumari. Bhandari—who despite his alleged extra-marital affairs has become a cult figure—is confident the ruling Sikkim Sangram Parishad will sweep the polls. But Dilkumari, who had

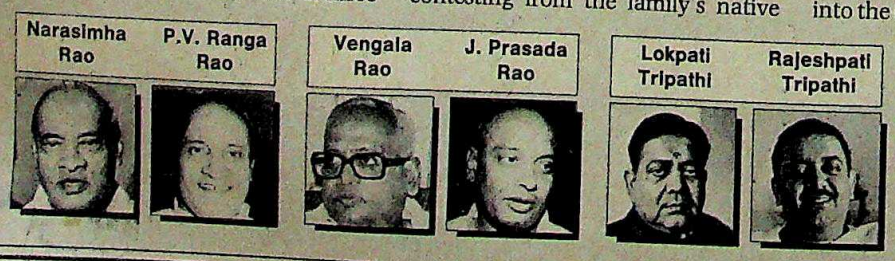


won the Lok Sabha seat during the last elections on the Sangram Parishad ticket, has since joined the Congress(I) and is putting up a stiff fight. Bhandari, however, doesn't consider her a serious threat. He has chosen to field Nandu Thapa, a lightweight, against her. ■

Rising Sons

SENIOR leaders who have carved a niche for themselves in the party hierarchy have been doled out valuable gifts: tickets for their sons. Among those favoured with tickets for the Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections are the sons of three Central ministers, P.V. Narasimha Rao, P. Shiv Shanker and J. Vengala Rao. Narasimha Rao's son P.V. Ranga Rao is in the race for the Hanamakonda seat in Warangal district. Shiv Shanker's son, the state Youth Congress(I) President P. Sudhir Kumar, is contesting from Malakpet in Hyderabad. And Vengala Rao's son, J. Prasada Rao, is contesting from the family's native Sattupalli. Of the ministers, only Vengala Rao is contesting from Andhra Pradesh. Narasimha Rao has opted for the Ramtek constituency in Maharashtra from where he was elected in 1984, while Shiv Shanker was elected to the Rajya Sabha from Gujarat.

Uttar Pradesh Health Minister Lokpati Tripathi has also led his son into the fold. While Tripathi himself is contesting for the Assembly seat from Majhwan (Mirzapur), his son Rajeshpati is the Congress(I) candidate for the Chandauli (Varanasi) seat, held by his mother Chandra, who died recently.



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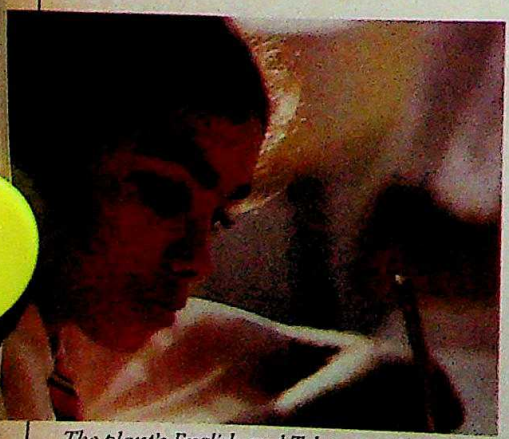
It is almost time for the shift to change in the Bhadrachalam Paperboards plant in a backward district of Andhra Pradesh. And Nageswar Rao is in a greater hurry to get home: his daughter from college must be home today. A bright student at the mill's own school, along with her two sisters, she is studying computer science and hopes to join this ITC company where her father began his career.

Now a proud technician, Nageswar had joined Bhadrachalam Paperboards as a worker. Living in the plant's self-sufficient housing colony, modelled as a 'modern village' with all contemporary comforts, the days of despair live on only as a memory. A time when he had almost given up his unproductive, ancestral land to move out of this backward area. That was ten years ago, when ITC came to his help...

Nageswar Rao of Bhadrachalam. In this backward area, it seemed that progress and prosperity would remain a distant dream.

Until the ITC-promoted Bhadrachalam Paperboards created jobs aplenty and helped him develop his skills productively for rich rewards.



The plant's English and Telugu medium school educates 1500 employees' children.

The ITC-promoted Bhadrachalam Paperboards has grown into a Rs 100-crore operation. Set up to provide a fresh impetus to the paper industry in the core-sector, the project has catalysed the development of a backward area.

Bhadrachalam has been transformed into a bustling centre of commerce and industry, ushered into the mainstream of life. Over 1200 direct jobs—and many more indirect ones — have been created for rural folk and tribals. Today their wages have increased and quality of life has improved, with access to health and hygiene facilities provided by the plant.

Like every ITC enterprise, Bhadrachalam Paperboards has established itself as a leader in its field. Mastering technology and setting new standards in productivity and product quality, it continues to be a source of pride for ITC. And stands testimony to ITC's commitment to the core-sector, to the success in developing a backward area.

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ELSEWHERE in the country, the Congress(I) may have faced a shortage of competent women candidates for the Lok Sabha elections, but in one Bihar family it seems to have run into a surfeit of feminine political talent. The family: that of Chief Minister Satyendra Narayan Sinha.

Sinha's wife, Kishori, has once again been fielded from Vaishali Lok Sabha constituency. His daughter-in-law Shyama Sinha is the Congress(I) nominee from Aurangabad. And Shyama's mother, Madhuri Singh, is seeking re-election from Purnea.

A clear case of nepotism? Perhaps, but not many were shocked. Kishori and Madhuri were already MPs. And Congress(I) circles had long concluded that only someone from the chief minister's household could retain the Aurangabad seat, relinquished by Sinha after he took over as chief minister in March this year.

Still, there was a degree of surprise. Partymen believed that the chief minister's wife would be shifted from Vaishali to Aurangabad. In anticipation of the move, in fact, Sinha's political rival L.P. Sahi had demanded a shift from Muzaffarpur to Vaishali. Also, since Madhuri Singh was in poor health, it was felt that she would make way for her high-profile son N.K. Singh, Bihar's industries development commissioner.

THE SINHAS

Madhuri Singh

Kishori Sinha

Shyama Sinha

The nomination of Shyama Sinha raised a few eyebrows. Wife of Nikhil Kumar, the chief minister's only son who is an IPS officer in New Delhi, the Delhi socialite, is considered too soft for Aurangabad. Many in fact expected that Nikhil Kumar, whom Sinha often consults, would be anointed Sinha's heir by being given a Lok Sabha ticket.

Whatever the reasons, finally, it was the three women who got the nod. Winning tickets is of course only half the game. The electoral battle still lies ahead. ■

THE KHANS

Arif Mohammed

Reshma

IN India, the easiest way for a woman to enter politics is to marry a politician. Arif Mohammad Khan, 38, is a seasoned politician. Now his wife Reshma, 34, has made her electoral debut as the Janata Dal candidate for the Aryanagar (Kanpur) assembly seat.

Arif—who left the Congress in 1986—is seeking re-election from the Bahraich Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh. A leading light of the Janata Dal, he has obviously helped his wife enter the electoral arena. Not that Reshma has nothing to her credit. A gold medalist in law, she practises at the Supreme Court and is a member of the steering committee of the All India Mahila Janata Dal.

Both husband and wife face an uphill task. While Reshma is up against a sitting Congress(I) MLA, Hafiz Mohammed Umar, Arif's rival is the Congress(I)'s A.R. Kidwai, a former governor. Though he'd won the same seat in 1984, he was then in the Congress(I).

If the husband-wife team wins, they'll join the ranks of Indira and Feroz Gandhi, Pramilla and Madhu Dandavate, Shalinitai and Vasantdada Patil, and Laila and George Fernandes. ■

Sons-in-Law

WITH family connections the deciding factor in the initial round for party tickets, sons-in-law too have become the occasional beneficiaries.

In Andhra Pradesh, Telugu Desam supremo N.T. Rama Rao bequeathed the ticket for the Kuppam assembly seat in Chittoor district to son-in-law and party politburo member, N. Chandrababu Naidu, while the ticket for the Parchur seat in Prakasam district went to his other son-in-law, state Health Minister D. Venkateswara Rao.

While Chandrababu Naidu will be facing the electorate for the first time, Rao is seeking to retain his seat. To accommodate Chandrababu Naidu, the sitting member from Kuppam, N. Rangaswamy Naidu, is being shifted to the Chittoor Lok Sabha seat.

N.T. Rama Rao

N.C. Naidu

D.V. Rao

Veerendra Patil

Dr B.G. Javali

Similarly, former Union minister and Karnataka Pradesh Congress(I) President Veerendra Patil has given the ticket for the Gulbarga Lok Sabha constituency to his son-in-law, Dr B.G. Javali. Patil will contest for the assembly from Chincholi.

Javali, 52, an E.N.T. specialist, who is married to Patil's eldest daughter, Lalitha, protests he got the ticket on his own merit. Says he mockingly: "I told the high command that if they did not give me a ticket because I am Patil's son-in-law, I will leave the party or divorce my wife."

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DYNASTIC politics, in full evidence in the ninth general elections, is cutting across party barriers with both the Congress(I) and the Opposition nominating relatives of well-known politicians. The Shastri family is a glaring example. All three sons of late prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri are contesting, two as Congress(I) nominees and one as a Janata Dal candidate.

THE SHASTRIS

Hari Krishna

Anil

Sunil

The eldest, Hari Krishna Shastri, Union minister of state for agricultural research and education, has been renominated by the Congress(I) for the Fatehpur parliamentary seat. The second son, Sunil Shastri, a member of the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet, is seeking renomination from the Gorakhpur assembly constituency on a Congress(I) ticket. And the youngest, Anil Shastri, is the Janata Dal candidate for the Varanasi Lok Sabha seat.

Of the three, the poll prospects of Hari Krishna are the bleakest as he is pitted against V.P. Singh though his contribution to his constituency is significant, the stature of his rival overshadows such consideration. He is even said to have lobbied to shift his constituency.

Interestingly, while he will be up against the raja of Manda this time, during the by-election to the Allahabad parliamentary seat, it was younger brother, Sunil, who took on V.P. Singh.

Although the brothers Shastri seem destined to challenge V.P. Singh at the hustings, the two families are in fact very close. V.P. Singh was initiated into politics by Lal Bahadur Shastri, and years later Singh repaid his debt by grooming Sunil for public life.

This is why Anil's decision to join the Janata Dal is not surprising. But that he should do so despite his family's age-old links with the Congress, must be a blow to the ruling party which is always trying to cash in on a known name. ■

THE GAJPATI RAJUS

Clock wise from top: Ashok, Uma and Anand

POLITICS runs in the Vizianagaram royal family, though it has rarely been of the same kind. While the ageing P.V.G. Raju is a staunch Congress(I) supporter, his sons opted for the Telugu Desam when the party was founded by N.T. Rama Rao in 1982. Both were elected in 1983. Anand, the elder of the two, became state education minister, and then in 1984 got elected to the Lok Sabha from the Bobbilli constituency. His younger brother, Ashok, who meantime was re-elected to the Assembly, became a minister.

The twist came last year in Delhi when Anand's wife, Uma, declared her support for Rajiv Gandhi. With Uma admitted into the Congress(I), Anand found himself persuaded to make a switch. The reward: Anand's ticket for the Bobbilli seat and Uma's ticket for the neighbouring Visakhapatnam seat.

A piqued Rama Rao, in turn, rewarded the brother, Ashok. After Ashok lost his ministerial post in the *en masse* sacking of the state cabinet, he was made party general secretary. Now he has been given a ticket by Rama Rao for the Vizianagaram assembly seat. ■

Poll Genes

THE list of candidates for the coming Lok Sabha and Assembly elections would make any geneticist conclude that human chromosomes have an as-yet-unidentified political gene. The roster of fathers and sons, sons and mothers, sisters and brothers, sisters and sisters contesting simply goes on and on.

In Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district, two brothers are fighting the assembly elections. Former minister N. Srinivasulu Reddy, who left the Congress(I) for the Telugu Desam, has returned to the parent fold, to contest from Kovvur. Elder brother N. Chandrasekhar Reddy is the Telugu Desam candidate for the Venkatagiri seat.

A pair of sisters is contesting from Bihar. While Union Minister of State Krishna Sahi is the Congress(I) nominee from Begusarai, her younger sister, Usha Singh, is the Janata Dal candidate in Vaishali. To compound the confusion, Usha's husband, Birendra Kumar Singh, is a member of the Congress(I).

No barrier divides the Bajpais of Uttar Pradesh. Union Minister of State Rajendra Kumari Bajpai is contesting the Lok Sabha elections from Sitapur, which she has represented for two terms. Son Ashok faces Anugrah Narain Singh of the Janata Dal in the Allahabad North assembly constituency, represented by his mother from 1967 to 1977. Earlier this year, he stood for mayor—and lost. If he intends emulating his mother's rise in politics, he'll need lots more luck.

Krishna Sahi

Usha Singh

Rajendra Bajpai

Ashok Bajpai

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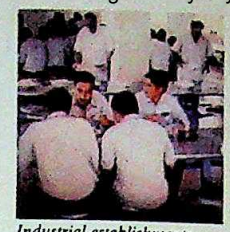
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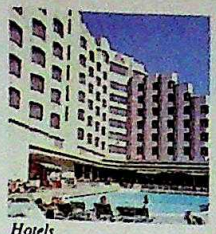
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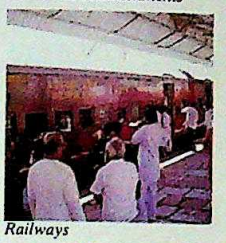
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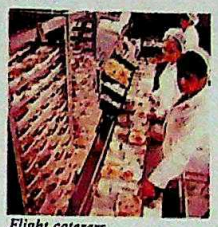
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I continued, she started life as a clean sheet of pa

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(From the corner of my eye, I could see my frien

eyebrows travel upwards.) See how the windshield and windows blend smoothly into t

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himself. Just step inside, I motioned. I didn't have to ask twice. There he was in the driver's seat, hands sliding reverently, over the wheel. Obviously, transported into another world. *Beautiful, he murmured again. I suppose the luggage stays at home, he asked loftily, his eyes still closed.* I didn't even bother to reply. Discreet lever was pressed. The rear deck flipped open on its own. Spacious and beautifully toured. Then for good measure, I slid the back seat forward, to reveal the extra cargo space. There was an impressed silence. Lost in thought, my friend began drumming his fingers against gradations inside the door. Air vents, I supplied smoothly. It took him a moment to regain composure. Then a brave effort at sarcasm. *Anything she hasn't got?* He walked to it. Competition, I answered, graciously.

MARUTI 1000

Quite a conversation piece.

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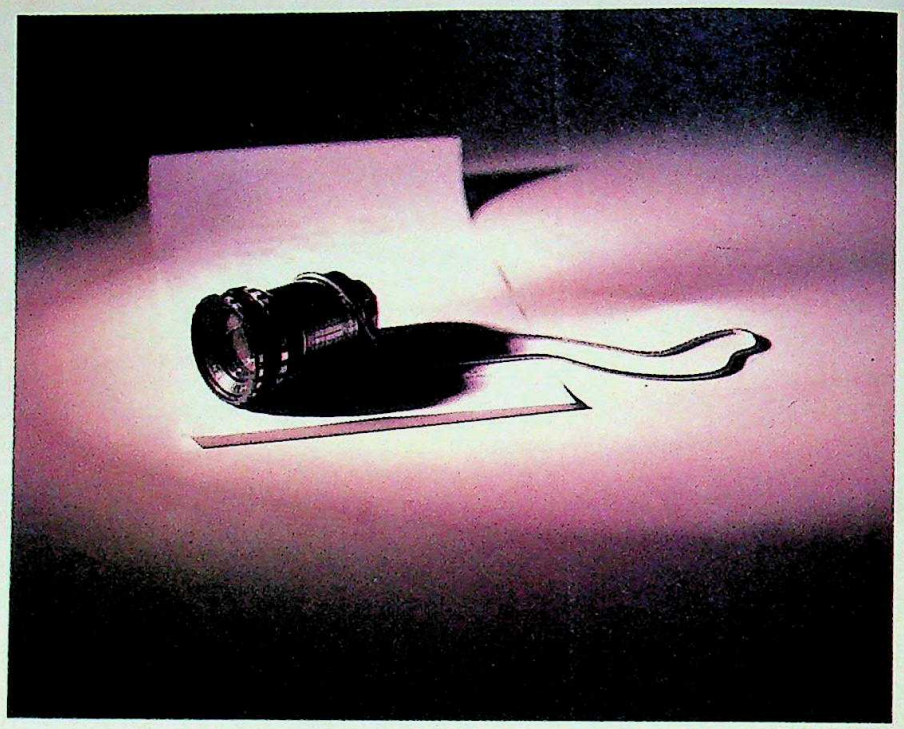

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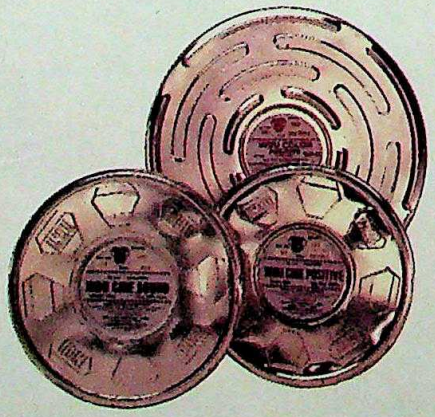

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Day of the Don

History sheeters on the campaign trail

THE have-gun-will-win syndrome is visible in every Indian election. But the ninth general elections will be the meanest yet. The evidence: this is the first time known criminals have been inducted into political parties. Criminals have always had links with politicians, but till now they have been in the sidelines. This time they are in the arena. In Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh alone, at least 50 candidates for the Lok Sabha and assembly polls are facing charges ranging from theft to murder.

Bihar, with its dismal record of election violence, is the haven of the criminal-politician. Of the 48 people killed during the 1984 Lok Sabha polls, 28 were from Bihar. The next year, when assembly polls were held in a number of states, of the 81 people who died throughout India, 51 were from Bihar. Violence is an inevitable feature of elections in Bihar because politicians rely heavily on antisocial elements during polls—though publicly they shun them. This time the deception has been dropped: criminals have become party candidates.

Take Kali Pandey. He has the distinction of winning the 1984 polls as an independent while being behind bars. Pandey had been expelled from the Congress(I) and arrested following a bomb attack on his party rival, Nagina Rai, also a known criminal. Both Pandey and Rai—who too was expelled—have been taken back into the party fold and Pandey is now the Congress(I) candidate for Bihar's Gopalganj Lok Sabha seat.

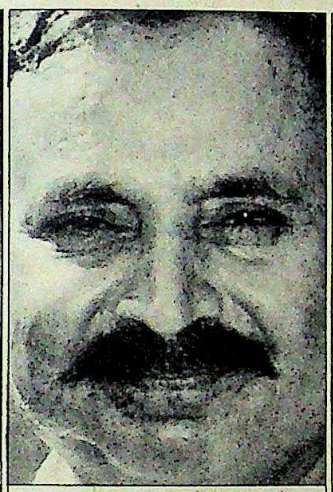
Equally shocking is the re-nomination of cooperative don Tapeshwar Singh from the Vikramganj parliamentary seat in Bihar. Some months back—at the initiative of the Prime Minister's Office—a number of criminal cases were launched against Singh who was accused of swindling one of the state's biggest cooperatives and supplying spurious fertilisers and pesticides. Bhagwat Jha Azad, then chief minister, had launched a virtual crusade against Singh, who had narrowly escaped arrest by getting anticipatory bail.

Shankar Dayal Singh—who has links with the Dhanbad mafia—and Bagun Sumbrui, the Congress(I) nominees from Dhanbad and Singhbhum, also have dubious records. And the Congress(I) candidate from Khagaria in Bihar, Satish Prasad Singh—who was chief minister for three days in the late '60s—was involved in an admissions racket at a college in Dhanbad.

The Opposition in Bihar has proved as bereft of principles as the Congress(I). The Janata Dal candidate from Hajipur, Laloo Prasad Yadav, was involved in a murder case. And both Taslimuddin, the party's candidate from Purnea, and Dhanraj Singh, the nominee from Munger, are history sheeters.

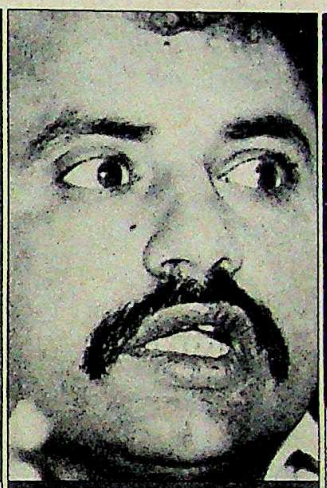
BHOLA PANDEY

The Congress(I) candidate for the Doaba assembly seat in Uttar Pradesh, he has five criminal cases pending against him.



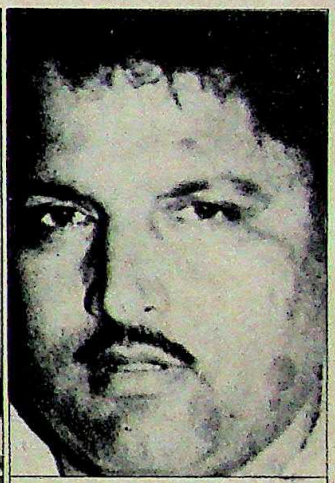
HARI SHANKAR TEWARI

The Congress(I) nominee for the Chillupar assembly seat in Uttar Pradesh, he is named in over 30 murder cases and has been detained under NSA.



VIRENDRA PRATAP SAHI

Arrested twice under NSA and named a conspirator in 25 murder cases, he is the Janata Dal's choice for Uttar Pradesh's Laxmipur assembly seat.



KALI PANDEY

Detained for organising a bomb attack in Patna, he has been given the Congress(I) ticket for the Gopalganj seat in Bihar.

The scene in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh is even more depressing. The maximum number of history sheeters is in the fray here as the state is having polls to both the Lok Sabha and the Assembly. There are 21 sitting MLAs with police records who are seeking a fresh term. Of these, 15 are Congressmen while four are with the Janata Dal. A small mercy: both parties have limited antisocial elements to the Vidhan Sabha.

Hari Shankar Tewari is contesting the Chillupar Vidhan Sabha seat on a Congress(I) ticket while V.P. Sahi is the

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Janata Dal's choice for the Laxmipur assembly seat. Tewari—who joined the Congress last month—is known as the mafia don of eastern Uttar Pradesh. He has been detained under the National Security Act (NSA) and his name figures in over 30 murder cases. Sahi has been arrested twice under NSA and is named a conspirator in 25 murders. Both men had won the previous elections as independents. Now the nation's two mainstream parties have opened their doors to them.

Also noticeable is the candidature of the Janata Dal Secretary-General Sanjay Singh—involved in the sensational Syed Modi murder case—from the Amethi assembly seat. The CBI has charged Singh with hiring assassins to kill the badminton star. Other prominent history sheeters are Bhola Pandey, the Congress(I) candidate from the Doaba (Ballia) assembly seat, and Janata Dal nominees Raj Bahadur Singh and Rama Kant Yadav who are standing from the Jaunpur and Phoolpur assembly seats.

The criminalisation of politics is not restricted to the Hindi belt. In the south, the Telugu Desam is guilty of admitting history sheeters. Most notable is Devineni "Nehru" Rajsekhar, who came from jail after getting bail to file his nomination papers from Kankipadu in Andhra Pradesh. 'Nehru' is accused of the murder of Congress(I) MLA Mohan Ranga Rao. In Hyderabad, the notorious criminal-politician, Kotha Das, of the Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM), has several robbery and dacoity cases against him. The high court has found him guilty in a dacoity case against which he has appealed to the Supreme Court.

In Punjab, among the candidates in alleged to be involved in terrorist activities is Atinderpal Singh. A co-accused in the Indira Gandhi murder and Delhi bomb blast cases, he is the AISSF's nominee from Patiala.

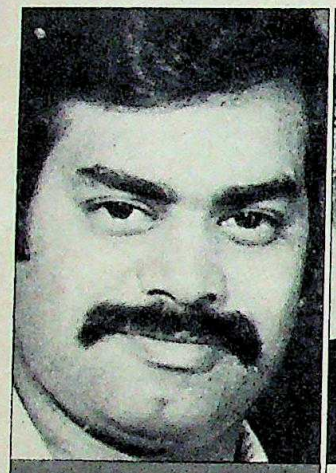
However, none of these unsavoury characters would be in the electoral fray if the Government had acted on an Election Commission recommendation made in 1985, that persons facing prosecution or detained under various acts should be debarred from contesting elections. Under the present law, only those who have been convicted for at least two years are barred. Says Madhu Limaye: "At this rate, the underworld lords and mafiosi will lead the political parties in the next century."

Still, in all fairness to both the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal, there were partymen who spoke up against the induction of criminals. Chandra Shekhar was attacked by irate party members when he recommended his protege, the Dhanbad don, Surya Deo Singh, for a seat. "We do not want rapists, criminals and goondas to come to Parliament," said one. In the Congress(I), Rajasthan strongman, Naval Kishore Sharma, embarrassed the party when he signed an open appeal along with opposition leaders. Their statement read: "History will blame the political leadership in free India of either total neglect or collusion for legitimising criminality and goondaism, mafia and smuggler gangsterism as a political weapon."

Sadly, political expediency has gained the upper hand. Even V.P. Singh who had said just two months ago that "a mafia runs this country" has abandoned all ethics and allowed the Janata Dal's symbol to be desecrated by persons with shady backgrounds.

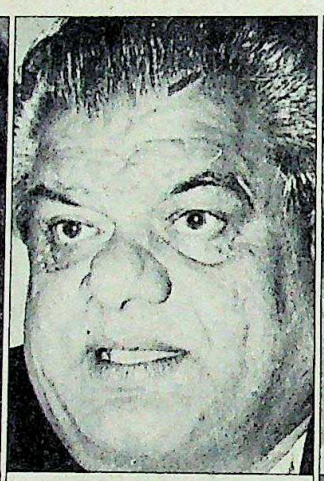
Although this is likely to be one of the most closely contested elections in India's history, there is one outcome which can be safely predicted: many criminals will represent the Indian people in Parliament and the state assemblies.

—PANKAJ PACHAURI with bureau reports



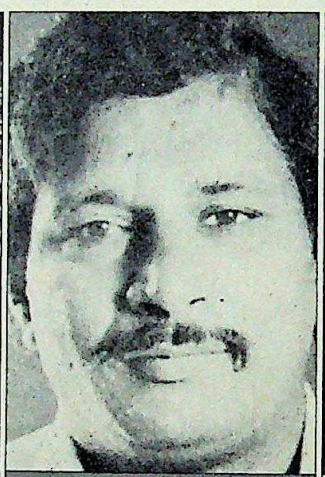
DEVINENI RAJSEKHAR

The Telugu Desam contestant for the Kankipadu assembly seat, he has been accused of the murder of Congress(I) MLA Mohan Ranga Rao.



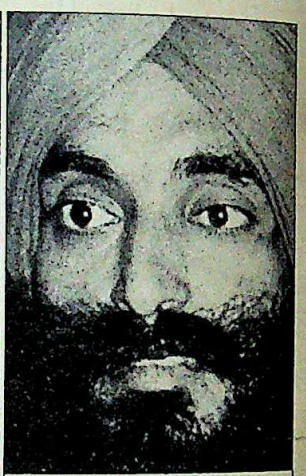
TAPESHWAR SINGH

The Congress(I) nominee for the Vikramganj Lok Sabha seat in Bihar he has been charged by the CBI of swindling cooperative funds.



KOTHA DAS

The MIM candidate for an assembly seat in Hyderabad, he faces charges of robbery and dacoity and has been found guilty by the high court.



ATINDERPAL SINGH

A co-accused in the Indira Gandhi murder and Delhi bomb blast cases, he hopes the charges against him will be dropped if he wins from Patiala.

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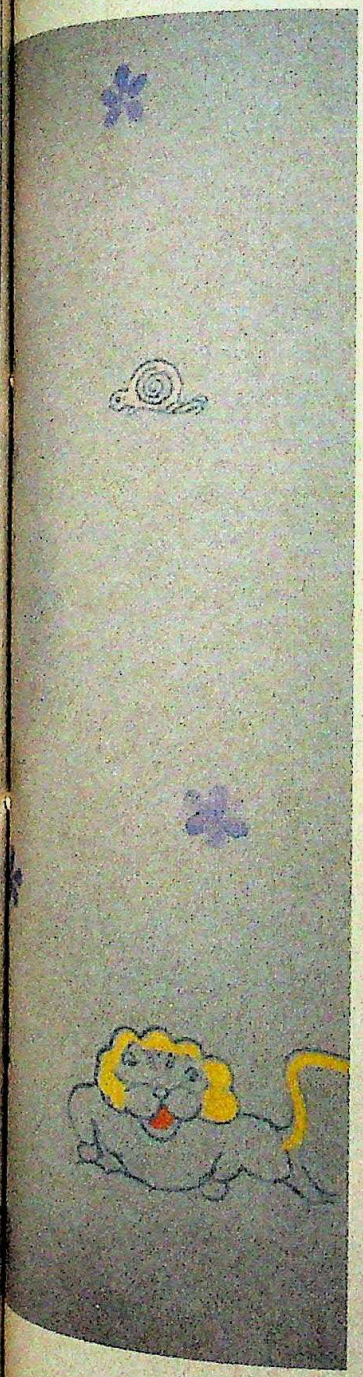

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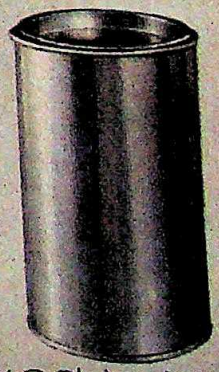

Trust in food
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JOGINDER CHAWLA

Sharma: colourful mascot

◆ Perhaps the most photographed character on the Janata Dal juggernaut is **Parmanand Haryali Sharma**, about 50, dressed true to his self-given middle name: all in the party green with anti-Rajiv slogans smeared all over them. V.P. Singh zindabad is written even on his eyeglasses through which he squints. Promising to throw Rajiv out, the lonely minstrel from Bareilly goes wherever media attention is expected. He was preening in the glare of the world media eye at Rajiv's first election meeting in Amethi. Says he: "I'll be in Delhi on November 27—for the victory celebration."

◆ When royalty goes begging, it's an occasion. Last week it was **Bhawani Singh**, former raja of Jaipur, who was painting the city pink. Togged in a raw silk safari suit, the dapper prince drove his custom-built jeep into stinking slums, asking for votes. A change of scene, and of clothes. A navy blue suit to inaugurate the Ranji Trophy match. "I don't want to seem a politician among sportsmen," said the polo-playing prince. But soon, he was sporting the political image again. Donning the safari, Singh declared: "*Main thako, the maro*" (I'm yours, you're mine.)

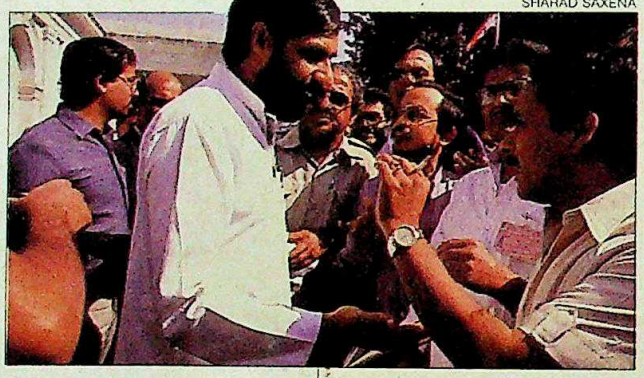
Bhawani Singh: quick changes

GOPAL SUNGAR

◆ Guess who got the most flak in the Congress(I) after Rajiv Gandhi? Last fortnight it seemed that the Congress(I)'s official spokesman, **Anand Sharma**—the 34-year-old former Youth Congress(I) chief amply qualified. Sharma was recently chosen by Rajiv as the party's media manager.

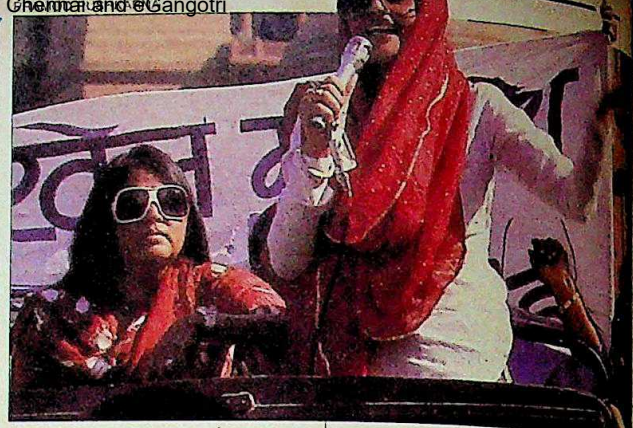
Anand Sharma: press attack

SHARAD SAXENA



But mere articulateness wasn't enough. Often caught napping on sensitive issues like Ram Janmabhoomi, Bofors and opposition unity, his stock refrain was: "You are deviating from the main issues." As Sharma continued his daily five o'clock Follies, it was obvious that he was information-starved about the campaign and Rajiv's schedule. But Sharma remains unfazed by the media bashing. He says: "It's been great. The press has been aggressive but not devious with us." Some people are suckers for punishment.

◆ **Kiran Chowdhary**—Bansi Lal's glamorous daughter-in-law—has jumped into the fray to find that politics is not all stardust. As the joint secretary of the All-India Mahila Congress hit the Delhi streets in a dawn-to-dusk campaign, she faced jeers. When Kiran's corps descended on some government employees soaking in the sun, chauvinistic jeers replaced the expected cheers. "The least you can do when women talk is to listen," rebuked Kiran. "Go home!" they roared back. Not homeward bound, she went to the press to fully exploit the incident. And announced: "Even women aren't safe with the Opposition."



Kiran: turning tables

◆ They call her the Andhra *abhinava rudramma*—the legendary queen who led troops to battle. And not for nothing. Telugu Desam MP, **Renuka Chowdhury**, 35, faces charges of punching a constable's nose bloody—when he intervened in a clash between Telugu Desam and Congress(I) workers. The fiery Renuka was leading a battalion of Telugu Desam "yellow shirts", the party's goon squad. But the police, their nose out of joint, were not amused and charged her with assault. Retorted Renuka: "Isn't it an insult that the man I punched survives?"

Renuka: hitting out

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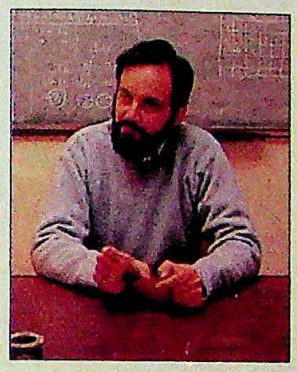
MAKING poll predictions in cold print is a hazardous business at the best of times. And if you add to that an electorate of 475 million, the largest and most diverse in the world, an uncertain political climate, and a two-week lead time, you have an exercise which ought to be undertaken only by the stout of heart and thick of skin. For a failed poll pundit faces both a scoffing public and the sudden termination of a specialist vocation. It's not only the wait for the final result which is nerve-racking, but also the insinuations made by those who disagree with the prediction. Braving this for the last three general elections are psephologist Prannoy Roy and his colleagues at MARG. *Roy pioneered this arcane science in India through the pages of* INDIA TODAY *in December 1979. He predicted Mrs Gandhi's return, with the Congress(I) getting 291 seats: it got 353. In 1984, he predicted 366 seats for the Congress(I) and mentioned that "the poll has some indications that with its allies the Congress(I) could command over 400 seats". The Congress(I) won 415.*



Prannoy Roy: bull's eye

This year the poll published in the previous issue hit the bull's eye. It predicted 195 seats for the Congress(I) and a hung Parliament. The Congress(I) has won 192, with the result of one seat yet to come. This must certainly rank as one of the most accurate poll predictions in the world. Says Roy modestly: "The next worst thing of getting a poll wrong is getting it dead right. You can't ever do better."

For me it's been a reaffirmation of faith in polling as the best barometer to gauge the political climate. INDIA TODAY *had in August 1987 decided to conduct six-monthly opinion polls to keep track of the public mood and the final poll was the culmination of this exercise. Interestingly, the last poll, in August 1989, had said: "The first major finding of the poll is the sharp increase in the strength of the* BJP. *Its popularity has increased not only in its traditional redoubts of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, but also in the Hindi belt of north India." All this has come to pass, and much more.*

THE country has clearly voted for a change and has got it in the form of a National Front Government with V.P. Singh as the prime minister. Singh is no stranger to INDIA TODAY *as he first appeared on the magazine's cover in June 1980 as the new chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, along with the other new chief ministers. Since then he has appeared on the cover individually four times, and eight times with others.*

Despite this extensive coverage he remains a person not easily fathomed, and one always capable of springing surprises with his quirky behaviour and individualistic stands. However, there is little doubt that though he appears otherwise, he is an astoundingly astute politician who after being expelled from the ruling party has in a matter of 28 months hijacked the Opposition and landed himself in the prime minister's chair. But now he faces the toughest test of his political skills: to run a minority government with support from two diametrically opposed parties. Perhaps, the best outcome of this entire situation is that people's expectations from governments will conform more closely to ground realities and not verge on the wild as in the past. And hopefully, in the process, they may be pleasantly surprised.

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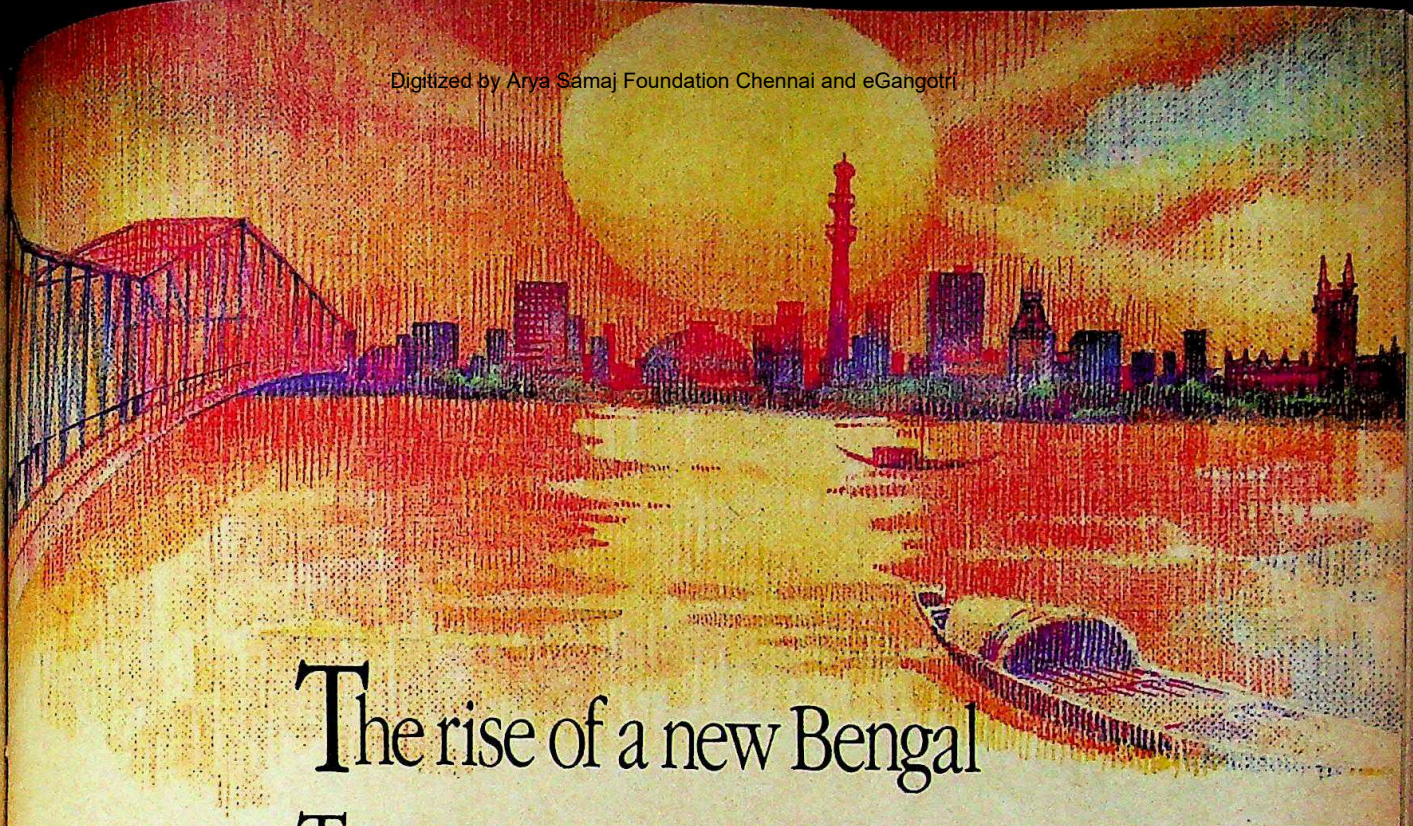

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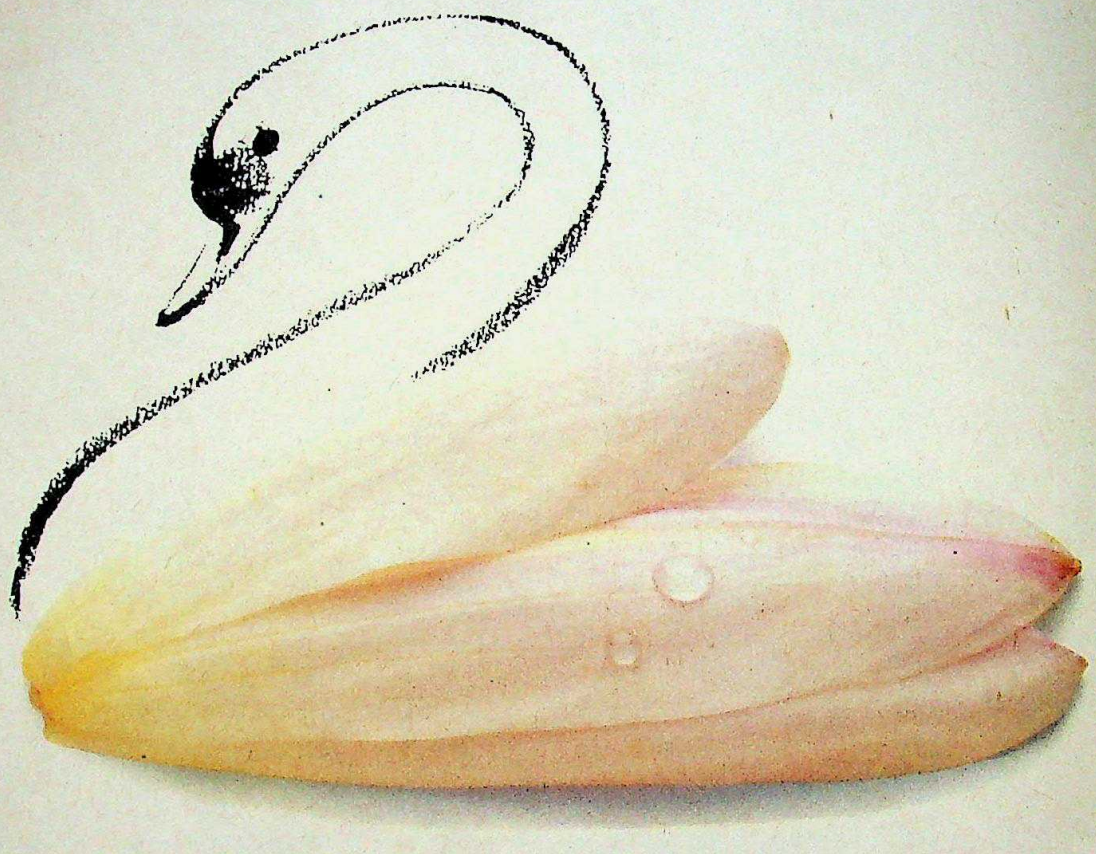

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A KEEN CONTEST

Your poll predictions ("Election Special", November 30) show that a glorious moment has dawned in Indian history. The voter is now ready for a coalition government rather than a corrupt government. The new government will be forced to perform as it could be thrown out if it fails to do so. It will also show the likes of K.K. Tewary that they can no longer take the Indian voter for granted.

Delhi — **BOBBY KAPOOR**

■ The renomination of 80 per cent of the sitting Congress(I) MPs by Rajiv Gandhi will be disastrous for the party. The electorate is certain to give an anti-Congress(I) verdict this time.

Raipur — **SHAILESH TIWARI**

■ There is a fear that if the Opposition forms a coalition government, it will not last too long. The Congress(I) has given the country stability at the Centre, but it has lost its credibility.

Ranchi — **SANKALP SHAKUNT**

■ The main aim of the Opposition is not to set guidelines for the progress of the country, but to unseat Rajiv Gandhi.

Visakhapatnam — **K. SUDHAKARA RAO**

■ Your reports on elections were very informative. 'Poll Talk' added the spice.

Calicut — **N.R. SRIPATHI**

NO BID FOR CAMPAIGN

I was surprised to read in your Election Special issue ("Raking It In", November 30) the reference to Tara Sinha Associates and the Congress(I) publicity campaign. As a matter of policy, we do not handle political advertising. Apart from this, we were not asked to handle video publicity nor have we made any bid for the campaign.

New Delhi — **TARA SINHA**
Managing Director

COMPUTERISED RIGGING

Electronic voting machines will be ineffective in containing malpractices such as rigging and booth-capturing ("Tortuous Task", November 15). Whoever captures the polling booths will also obviously capture the machines. Collusion by polling agents is all that is required to further put a seal on the misdeed.

Again, the statement of Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) that its voting machines are not programmed is misleading. At the heart of the voting machine is a micro controller—a tiny computer which is controlled by a computer programme written by BEL. It is possible to write a programme with a built-in bias.

New Delhi — **JAYA JAITLY**

DISTURBING TREND

Communalism has assumed frightening proportions ("Dangerous Dimensions", October 31) as evident from the riots in Badaun, Kota, Indore, Sasaram and other places. Unfortunately, the VHP-BJP alliance is aggravating the situation by encouraging Hindus to counter Muslim fundamentalists.

New Delhi — **SHAILENDRA KUMAR**

■ All right-minded people should condemn the actions of the BJP and the Shiv Sena. The Janata Dal's alliance with the BJP proves that the combined opposition cannot give India a stable and secular government at the Centre.

Bangalore — **R.N.S.P. ACHANTA**

UNCLEAR PICTURE

This refers to the item in Trade Winds ("Big Spenders", September 15) which shows the advertisement expenditure of our company as Rs 24.9 crore. By clubbing advertising discounts along with commissions in sales promotion, the real expense incurred on advertising remains unclear. Commission is paid to authorised dealers or distributors for their services and cannot be classified as sales promotion activity.

The expenditure of Hindustan Lever, Escorts, Blow Plast and Colgate, as their balance sheets reveal, on commissions and discounts is relatively low and that on advertising higher than ours. The most apt comparison would be advertising expenditure and possibly sampling which is a kind of promotional activity.

Bombay — **DR PRAGNYA RAM**
Manager, Corporate Relations, Hindustan Ciba-Geigy Limited

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IDEALLY IGNOBLE

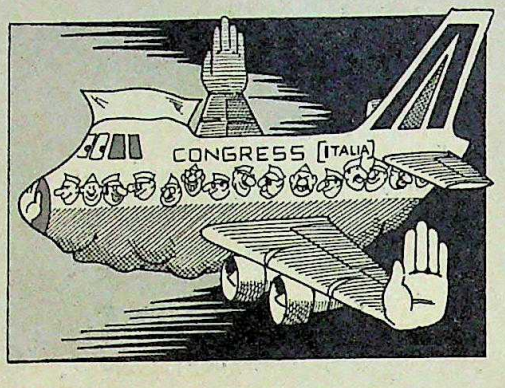
☐ THE 1989 elections, somewhat inevitably, spawned the perfect national lampoon: the Indian Opportunist Party (IOP). The IOP offered a hilarious diversion from the deadly serious business of elections. Its symbol: a *'neta'* clutching his chair. Its sponsors: the Bribery Front, the Misguiders Unity, the Indian Corruption Forum.

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

The Delhi-based party's manifesto pledged that the IOP would keep alive "the spirit behind leaders usurping top positions" and would "ignore all boring talk of principles, morality and righteousness".

The party pledged to "wholeheartedly support corruption" and legislate the legalisation of commission agents. It declared that the most notorious agent—meaning the one who makes the most illegal money—would be awarded the Bofors Ratna. The icing on the IOP cake was a lengthy and impressive list of achievements of like-minded opportunists in Indian politics over the last 40 years with, naturally, the Bofors bribe-takers heading the list. The IOP may have failed to sweep the elections, but it certainly garnered the most laughs.

POLL TALK



Q. *Why is Rajiv so sure of the Congress(I) getting 400 seats?*
A. Because he has chartered an Alitalia Boeing.

● Let us see, after the elections maybe.
ARUN NEHRU on the alleged offer to join the Congress(I)

● History is not something that can be written by government departments. That is publicity.
RAJMOHAN GANDHI in Sunday Observer

● Lord Krishna told Shishupal's mother that he would forgive her son for a hundred sins. When he crossed the limit, Krishna killed him with his *sudarshan chakra*. Today, the same *chakra* is in my hands. And we have lost count of the sins the Congress(I) has committed. *MANEKA GANDHI at Pilibhit*

● They are communal, they are divided and they are deserters.
MOHSINA KIDWAI on the Opposition

● The National Front is an explosive mixture of clashing personalities, contending egos, colliding ambitions and conflicting ideologies.
ANAND SHARMA, AICC(I) spokesman

● Rajiv Gandhi has given this country a government of the yuppies, by the yuppies and for the yuppies. Let the yuppies vote for him. The great mass of Indian people have nothing to do with such a leader.
S.S. BHANDARI, BJP leader

● She is a modern day Rani of Jhansi.
RAJIV GANDHI about Jayalalitha

FIGHTING FOR EVER

☐ S.N. VERMA has one obsession—elections. He just can't resist contesting, and in the process he has notched up something of a record. He has contested for the Lok Sabha eight times. He has also contested several elections to the state assembly, the Rajya Sabha and the legislative council. He once even attempted to contest the presidential election. A resident of Sitamarhi, Verma is undaunted by the fact that he has never won. "I will continue to fight elections till I breathe my last," he says. At 75, that may not give him many more chances.

WORK VAGARIES

☐ IT had to happen. The educated unemployed of Betual in Madhya

Pradesh formed a Shramjivi Karyakarta Sangh to supply workers to all parties "at moderate rates". The rates: Rs 50 per day for slogan-shouting, Rs 75 per day for making speeches and painting slogans, and Rs 100 per day for disrupting meetings.

The ploy worked. Temporarily they were rescued from unemployment. The Congress(I), the BJP and even some independents "hired" their services. Electoral enterprise, it is obvious, has no limits.

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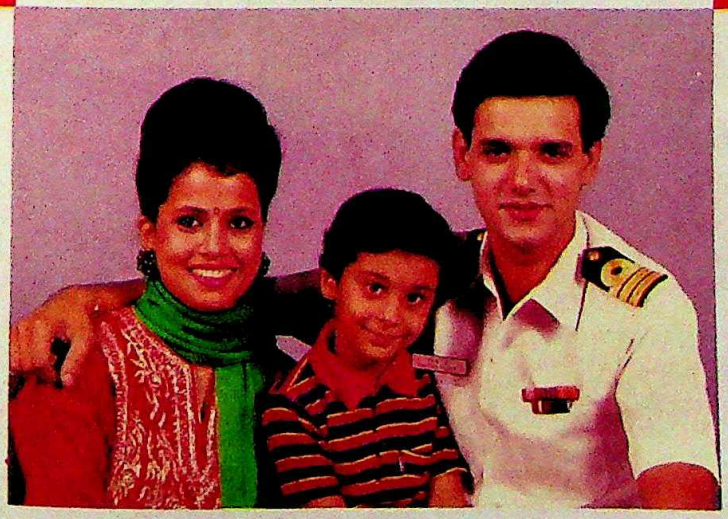

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BEASTLY BIDS

☐ IT was a real jungle out there. Especially in Karnataka where a large number of candidates had chosen beasts or birds as their election symbols. V.N. Subbaiah, a rebel Congress(I) candidate from Madikeri constituency, hired an elephant—his election symbol—from a local circus to add weight to his campaign. Not as ambitious was

Independent H.D. Malappa whose symbol was a pigeon. With a flourish, he would release a covey at every meeting. Then there was Pratibha Patil, another Independent who had a lion as her symbol. Fortunately, the lion that accompanied her on her campaign was a caged one—also borrowed from the circus. Elections do, after all, bring out the beast in most candidates.

PRESENCE PRETENCE

☐ THE BJP's grassroots organisation and its canny political bosses make for a potent combination. One example was Gandhinagar constituency in Gujarat. The Congress(I) wanted to open a couple of campaign offices in the Shahpur area of the constituency, but they came up against a blank wall—the BJP's clout ensured that there was not a room to be had. Then came the sting. BJP workers approached local Congress(I) bosses and demanded—and received—money to allow the ruling party to open three offices. The offices were opened, but while the banners belonged to the Congress(I), the propaganda all day from the offices was that of the BJP. The offices were occupied by young BJP workers who would demand a steady supply of snacks from the Congress(I) occupants while unabashedly playing BJP poll songs. The Congress(I) bosses were speechless. Said one lamely: "At least the banners are a mark of our token presence in the area." A pretence of presence?

FINDING THE NOOSE

☐ WINNING an election is but a question of buying the right people. A Congress(I) candidate in Tamil Nadu treated that as electoral gospel. Halfway through the campaign, Vallalperumal, a former minister in the state Cabinet, sprained his leg and was confined to bed. But undaunted, our hero summoned a group of local journalists, and informed them that since he was incapable of campaigning, they ought to do it for him by writing favourable reports in their papers. The bottom line: if he won, a moped for each of the journalists.

Whether it was the ethics of the thing or the fact that Vallalperumal had no electoral chance of keeping his promise, the journalists promptly published his offer in their papers. At least poor Vallalperumal stayed in the news, even if he veered off the election race.

WOOING ANTICS

☐ THE race to woo the electorate can prove literally back-breaking. Especially with candidates

like Baki Rao, who contested the Khandwa Lok Sabha constituency, around. He was asked by some spectators at a public gathering to climb an electric pole. Not wishing to alienate potential voters, Rao, garlands and all, immediately clambered up. Back on *terra firma* there came an even firmer demand. The crowd wanted Rao to perform a series of cart-wheels. Aware that he was finally attracting the largest crowds of his campaign, Rao somersaulted across the stage. Those who would protest at his antics ought to realise that negotiating slippery poles and performing cartwheels is a standard requirement for politics.

POLL TALK

Q. *What did Rajiv say when V.P. Singh passed by?*
A. *Bhala Uski Kameez Meri Kameez Se Safed Kaise?*
(take-off on popular detergent jingle).

• In cricket, I prefer the one-day match to the five-day one. I would rather have someone as prime minister for one year at a time.

HAJI MASTAN, president of the Dalit Muslim Minorities Suraksha Mahasangh

• Your precious vote is like a match-stick, you can either light the *chulha* (hearth) at home or use it to set the entire nation aflame.

RAJESH KHANNA, campaigning for the Congress(I)

• I have no ambitions...my attempt would be to make V.P. Singh the prime minister.

DEVI LAL

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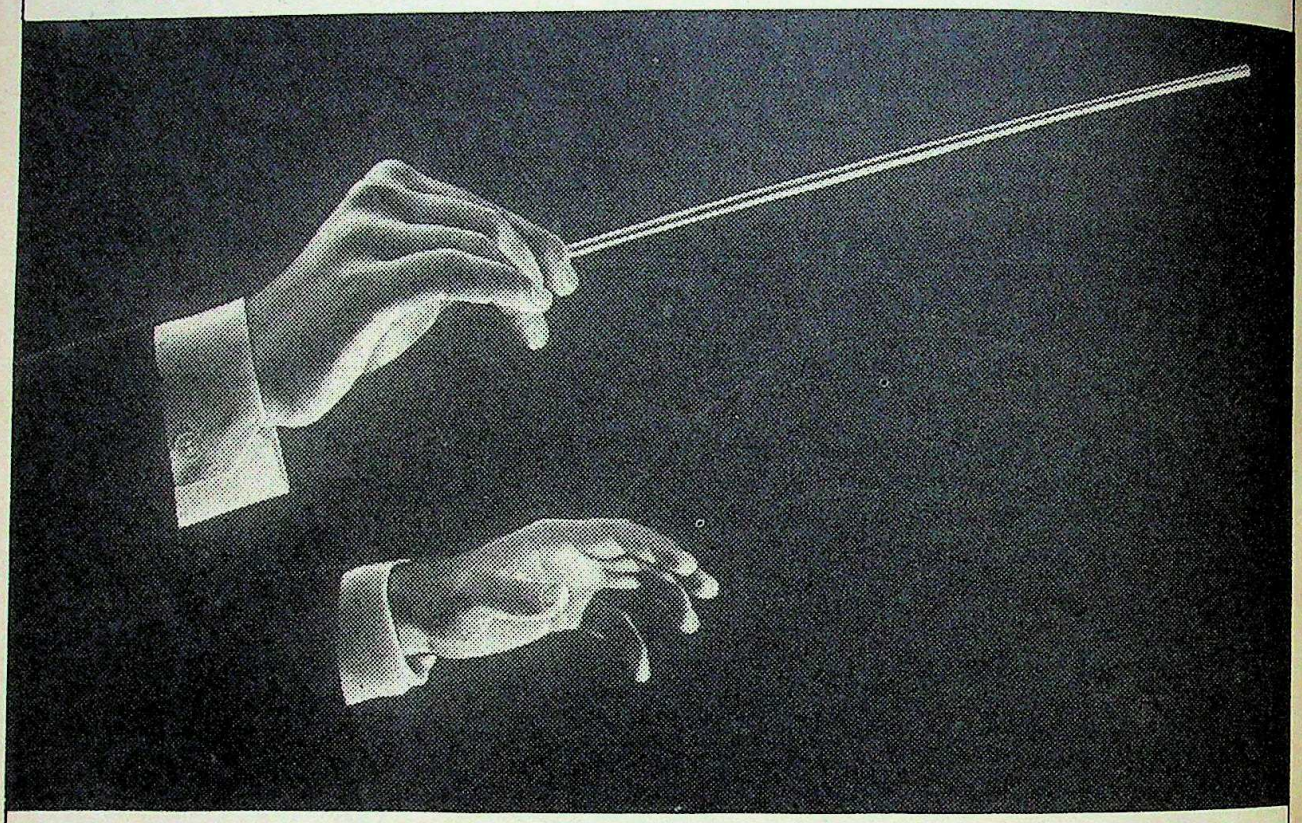

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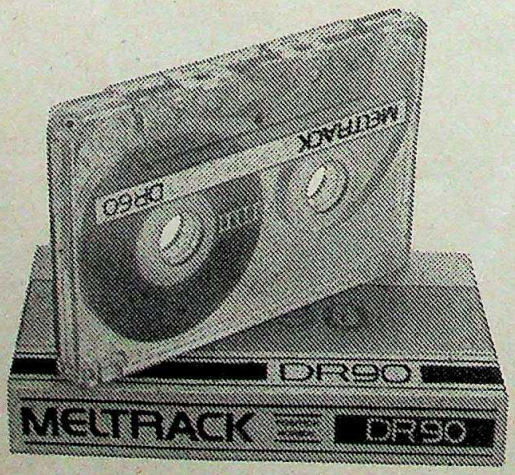

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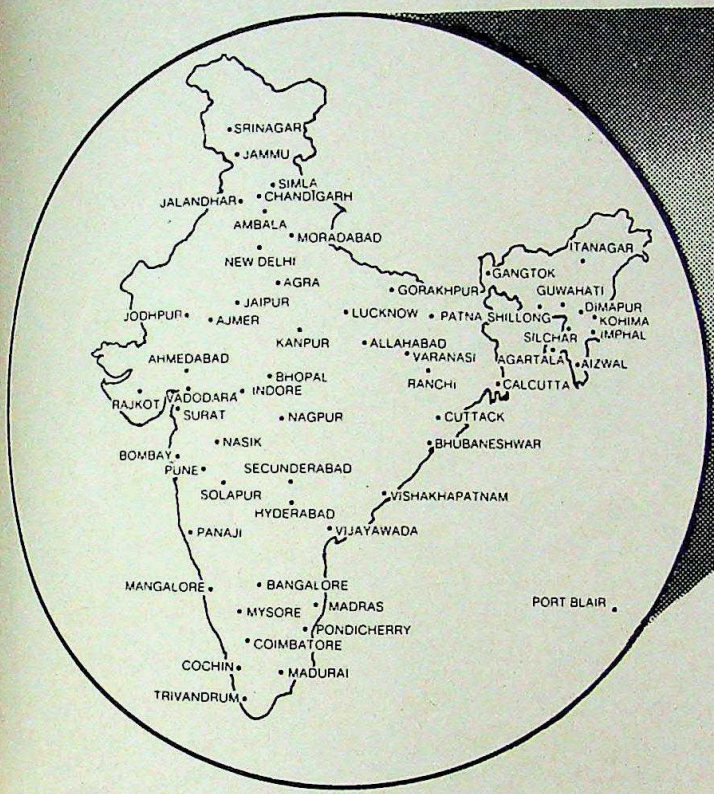

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HOME SOUR HOME

☐ EASILY the most embarrassed Central minister in the election fray was A.M. Arunachalam, contesting from Tenkasi in Tamil Nadu. The reason for the minister's discomfiture: the swank house he has recently built in Tenkasi, which literally stands out like a sore thumb against the hovels and huts that dominate the constituency.

As the Opposition attacked him, a flustered Arunachalam went and put his foot in his mouth by declaring that the house was worth only Rs 5 lakh and that Rs 2 lakh of that came from G.K. Moopanar, the former TNCC(I) chief, as a "gift". Arunachalam's opponents immediately demanded to know where Moopanar had got so much money that he could afford to dole out Rs 2 lakh as a gift.

That was not all. The DMK, to rub salt into the electoral wound, then even offered to buy the house for Rs 5 lakh, knowing full well that the cost of construction was at least twice that amount. Arunachalam, of course, had no answer to that. Well, he ought to have known that people who live in glass palaces cannot afford to throw stones back.

THE BARRED CANDIDATE

☐ THE terrorist problem in Punjab naturally proved a major headache for security forces entrusted with protecting candidates in the fray. But the biggest headache turned out to be an independent candidate

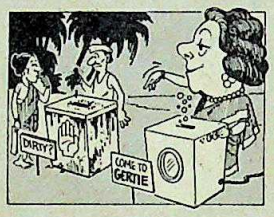
from Chandigarh who was firmly convinced that he was destined to be the next prime minister of India.

Besides delusions of grandeur, he also suffered from paranoia. He was convinced there existed a conspiracy to eliminate him. The candidate even suspected his own guards of being party to the conspiracy, and kept giving them the slip. The annoyed policemen finally decided there was only one way to keep tabs on the errant candidate—keep him in jail. So, each night after campaigning, the candidate was installed in the local lock-up. Truly a no-bars-hold election, this was.

POLL TALK

'Don't get your hands dirty. Keep them clean and vote for Gertie'.

Campaign slogan of Gertie Suvarna; Oscar Fernandes's sister in law



- Liberalisation has to be staggered and managed. We must not get in too deep, too fast. Laissez-faire is not on for our country.

V.P. SINGH in Far Eastern Economic Review

- We want complete freedom. Call it Khalistan or whatever you like.

BIMAL KHALSA, widow of Beant Singh

- Why pick on one? This shows the partisan approach of a section of the press. India is a religious country. Each one is entitled to seek blessings of a religious person.

ANAND SHARMA, Congress(I) spokesman, reacting to reports of Rajiv Gandhi's meeting with Devraha Baba

ON A CAPITAL PLANK

☐ HE certainly did not aim at living up to his name. Sardar Patel, an independent candidate contesting from Secunderabad constituency in Andhra Pradesh made what must rank as the most unique poll promise in the 1989 elections. Patel's electoral plank, a rather shaky one, rested on his pledge to get India's capital shifted from Delhi to Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh.

And what about the massive funds required for such a major upheaval? No problem. Patel would simply ask every Indian to contribute Rs 10 towards the cost of the project. That wasn't all. When asked why Ayodhya should be the capital, Patel's reply was: it symbolised the spirit of unity, brotherhood and religious tolerance, notwithstanding the fact that currently Ayodhya symbolises the exact opposite. Oh well, what's the harm in building capitals in the air.

ELECTORAL ECONOMY

☐ NARAYAN Das Khambra, 67, an independent candidate who contested the Bhopal Lok Sabha seat this time, ought to earn himself a berth in the *Guinness Book of Records* if not one in the Lok Sabha. He has so far contested three presidential elections, four elections for the post of vice-president, two for the Lok Sabha and one for the state Assembly. Khambra has a peculiar electoral theory. "Losing an election does not bother me because I know that I cannot win," he says.

Why then does he do

it? Bodhra, another independent contesting from Bhopal, offers a clue. Explains Bodhra: "I am contesting because by depositing Rs 500, my name will be published in newspapers and also on lakhs of ballot papers. It is good publicity for a small amount." That is some cost-benefit ratio.

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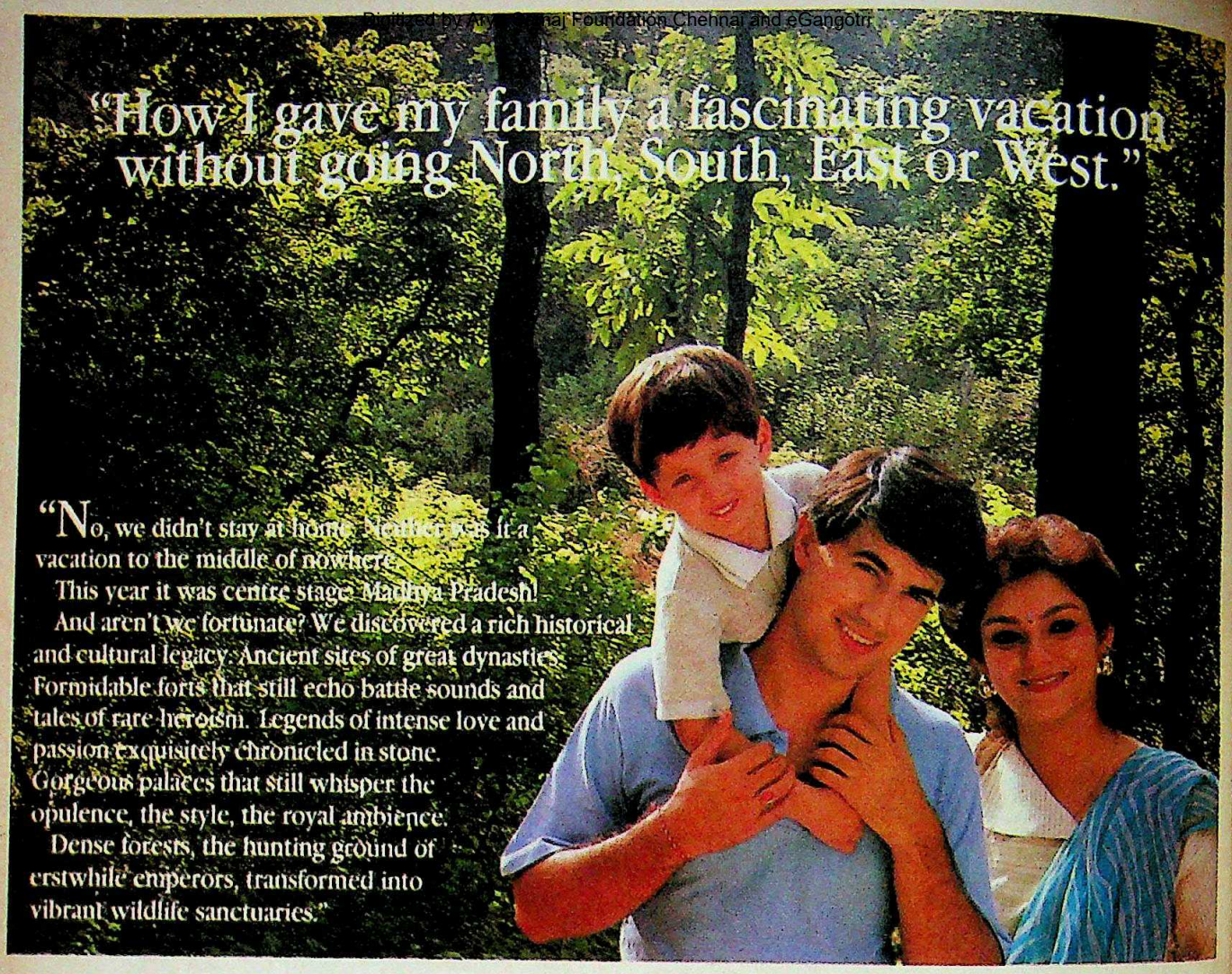

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Kanha. Bandhavgarh. Shivpuri — Wildlife reserves with such a profusion of species of birds, deer, antelopes, sambar, blackbuck. And, of course, the tiger.

Ujjain. Omkareshwar. Maheshwar — This is where a hundred gods have taken abode.

And **Bhopal** — The capital city. Hugging the shores of a magnificent lake. It is a quiet blend of mosques and museums, parks and gardens, broad avenues and modern buildings.

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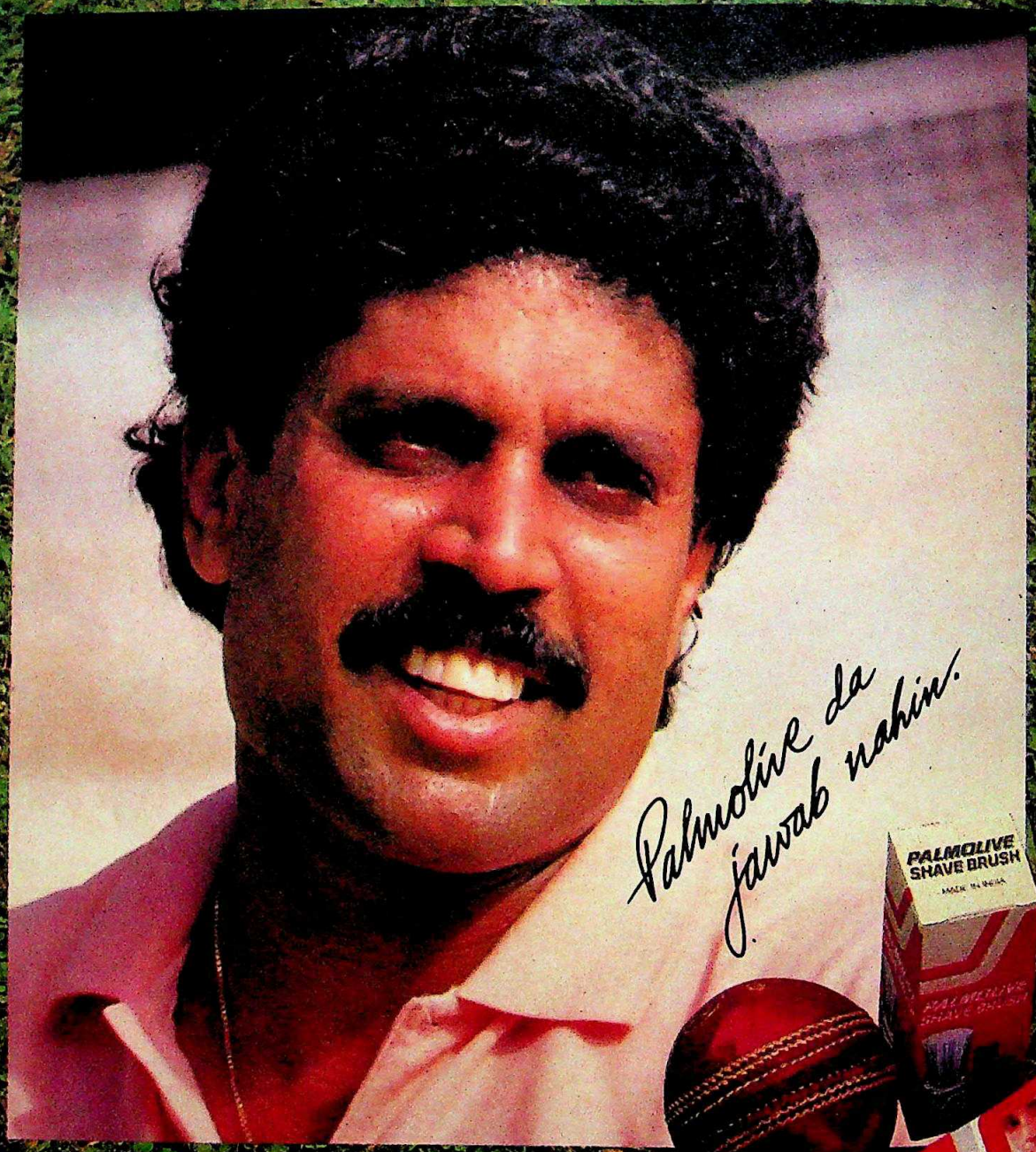

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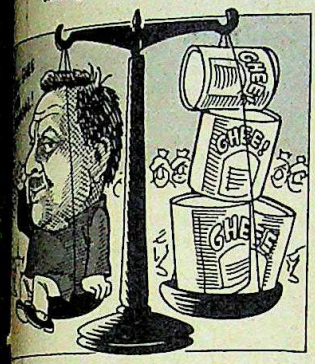
GHEE WIZ

☐ IN the absence of having anything weighty to say, candidates in India have traditionally preferred to be weighed themselves. But now even being weighed against coins is becoming *passe*, though heavyweights like Haryana strongman Devi Lal continue to stagger the scales.



This election, one contender decided on a commodity that he felt offered much more incentive for his workers than mere coins. The Janata Dal candidate for the Outer Delhi Lok Sabha seat, Tarif Singh, had himself weighed against *desi* ghee.

Tilting the balance at a hefty 81 kg, Tarif Singh acquired enough of the stuff to keep his workers soaked in *desi* ghee for the remainder of the election campaign. That was what one could call a well-oiled party machinery.

POLICE PIGEONS

☐ INDIA on the threshold of the 21st century? Try telling Orissa's police force that, and the answer is most likely to be: "Oh, tell tnat to the birds!"

That's exactly what the state's police did in order to maintain links with remote polling centres: told it to the birds. Around 40 polling centres in Koraput, Phulbani and flood-prone areas of Cuttack were linked to the police control room, not by wireless or walkie-talkies, but by specially trained homing pigeons which carried messages to and fro.

And by all accounts,

despite the difficulties, they seem to have done a commendable job. Pigeons they may be, pigeon-hearted they were not. For the Orissa Police, though, that may only have been partial consolation. The elections were for them, literally, a flight back in time.

POLL TALK

- *Chahey Hum Jiten Ya Loosaen...Yani Haren.*

  RAJIV GANDHI's faux pas *during Amethi speech*

- If we got Devi Lal in Haryana and V.P. Singh at the Centre, I am pretty sure we can solve the Punjab problem within a week.

  KHUSHWANT SINGH

- *Kuchch baaten gupt rahni chahiyen.*

  DEVRAHA BABA, when asked what transpired in Rajiv Gandhi's secret meeting with him, in Indian Express

HANDING IT OUT

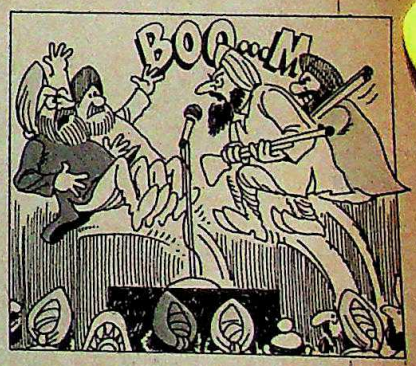
☐ ELECTIONS can cause paranoia in candidates. But Rammurat Shukla, an independent candidate from Raipur in Madhya Pradesh, seems to see a hidden hand behind everything.

He demanded that the returning officer ensure that all traffic constables in Raipur be removed from duty during electioneering. His reasoning: traffic constables on duty were blatantly canvassing support for the Congress(I) by displaying the 'hand' (the ruling party symbol) to all passing traffic, thus violating election guidelines.

His complaint further alleged that the automatic signals installed at traffic junctions had been deliberately rendered out of order by the district administration so that the traffic constables could influence the electorate. You have to hand it to Shukla.

MILITANT MOVES

☐ THE climate of fear in Punjab seems to have made electioneering much easier—and infinitely cheaper—than usual for the militant elements in the fray. The poll strategy of activists of the All India Sikh Students' Federation is a classic example. Having obtained the campaign schedules of certain moderate Akali leaders from the Badal and Longowal group, they would arrive at their election meetings. Standing menacingly in the front row, they would persist in asking inconvenient questions to the Akali candidates



in the fray.

The inevitable result: the Akalis would hastily wind up their speeches and move to the next village, leaving the militants with exactly what they wanted—a ready-made stage, a public address system and, above all, a captive audience.

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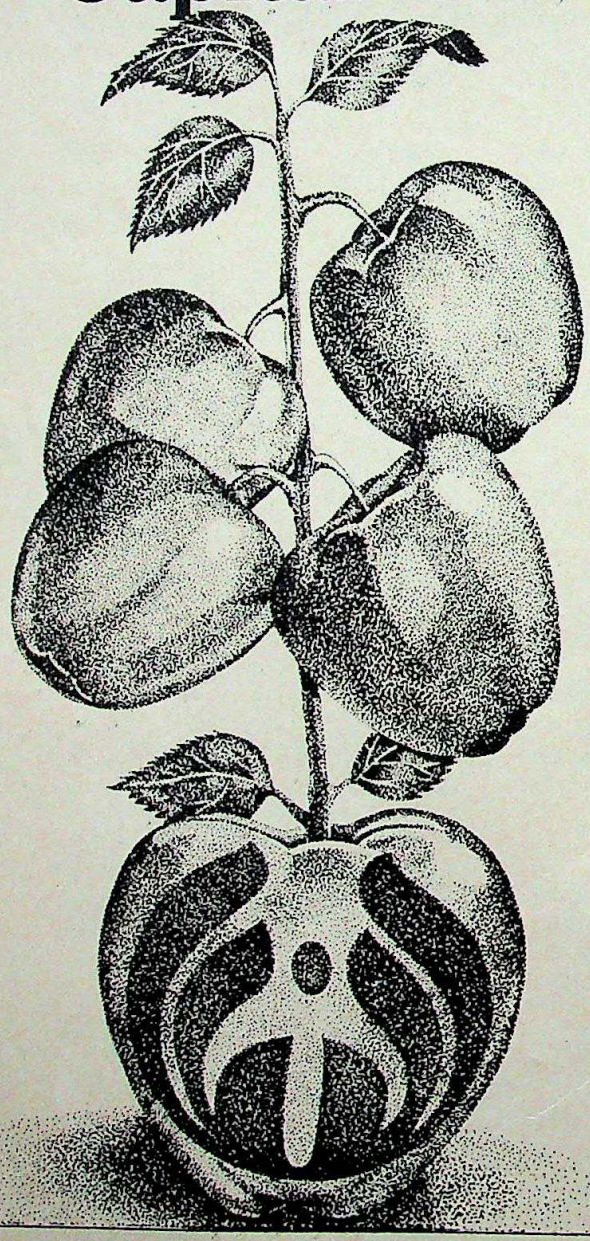

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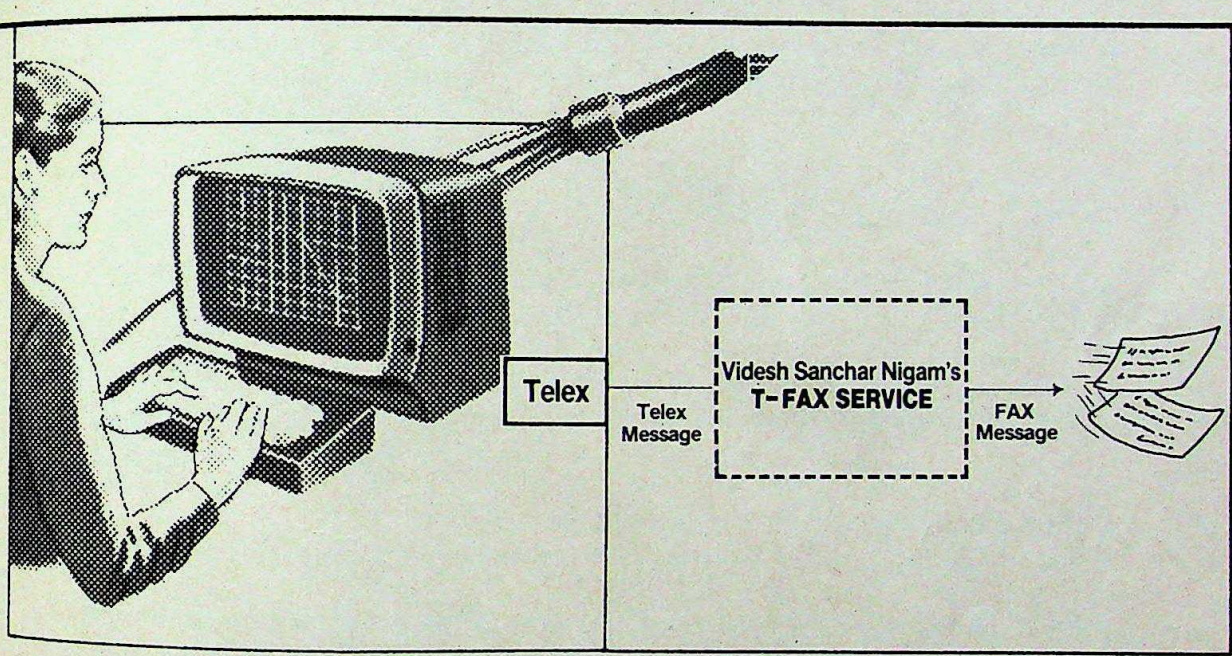

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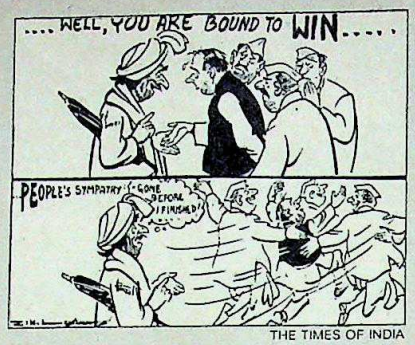
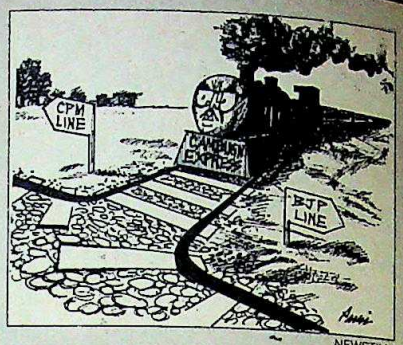


THE TIMES OF INDIA



NEWSTIME

• *If they make a* khichri, *the Opposition won't be able to form a government. Doctors generally recommend* khichri *only to those who are sick. But the opposition parties are seeking to feed* khichri *even to a healthy nation like India.* ■ RAJIV GANDHI

• *Rajiv Gandhi is history now. Let's talk of the future.* ■ V.P. SINGH in *Probe*

• Mein Italy ki beti ho sakti hoon, lekin Amethi ki bahu hoon. *(I may be a daughter of Italy, but I am the daughter-in-law of Amethi.)*

■ SONIA GANDHI, while campaigning in Amethi

• *We will win 12 out of 10 seats in Haryana. I'm contesting from Sikar and Ferozepur also but I remain a Haryanvi.* ■ DEVI LAL

• *If they win they'll loot, and if they lose they'll smash and shoot.*

■ Slogan in Punjab on the terrorists contesting

• *This pompous manifesto, obviously written by a hack, assumes an air of condescension while speaking of the Congress Party's wish to transfer power to the people.*

■ Janata Dal statement on the Congress(I) manifesto

• Hum to dubenge sanam, tujhko bhi le dubenge.

■ Graffito on the walls of Harsud in Madhya Pradesh, which will be submerged under the Narmada Sagar reservoir

• *Rahul Gandhi who accompanied his father was impressed with the large crowds that had gathered in the election meetings at different places in Madhya Pradesh.*

■ MOTILAL VORA, chief minister of Madhya Pradesh

• *You may spit on my face, but vote for the Congress(I).*

■ BALKAVI BAIRAGI, the Congress(I) candidate for Mandsaur Lok Sabha seat, at an election meeting

• *To ask for votes is like abusing us.*

■ A poster put up by the residents of a Harijan basti in Sehore, Madhya Pradesh

• *Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi is a disillusioned man. He never thought that the opposition leaders would see eye to eye.* ■ CHANDRA SHEKHAR, Janata Dal leader

• *Their leadership changes its chief ministers every six months—and from that, you know how they are running the Government.*

■ JYOTI BASU, West Bengal chief minister, on the Congress(I)

• *Rajiv Gandhi, his mother and his grandfather ruled this country for 42 years. Even today, nearly 64 per cent of the population is illiterate and millions of people don't get two square meals a day. But, Rajiv Gandhi still insists on saying:* "Mera Bharat Mahaan".

■ RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE

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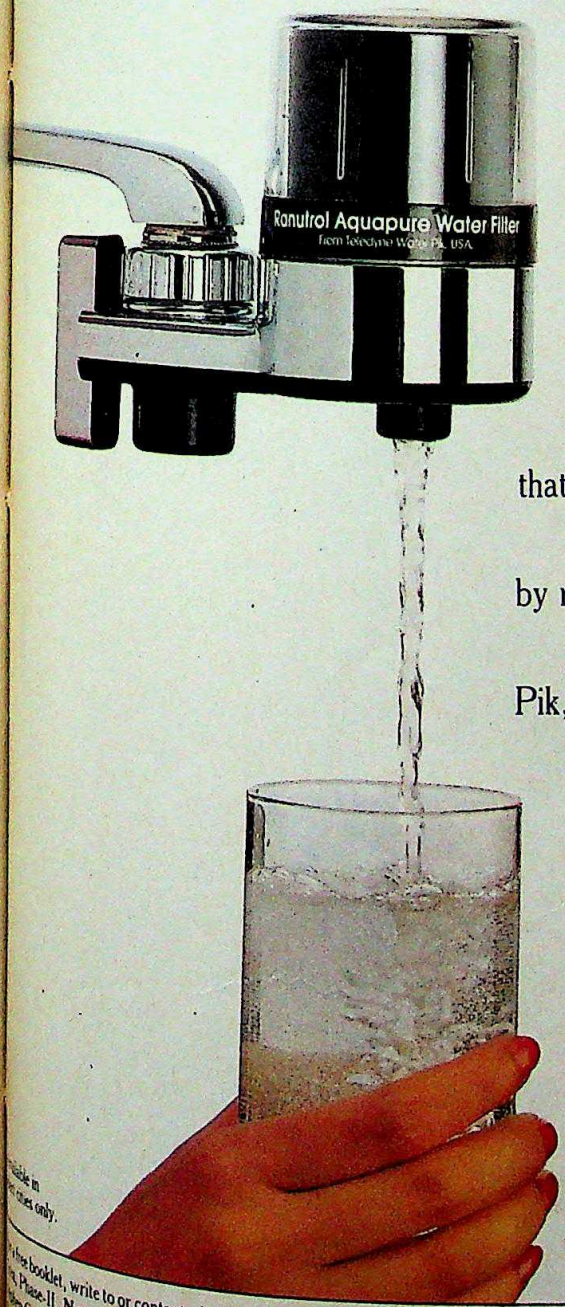

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NATIONAL FRONT TURBULENT

FOLLOWING three days of postponements and harrowing delays during which the entire nation was seriously beginning to doubt whether the vanquishers of the Congress(I) could form a government, the Janata Dal finally convened its parliamentary board meeting at 3:15 p.m. on December 1 in Parliament's Central Hall to elect its leader and the next prime minister of India.

It was an orderly meeting, but an extraordinary happening. Seated on the dais were Madhu Dandavate, presiding over the proceedings, V.P. Singh, Devi Lal, and Chandra Shekhar, an air of expectant jubilation on his face. Dandavate called for the nominations. And the denouement occurred within the next 15 minutes. The first surprise came when V.P. Singh proposed Devi Lal's name. It was seconded by Chandra Shekhar. Since there were no other names, Dandavate declared Devi Lal elected. While a shocked silence descended on Central Hall, all hell broke loose outside. Domestic and international wire agencies flashed the message to all corners of the world that Devi Lal had been elected the next prime minister of the largest democracy in the world. Outside Parliament crowds that had followed Devi Lal screamed their support for him. Even members of the Congress(I) were ecstatic that V.P. Singh had met his Waterloo.

> **One of the most complex and ultimately successful operations conducted by V.P. Singh's supporters was to neutralise Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar.**

Then four minutes later, wire services sent urgent messages urging, "kill, kill, kill, earlier story". The change came, it seemed, suddenly. Devi Lal rose to his full height, and in a masterly performance, thanked V.P. Singh for supporting him. He then said that the election result was really a fight against the corruption of the Rajiv Gandhi government and the leading warrior was V.P. Singh. *"Aur phir, Haryana me, jahan mujhe log tauji, tauji karke pukarte hain, main wahan tauji hi banke rehna chahta hoon."* (Besides, I prefer to look after Haryana as an elder uncle of my people.) And as the audience listened raptly, he proposed V.P. Singh's name for the leadership. He had barely stopped speaking, when Ajit Singh loudly seconded him. There were no other nominations. Amid thunderous applause Dandavate declared Singh elected. The only sign that there was an undercurrent of turbulence was the shell-shocked look on Chandra Shekhar's face.

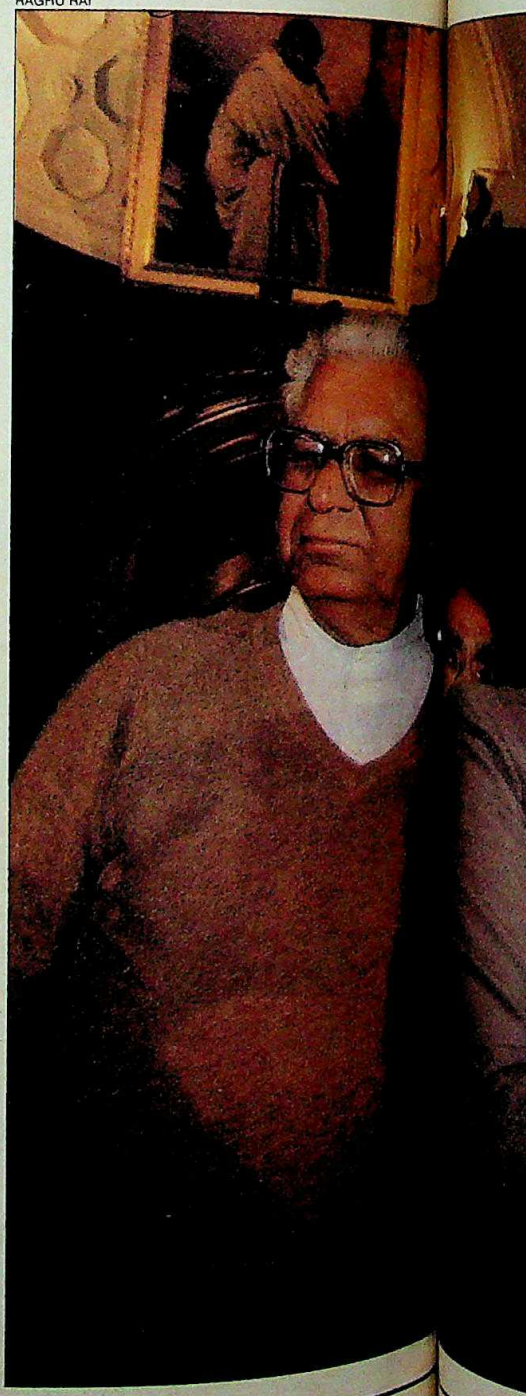
Four hours later, President R. Venkataraman officially asked V.P. Singh to form a National Front Government and scheduled the swearing-in ceremony for the following day.

The cavalry of grim-faced armed guards and police escorts accompanying V.P. Singh to Parliament and then to Rashtrapati Bhawan, associated more with Rajiv Gandhi's imperious style rather than the princeling of the erstwhile Jan Morcha, was a clear signal that the power equations in the nation had changed. On November 29, while speculation abounded about some last-minute game plan by which Rajiv Gandhi would try and hang on to power, Rajiv drove to Rashtrapati Bhawan and tendered his resignation to the President.

On the surface, a smooth transition. But underneath, a political volcano that threatened to erupt for four days with nightmarish consequences for the very stability of the nation. For even as the National Front was hurtling towards forming the new government, 48 hours of dramatic developments were demonstrating how precariously the new government is balanced. The events preceding the formation of the Government—blackmail, brinkmanship, rumour, tantrums—indicated a rocky road ahead that will call for some of the most astute political jugglery and management ever witnessed in this country. The Augean stables extended right into the belly of the very Janata Dal.

According to plans, the leader of the new government was to be picked at 3 p.m. on November 28. The day came and

RAGHU RAI



Devi Lal, V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar: clever manoeuvres

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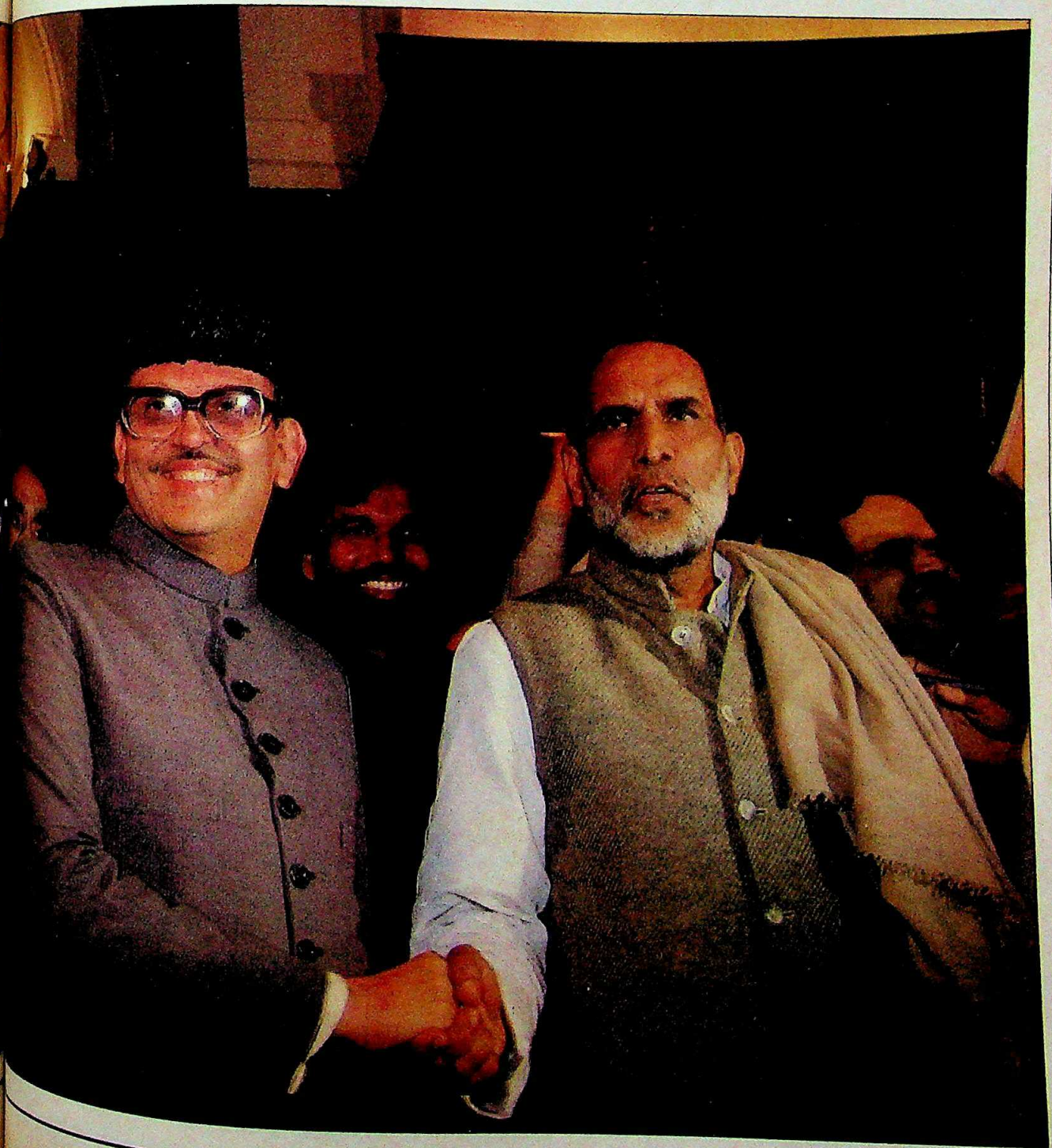
TRANSITION

went. Postponed to the 29th. Postponed to the 30th. Postponed to the 1st. What was happening within these four crucial days was a replay of Indian politics at its filthiest and grimiest. Money, muscle, treachery, self-interest, blind ambition, and the machinations of two men—Devi Lal's son Om Prakash Chautala and Chandra Shekhar—were playing havoc with the people's electoral verdict and holding to ransom the entire political process. Groups favouring the twain—and assisted by industrialists opposed to Singh—were engaged in frenetic back-stabbing to ensure his defeat. The strategy, partly born out of self-destructive avarice and partly out of a game plan worked out between Congress(I) and anti-V.P. Singh forces, was aimed at sabotaging the delicate balance worked out by V.P. Singh, whereby a centrist core, the



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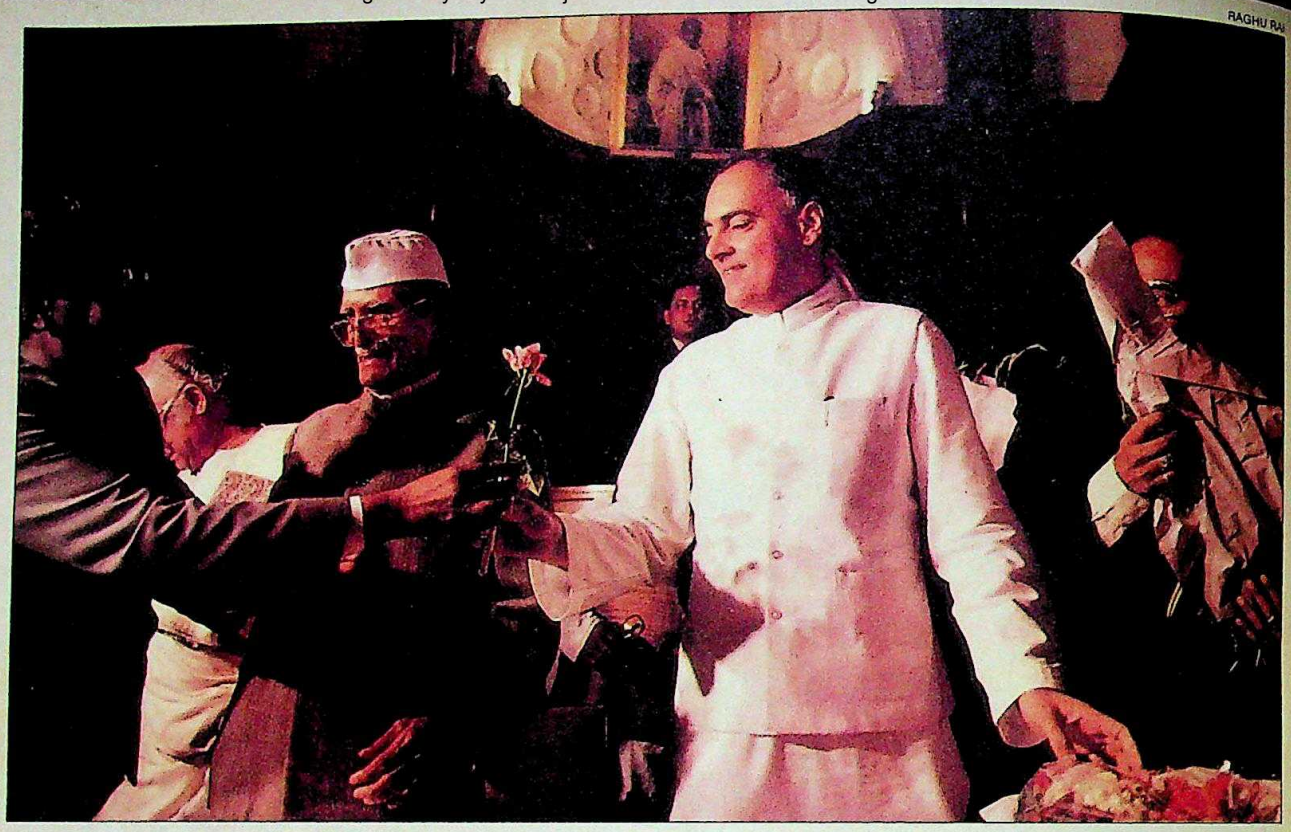
RAGHU RAI



Rajiv Gandhi chosen leader of the Congress(I): unchallenged

Janata Dal, would form a government assisted from the outside by the BJP and the communists. The Congress(I) advertisement campaign of fighting roosters and scorpions may have backfired during the election campaign, but it began to hit home with an ironic fury in the developments that marked the post-election power struggle in the Janata Dal.

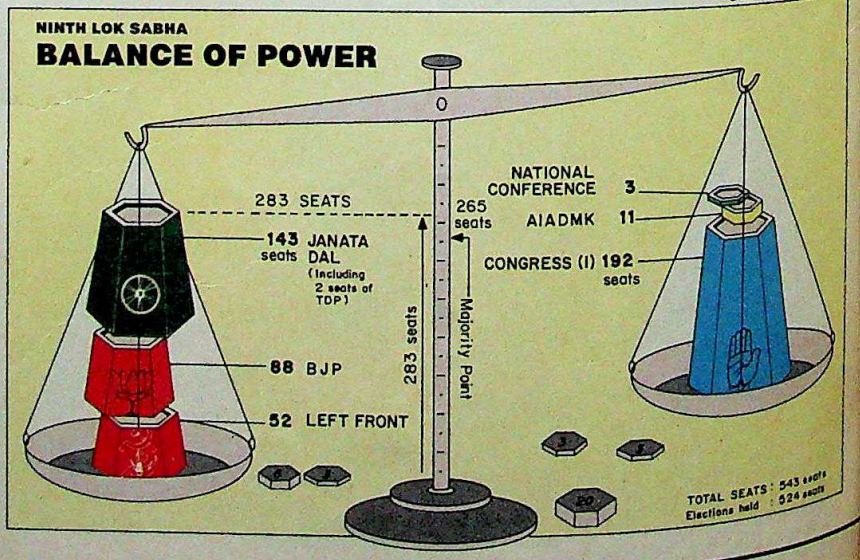
THE one person who emerged as the master strategist responsible for blunting the daggers being hurled in V.P. Singh's direction to prevent his emergence as prime minister was none other than Arun Nehru, the latter day Chanakya of Indian politics. V.P. Singh's major task lay not only in finding a *modus vivendi* with the revivified BJP whose support for him was in total contradiction of the anti-Hindu-fundamentalist stance he had taken during the election campaign, but also in battling the formidable beasts of opposition to him that lay buried within the belly of his own party. Here is how the intrigue unfurled:

■ **November 27.** Devi Lal is lobbying for himself. He meets L.K. Advani to test BJP support for himself, but Advani bluntly tells him that the country has voted for V.P. Singh as the alternative leader, and since Devi Lal's own government has fared badly in Haryana, he should confine his role to building up the party. Devi Lal says in an interview that evening: "My personal support is for V.P. Singh."

■ **November 28.** Devi Lal, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and N.T. Rama Rao visit Chandra Shekhar, the most virulent V.P. Singh foe, lying in bed with malaria at his house, to urge him to support V.P. Singh. He remains non-committal, but begins organising a subterranean effort among V.P. Singh's opponents, including Devi Lal's son, Om Prakash Chautala, to revive Devi Lal's opposition to V.P. Singh. This is because Chandra Shekhar has made his own head count and realises that he would be soundly thrashed in a contest with V.P. Singh. But he keeps this close to his chest and continues to create the impression that he is still in the running while also letting it be known that he will support Devi Lal. His tactic is that even if he cannot trounce V.P. Singh himself, he will do it through Devi Lal and emerge as the kingmaker who humbled V.P. Singh.

■ **November 29.** Anti-V.P. Singh industrialists who have been campaigning amongst Janata Dal MPs—many of whom have been provided luxury suites in two posh hotels—as well as international

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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godman Chandraswamy get active. The industrialists, Chautala, and Chandraswamy hatch a plan to: bring Devi Lal back into the fray; and turn the BJP's support to Devi Lal. Chandraswamy and emissary "Mama" Aggarwal confer with Chandra Shekhar, and then visit Atal Behari Vajpayee. They try and sell Vajpayee the line that the BJP should join the new government and support Devi Lal because only he, and not V.P. Singh, would openly support the militant Hindu demand for a "Hindu Rashtra". Vajpayee listens patiently, but makes no commitment.

Meanwhile, Chautala organises busloads of Jats from Haryana who arrive in the capital in thousands to pressure Devi Lal. They chant: *"Ban gaye, ban gaye, pradhan mantri aap ban gaye."* (You have become the prime minister.) The psychological pressure begins to work and Devi Lal starts assuring his supporters that he is very much in the race. Janata Dal leaders decide to postpone the scheduled meeting of the party's political affairs committee and the parliamentary board.

Late that night Arun Nehru, Arif Mohammed Khan, and V.C. Shukla launch a counter campaign. They put pressure first, on people like Chimanbhai Patel and Nathuram Mirdha—leaders known to be in the V.P. Singh camp, but now wavering under pressure from various lobbyists. The same night V.P. Singh and Arun Nehru confer separately with Jyoti Basu and L.K. Advani and gain their reassurance that their support is exclusively for a National Front government led by V.P. Singh.

Still, a paralysing stalemate was in the air. According to the numbers count, of the 141 party votes, the V.P. Singh-Biju Patnaik-Ajit Singh-Mirdha camp would get 80, and the Devi Lal-Chandra Shekhar group 61. The splinter group, consisting of more than one-third of the party, was in a position to switch sides without being affected by the Anti-Defection Act.

RAGHU RAI

■ V.P. Singh with Advani, Vajpayee and other leaders ■

V.P. Singh was able to garner the support of the Left and the BJP by hammering out an agreement on a minimum programme of action.

Basu greeting Devi Lal and Rama Rao

PRASHANT PANJIAR

■ **November 30.** There appears to be a clear and ominous divide between Devi Lal and V.P. Singh. The two leaders, who were in personal contact with each other every hour until the 28th, have not spoken to each other for two days. But this apparent division is part of a strategy masterminded by Arun Nehru along with Arif Mohammed Khan, Satya Pal Malik, and a senior official from the Intelligence Bureau. The plan: to make an assessment of whether Chandra Shekhar is indeed a contestant, and how much support he enjoys. In doing so, Nehru also seeks to convey the impression to Chandra Shekhar that there is a real falling-out between Devi Lal and V.P. Singh. With this in mind, he advises V.P. Singh's camp to break all contact with Devi Lal while secretly planting key V.P. Singh supporters in Chandra Shekhar's camp to ensure that Chandra Shekhar's support for Devi Lal is absolute. This is part of an intricate design that unfolds the next day.

■ **December 1.** Devi Lal arises at 6 a.m. and starts contacting key MPs and leaders like Sharad Yadav and Ajit Singh to canvass their support. Chautala, meanwhile, parks himself at Chandra Shekhar's house. The second part of Nehru's strategy is to keep Chandra Shekhar convinced that he is regarded as a real king-maker, and that if he steps down from the contest in favour of Devi Lal he will be doing so from a position of strength. In order to carry out this tactic, Nehru persuades Jyoti Basu and former president Zail Singh, and actor Shatrughan Sinha, who is close to Chandra Shekhar, to convey to Chandra Shekhar that he should help avoid a conflict and disintegration of the party by lending his support to a consensus candidate. And Devi Lal, the very man Chandra Shekhar is secretly backing, appears to be emerging as this consensus candidate. Also, Ram Jethmalani attempts to conduct a fast outside Chandra Shekhar's house to dissuade him from his hostile stance, but is ruthlessly beaten up by hoodlums.

As the game continues, the next step is to approach Devi Lal to accept the candidature of V.P. Singh. But Nehru wants to make certain that while this is being accomplished Chautala should not be allowed to meet his father for two crucial hours—between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. when the critical meeting of the parliamentary party for election of the new leader is to begin. This is accomplished by despatching dozens of senior partymen to lobby Chautala and keep him buttonholed at Chandra Shekhar's residence.

Now the crucial question is how to

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establish contact with Devi Lal. A team of journalists, working closely with the group, requests him to talk to Nehru and V.P. Singh directly to sort out the problems. After considerable dithering, Devi Lal agrees. At 1:30 p.m., Nehru drives in a white Maruti to Haryana Bhawan and has a half-hour closed-door meeting with Devi Lal. He reminds the Jat leader that he is the key architect of opposition unity and the defeat of Rajiv Gandhi and urges him to do his duty to the nation by not allowing party-wreckers to turn victory into defeat. At 2 p.m. Devi Lal agrees to drive with Nehru to Orissa Bhawan where V.P. Singh and Biju Patnaik are secretly waiting. There ensues a heart-to-heart talk in which Devi Lal recognises the problems for the party's image, but adds that since he's being projected by his followers as the next prime minister, it has now become a matter of personal honour for him.

> **Arun Nehru was the master strategist responsible for blunting the political daggers hurled at V.P. Singh.**

V.P. Singh again plays his famous "withdrawal card", and tells Devi Lal that if that is the case then he would himself propose his name for prime minister. Nehru and Patnaik interject. They argue that since V.P. Singh had made the offer to nominate Devi Lal, and since it was a matter of general agreement that Devi Lal's heart really lay in running Haryana and that V.P. Singh was the only man experienced in running the Central Government, Devi Lal should reciprocate in equal measure. A deal is struck which would guarantee Devi Lal's honour, yet tilt the scales in favour of V.P. Singh.

Immediately thereafter, Devi Lal, now part of the Nehru strategy, invites Chandra Shekhar to Orissa Bhawan. The Rajput leader from Ballia is informed that Devi Lal is the consensus candidate whose name would be proposed by V.P. Singh. Chandra Shekhar is asked if he will second the nomination. A beaming Chandra Shekhar agrees, and he and Devi Lal arrive at Parliament House where a throng of supporters scream: *"Chandra Shekhar zindabad! Devi Lal zindabad!"* Some minutes later, Arun Nehru and V.P. Singh arrive. But a little earlier, Nehru makes a key telephone call to Ajit Singh and informs him of the strategy.

WHAT transpired at the parliamentary party meeting that began at 3:15 p.m. was ultimately the unravelling of this meticulous, elaborate and clandestinely designed nuts and bolts strategy, in which an unwary Chandra Shekhar, for long labelled the country's wiliest politician and party wrecker par excellence, was brilliantly checkmated and politically humiliated. And the shock showed on his face as he muttered under his breath: "I'll show them." He spoke briefly afterwards saying: "I support the decision, but with reservations because I was kept in the dark about all this." Later, when saffron-robed N.T. Rama Rao called a general National Front meeting to order, Chandra Shekhar, with a few of his supporters, walked out in obvious disgust.

V.P. Singh's fight had been on two fronts. For even as the complex and ultimately successful plan to neutralise Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar was being carried out, a parallel effort was underway to ensure the support of the BJP without any loss of face either for V.P. Singh or the BJP.

The main reason for this was that the mathematics on the basis of which the post-electoral calculations for forming a government were made, went completely awry. The National Front had made its seat adjustments with the BJP and the Left parties in the belief that it would win a total of about 260 seats. This was seen as a comfortable position in which, with the BJP and Leftists receiving about 50 seats each or less, V.P. Singh could rely on the Left for supporting his government even to the exclusion of the BJP, whose support for the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue he had openly condemned.

In its calculations, the Front had not even remotely envisaged that a pro-Congress(I) wave in the south, that went against the regional parties of the National Front, would just about wipe out the Front leaving the Janata Dal with about 141 seats in the Lok Sabha. Nor did they calculate that the communists would lose Kerala and leave the CPI(M) with only 32 seats in Parliament.

PRASHANT PANJIAR

Arif Mohammed, Arun Nehru, Shukla

And least of all was the Front prepared for the virtual tidal wave on which the BJP swept into Parliament with 88 seats. Singh's flirtation with the BJP in terms of seat adjustments erected a veritable Frankenstein for the Janata Dal. The contradictions began hitting home as soon as the results began to come. On November 27, V.P. Singh suddenly discovered that he could not possibly form a government without BJP support. And he was unwilling to make a public request soliciting its support because it would have totally contradicted his earlier public posture.

A major crisis was at hand: it seemed the National Front would fail to form a government. Fumed Advani: "If he wants our support he should accept it publicly. I will not accept his cloak-and-dagger politics."

The crisis was finally resolved through the appointment of a committee consisting of V.P. Singh, Rama Rao, Arun Nehru and Ajit Singh to negotiate with the BJP. First, Rama Rao, as National Front chairman, and its convener V.P. Singh,

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wrote a letter to Advani seeking the BJP's support. "It is now the sacred duty of all of us to see that this mandate of the people is not frustrated and the formation of a non-Congress(I) government is not delayed to give effect to the hopes and aspirations of the people," the letter read.

Next, in secret negotiations between V.P. Singh, Nehru and Advani lasting all night, the problem of whether the BJP would support the National Front from outside or participate within the Government—as a BJP faction led by Advani had been demanding in view of its massive gains in Parliament—was thrashed out. V.P. Singh remained adamantly opposed to this. Again another compromise was hammered out. In return for supporting a government led by V.P. Singh from outside, the BJP demanded that the new government implement certain basic reforms, including: State funding of elections; cleaning the judiciary of political elements; granting autonomy to Doordarshan and All India Radio; arriving at a consensus on including Sanskrit in the national multi-lingual formula for different states; replacement of the Minorities Commission by a civil rights commission; immediate dissolution of state assemblies in Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra with seat adjustments favouring parties according to the new strength they have demonstrated in the Lok Sabha.

All this amounts to virtually unconditional support by the BJP to the new government. It is not even asking the Janata Dal to support the VHP's proposal for the construction of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple, and has also made the commitment that it will prevent construction from starting at least until assembly elections are held in the states.

For the time being V.P. Singh has been able to meander his way out of a political thicket of stinging nettles with only a few rashes to show for it. But what is he really presiding over? The brew in his own party consists of unpredictable and rebellious Jats who could well rebel against Devi Lal for standing down; adherents of the former Congress(I) culture; as well as the followers of Chandra Shekhar who have shown themselves capable of unfathomable political mischief. Moreover, Chandra Shekhar, neutralised for the time being, is unlikely to keep silent.

Among his allies there is a segment of powerful BJP leaders like L.K. Advani, still smarting under the memory of V.P. Singh having publicly condemned their stance as communal, who may still seek participation in the Government much to the disenchantment of V.P. Singh's newly-acquired Muslim vote-bank in the Hindi heartland.

BHAWAN SINGH

Jethmalani being roughed up

AND there is still the spectre of how severely the alliance with the BJP will be strained once the plan for the construction of the temple in Ayodhya starts moving ahead and how the BJP leadership will respond to pressure from its own militant cadres. Also, strains are bound to develop with the Left during the budget session because it does not entirely see eye to eye with V.P. Singh's liberal economic thinking.

Then there is Rajiv's Congress(I) to contend with. In fact, the consensus prevailing among political observers when the election results began pouring in was that only a realignment of the opposing factions of the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal could provide a stable government with more than 300 seats. The speculation was that a Congress(I), led into a debacle by Rajiv Gandhi, would be willing to dump him and join hands with V.P. Singh in a new political configuration.

But that eventuality was also the victim of the final arithmetic. Today Rajiv Gandhi finds himself sitting pretty as leader of a formidable and undivided opposition facing a potentially fractious ruling party. And there is nobody within the Congress(I) capable or willing to lead a revolt against him.

This was amply demonstrated at the party's parliamentary board meeting at 7 p.m. on November 27 where a confident and totally relaxed looking Rajiv, so different from the piteous figure he had cut during the campaign, was unanimously re-elected leader of the party amongst paeans of praise from party members.

Ranged against V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar's supporters beat up Ram Jethmalani when he tried to fast in protest.

"The election has proven," Rajiv told wildly cheering partymen, "that we are the only national party that stands on a well-founded ideology and does not move from its ideology for momentary gain."

The reasons for Rajiv's new-found confidence are not difficult to explain. The power of the syndicate bosses, with the exception of Sharad Pawar, who has openly exhorted all partymen to support Rajiv, has been totally squashed. The electoral numbers have served, in effect, to split the party in Rajiv's favour. The political machines of the potential challengers—N.D. Tiwari, Jagannath Mishra, Amarsinh Chaudhary, Motilal Vora—have been defeated in their own states. And rival power centres within the party like Buta Singh, Shiela Dikshit, K.C. Pant have also been eliminated, leaving Rajiv Gandhi as the only elected national figure in the Congress(I).

Besides, the power-base in the party has now shifted to the south—returning as many as 104 of the party's 192 MPs. Most of them owe their tickets and victories to Rajiv Gandhi

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and are unlikely to try and eject him.

Overtly, the Congress(I) will not seek the support of any other group. "But we are not opposed to receiving their support should they choose to give it to us," says Arjun Singh. He was the first partyman to issue a circular to his colleagues asking pledges of support for Rajiv Gandhi. Clearly, he has made a comeback as a key Rajiv adviser, along with Madhavsinh Solanki and Sharad Pawar.

The Congress(I)'s game plan, it seems, is to project a sober image, to cooperate with the new government in its investigations, and to project Rajiv not as a humiliated but a humbled and wiser leader in the fashion of the post-Emergency image of Sanjay Gandhi. At the same time, the party will spare no subterfuge to engineer a massive defection from the National Front just before the assembly elections.

As Kamal Nath, one of the few victorious Congress(I) MPs from Madhya Pradesh, put it: "The real campaign has just begun. Some of the elements who were responsible for the prime minister's dilemmas have been wiped out by the people. As far as the new government is concerned, my slogan is, we will meet them, greet them, and then beat them." Should the National Front alliance begin to come unglued, its inability to provide a stable government could be the most potent weapon in the hands of a Congress(I) attempting a comeback.

But there are also the pluses for V.P. Singh that cannot be ignored. If he appoints a 55-member ministry—and assuming each minister has the support of at least three MPs—he will ensure that at least 150 of his partymen will have a vested, patronage-based interest in not defecting. And there is reason to believe that the Left Front and BJP support for the National Front will be firm at least initially. For, both parties realise that if the Government falls they are unlikely ever to recoup their positions in Parliament. The BJP, in particular, remembers the lesson of 1980 when, because of the failure of the Janata government, it found itself decimated. The party leaders appear committed to not repeating that mistake again.

And even with their support, the National Front can hope to chalk up no more than an uncomfortable majority of 281 seats. Moves are already underway to garner the support of independents and satellite groups such as the Simranjit Singh Mann supporters. Together, these comprise about 40 MPs and plans are afoot to include them in the Government by giving them ministerial berths. The immediate plan is to incrementally build up the core group to about 200 by chipping away at the satellite groups that now support the Congress(I).

And the long-term strategy is to weaken Rajiv's position even further, not by punishing him, but by opening up all the files on scandals and related improprieties, and thereby pulling down his image to such an extent that he becomes an embarrassment and liability to his own party. In this eventuality, National Front strategists figure, Congressmen will have little option but to defect in large numbers, thereby giving the National Front a comfortable majority in which it will have to depend neither on the BJP nor the communists.

But beyond the strategy, there is the enigma of V.P. Singh himself. While he now boasts an 'A' Team of Nehru, Arif, V.C. Shukla, Inder Gujral, Satya Pal Malik, he still trusts no aides, but only his inner voice that he has repeatedly said never fails to serve him in coming to the right decision. The turbulent transition in government, while it provides V.P. Singh as an alternative and a minimum programme of opposition unity must now demonstrate that if the Congress(I) had destroyed national consensus, as V.P. Singh claims, a new one must emerge in its place.

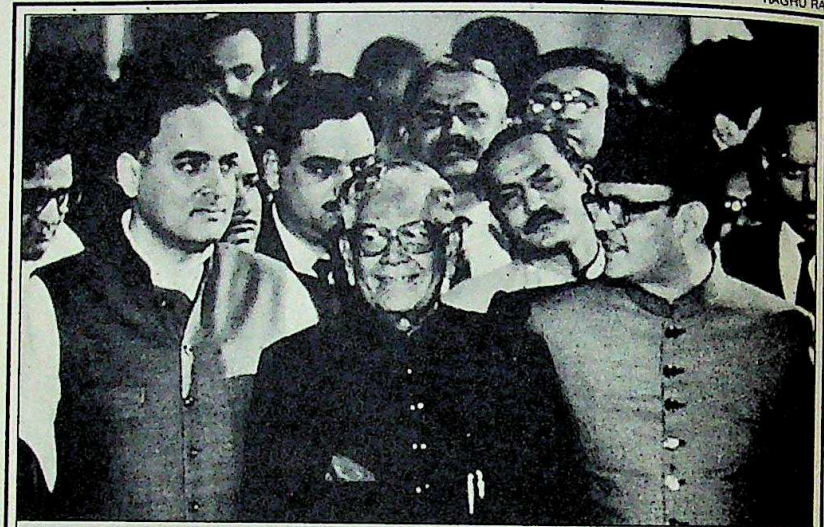
The electorate has shown that it is a harsh task-master and will brook no excuses for incompetence, arrogance, and the failure to deliver. V.P. Singh too will find himself subjected to remorseless scrutiny. The problems he faces are Herculean. Especially since he is still performing a balancing act on a precarious tightrope and will be appointing a meal-ticket ministry, catering to the greed of people within his own party through massive patronage.

The acid test for the new Mr Clean will be his ability to ensure that those given key ministries provide a ruthlessly clean government. Otherwise the "alternative" will all have been in vain.

There is little doubt, that so far V.P. Singh has achieved a goal even his most ardent supporters believed was an impossibility. During the past two-and-a half years, he had chalked out a war front and a peace front. The war front was Rajiv Gandhi. The peace front, despite its contradictions stemming from the fact that so many discredited and corrupt politicians had flocked to his bandwagon, was his party. Sooner than later he will have to choose two similar fronts in his own party. The war has only just begun. And in resolving these contradictions, Singh may continue to baffle and confound the Doubting Thomases as he has done for the past three years. But his task has only one direction: uphill. —INDERJIT BADHWAR and PRABHU CHAWLA

V.P. Singh with President and Rajiv after swearing in ceremony

RAGHU RAI



Singh has achieved a goal even supporters thought impossible. But he faces a continuing uphill battle.

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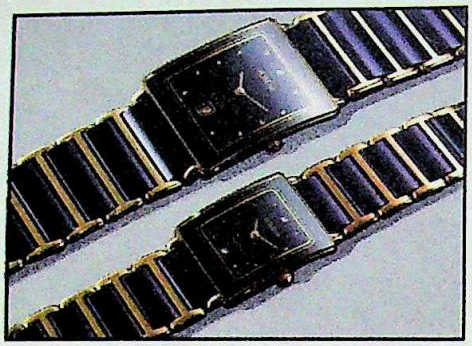

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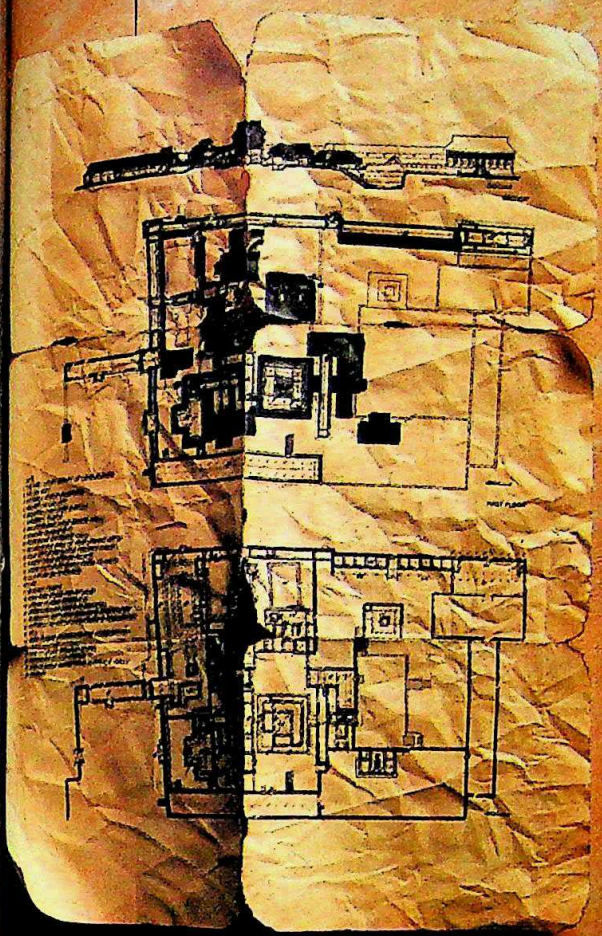

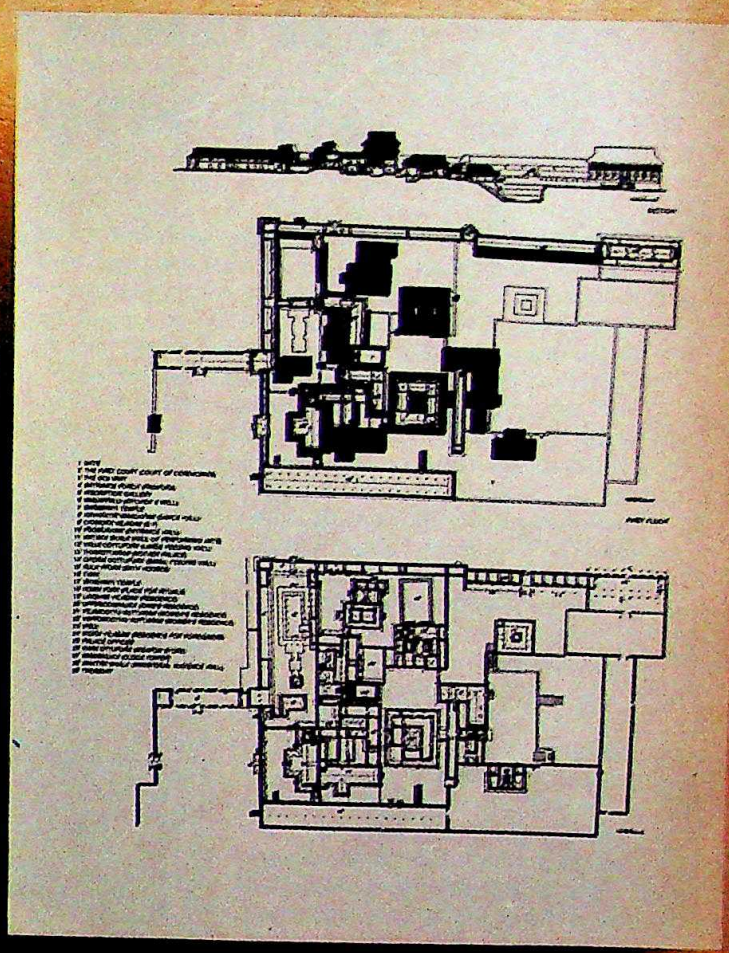

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V.P. SINGH

"I'll have politics on my terms"

THE newly-elected Prime Minister, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, outlined his views, plans and hopes on vital issues facing his government and the nation in a series of interviews with Editor AROON PURIE *and Features Editor* SHEKHAR GUPTA *during his campaign and on the day he was sworn in as prime minister. Excerpts:*

Q. How do you feel, now that you are prime minister?

A. I have a deep sense of responsibility towards those who live in huts and hamlets and particularly towards the younger generation which expects a lot from this crucial change at the Centre.

Q. Since you were expelled from the Congress(I) you have always maintained that you will not hold political office. What made you change your mind?

A. Left to myself I would like to play the role of Balram in Mahabharat. But at the moment I am carrying out the wishes of the leaders of the National Front and all the elected MPs of the Janata Dal.

Q. How would you describe the mandate given to your party? The south has rejected the National Front causing a horizontal political divide. Isn't it accurate to describe yours as a regional party of the Indo-Gangetic basin?

Q. There is certainly a set-back for us in the south. But electoral reverses do not mean that we have been wiped out politically. National Front partners like the DMK and our supporters like the Left Front are ruling two states in the south. We are sure we will correct this imbalance.

Q. How do you answer cynicism about your government's stability?

A. Since 1977, the Opposition has moved towards stability and the Congress(I) has deteriorated towards instability. It is the Opposition that has given stable governments in Assam, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala—Karnataka too, but there was foul play there. Look at Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, where chief ministers have changed, almost like calendars, every year. This political process has not been fully appreciated. We are not bankrupt like the Congress(I) where there's not a replacement for even a man like Rajiv Gandhi. I can't understand this. Political bankruptcy is being counted as a big asset.

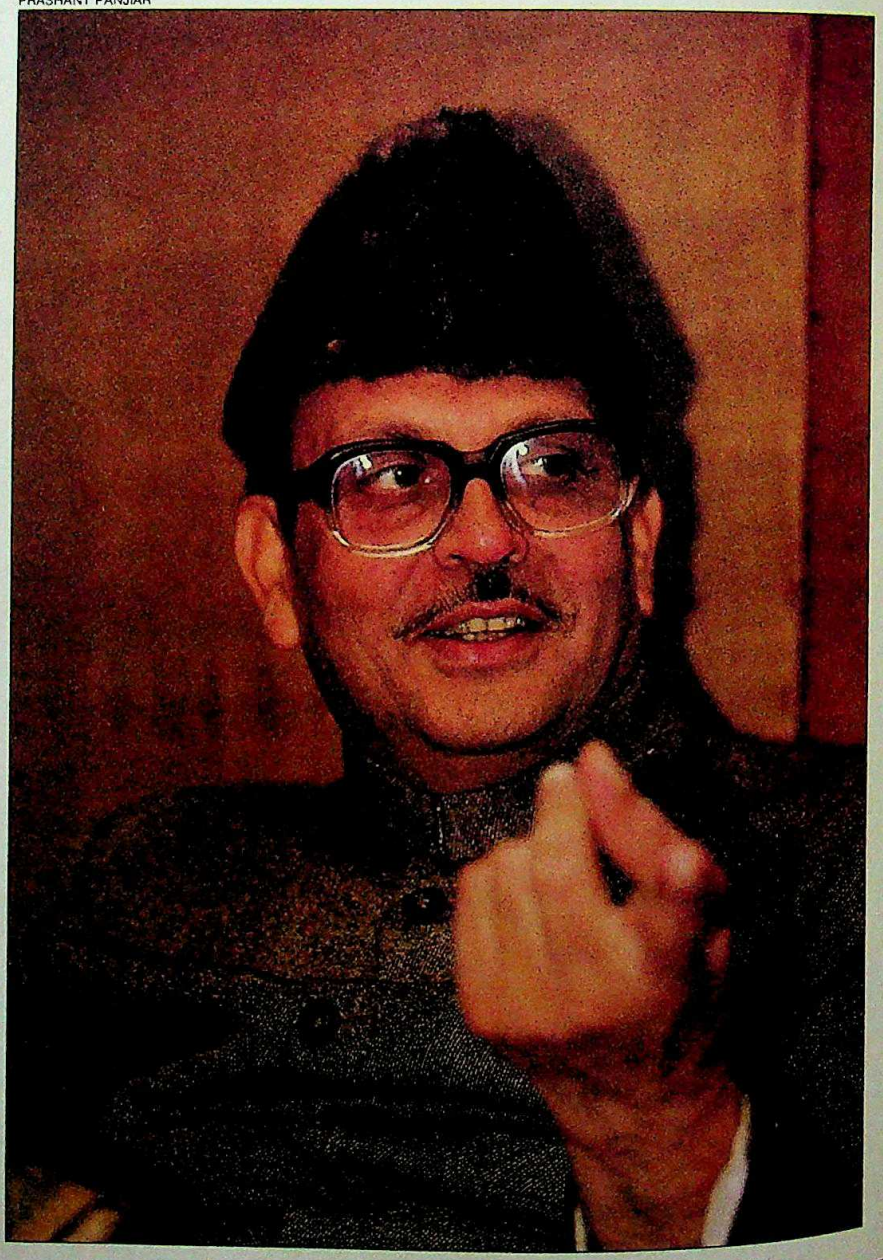
Q. The process of your selection has been marred by dissidence and Chandra Shekhar seems distinctly unhappy. How do you intend to tackle this situation?

A. I have no problems with anyone. I will continue to seek his co-operation.

Q. How do you view the phenomenal success of the BJP? Is it because of their communal appeal?

A. I think the BJP has won primarily due to one to one contests in almost every state. Both the Janata Dal and the BJP have benefited from this exercise because it reassured the people that we meant business.

PRASHANT PANJIAR



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Q. Since you are leading a minority government relying on the support of the left and the right which have diametrically opposing ideologies, how do you plan to ensure the stability of your government and implement a minimum programme?

A. Yes, there are inbuilt problems of a minority government. But I don't see any serious problem in implementing a minimum programme. All of them are committed to provide a clean and stable government at the Centre. I have always made it clear that I will have politics on my terms.

Q. What is this minimum programme?

A. Fight against the influence of big money over politics.

Q. As finance minister you were considered responsible for unleashing what many of your critics called the raid raj. Will the raids resume with the same vigour?

A. Raids cannot be an integral part of any government policy. But when there is evidence of government rules being violated by someone, corrective measures have to be taken to enforce the law. For a strong industrial base the Government will not hesitate to give positive impetus to agriculture-based industries along with the core industries.

Q. Will you have inquiry commissions as in 1977?

A. I don't think there is any need for it. The normal law of the land can take care of any lapses. The Government should have the will to implement these laws. And certainly there will be no vindictiveness.

Q. But you will identify those who took the Bofors money?

A. That is our bounden duty towards our motherland.

Q. You were one of the architects of the last government's economic policies. Do you plan to continue on the same path?

A. We see the agriculture sector as one of the mainsprings of the economy. Industry languishes when there is a drought, while there is an upswing when there is a good crop. We don't see a contradiction between agriculture and industry. But agriculture is still the main sector which provides the largest employment. Investments in agriculture have been inadequate. While the real price of agricultural produce has not gone up, the price of what the farmer is buying has gone up. These adverse terms of trade are depleting the rural area and pauperising it. This has to be reversed—even for the sake of industry. Otherwise, we have an industrial growth that is skewed.

Q. That means you will reduce the costs in industry too?

A. Yes. Because then it caters to the high-income bracket and items of mass consumption get neglected. We have to think of small-scale industries. Now, our biggest asset is manpower. And if this asset is idle, our main asset is idle. So you have to adopt technologies that will result in greater overall employment. We want agro-based industry.

Q. Does it matter if big business houses get into this?

A. I don't think big houses should get into the small-scale sector. But at various levels it is the new entrepreneur class that has come up in India—educated engineers and all. And they have given a fillip to industry and exports. Not the big ones. The dynamism of this sector has to be recognised and it matches our strategy. Then, of course, we will have to face the balance of payments problem. We will have to have a positive strategy for exports.

Q. Will you reverse some import liberalisation?

A. There is hardly any flexibility—70 per cent of our imports are compulsory imports: petroleum products, non-ferrous metals, precision machinery. Of the remaining 30 per cent, 50 per cent is for the raw material needs of industry. The debate is about the 15 per cent—a storm in a teacup. So that sets the minima.

Q. What about the maxima?

A. You take a person in the supermarket, put Rs 10 in his pocket and tell him he is free to buy anything he likes. You could have a debate about what he should buy, but it is purely academic. There is another problem. The rupee is not a freely exchangeable currency. So earnings in rupees, even say by generation through increased production, will not be enough. Payments will have to be in dollars from other sectors or exports. If you put the three constraints together and see the hard reality, you don't have enough to debate about.

Q. So what do you think is the critical economic issue?

A. The balance of payments management and the debt. I think that we'll have to have a positive and very forceful export policy. Then many items of our imports like edible oils can be curtailed. I've always had this strategy in the Finance Ministry. On edible oils it has paid off. Take many of the agricultural products, like pulses. There is no reason for importing them. Basically, import is like food—if you take too little you starve, if you take too much, you fall sick. A proper mix is also necessary—the wrong type of imports is like unhealthy food. So prudence is the password—just like management of blood pressure which should not be too high or too low. You have to pass a judgement seeing the needs of growth.

Q. What role do you see for large industrial houses? With your return, a lot of them are scared.

A. I don't know why they are scared. We mean no harm to them. We have nothing against them as such. One of the areas in which they have been found wanting is export. Large-scale houses have recently shown some interest. But if you compare their economic strength and the country's need for export, I don't think they have come up to expectations. And on the employment side, if you see the data in the corporate sector, employment has not gone up. They should come forward in areas where employment is generated.

Q. Will you push for that?

A. Yes. I have never restrained industrial growth. We need that. I think there was a positive fillip to industry as far as legitimate industry was concerned. It is activity other than industry that we stopped. I mean siphoning of money outside, evading excise.

Q. Will you pursue that in the same way?

A. We are all for industrial growth. We

STABILITY

"I don't see any problem with either the BJP or the Left. There are areas where we have no differences at all."

LEADERSHIP

"We are not bankrupt like the Congress(I) where there is no replacement for even Rajiv Gandhi."

BIG BUSINESS

"I don't know why they are scared. I have never restrained industrial growth. It is activity other than industry that we stopped."

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are not against making profits through industrial activities. But the activities we objected to are not connected with genuine profit. There is no reason why somebody with access to the powers that be, just for that reason, has an edge over the other unit which is enormously more efficient. Because of patronage, why should they hit the more efficient unit.

Q. *Will you try and make a lot of the control fiscal....?*

A. We will move from discretionary controls to non-discretionary controls. We will have to prioritise. There should be a more elegant way of dealing with this than this system of discretionary controls, of giving licences, moving from desk to desk, causing delays and corruption.

Q. *Do you see a nexus between financial institutions and large industrial houses?*

A. Actually so many banks have been forced to give loans—long-term loans and big public issues. It is unhealthy.

Q. *How would you unwind this?*

A. If one government gets legally committed, it is a problem for the next government. The credibility of the Government comes into play.

Q. *How do you propose to remove corruption?*

A. This is a poser for parliamentary democracies the world over. As politics becomes costly, and elections become costlier, political parties begin to need large funds. And those who have large funds need the Government. So a natural nexus builds up. Now I am not raising an ethical question, but a question on how it affects the political system.

Q. *How do you break the nexus?*

A. One, we have to have a package of electoral reforms. We have a very definite programme of state funding of elections. And I think we should all treat it as a national issue—all parties should put their heads together. Two, how do we control the bureaucracy? How can the gap between the rulers and the ruled be bridged? That's again a global problem of administration. It is a poser in communist countries, it is a poser in capitalist countries. And I'm very clear it cannot be bridged through elected representatives only. There has to be a counter-balance mechanism at the people's level—of joint committees of people and also decision-makers. The other thing is the Official Secrets Act. Much of the corruption exists because there is cover. The more the transparency, the more the check on corruption.

Q. *Do you have any disagreement with the Congress(I) on Panchayati Raj?*

A. Our model is better. We stand for real devolution of financial and administrative powers while retaining the federal system. Under the cover of the Panchayati Raj, they (Congress-I) want to hit at the federal system. They are mixing poison in sweetmeats. From PM there is DM, no elected CM.

Q. *What is your view on the Ayodhya issue?*

A. You can't expect an answer to such a complex question in monosyllables. The first thrust is for an amicable solution. That alone can bring a lasting solution. If it is not possible, then the matter has to go to court. At least during the pendency in court, anything that causes social tension should be avoided. We respect all religions—Hindu, Muslim, and all the religions that we have in the country. The Hindu sentiment is that Ayodhya is the birthplace of Ram and that there should be a temple here. I think that sentiment should be respected. I talked to Muslim leaders, and they say that we have no quarrel with them (Hindus) building a temple in honour of lord Rama. It is a Hindu place; there is no debate on that. Their fear is that the mosque could be demolished. One mosque is demolished, another one, then another. So between the Hindus' sincere and intense desire to have a temple in Ayodhya and the Muslims' apprehension that the mosque will be demolished, a way out has to be found.

CONTROLS

"We will move from discretionary controls to non-discretionary controls. We will have to prioritise."

INQUIRY COMMISSION

"I don't think there is any need. The normal law of the land is enough if the Government has the will. There will be no vindictiveness."

EXPECTATIONS

"We have to grow out of the fear psychosis that if a government goes, the nation will go. The country should have the courage to reject governments in a row."

Q. **What is your reaction to the Rajiv government's last minute decision to release many alleged Punjab extremists?**

A. This means that the previous government has accepted that the cases registered against them were wrong. We cannot compromise with the integrity and unity of the country. The process of reconciliation has to be started.

Q. *When you reflect on the past five years, is there a sense of regret or some feeling of disappointment?*

A. My own conscience is clean. I fought all day, but I slept well at night. Going back, yes, in a sense it is true that Rajiv had tremendous opportunity. No one has started with that much goodwill. I myself worked very hard for him, because I was very attached to his mother. And I thought that being with Rajiv, it was my duty to see that he was a success. And one by one things turned out differently.

Q. *So in that sense you would say that you are disappointed?*

A. You could say disillusioned.

Q. *You may be placed in the same position—where people expect a lot from you and you disappoint?*

A. The country should have the courage to reject people in a row and reject governments in a row. The whole system has to be put in a crucible and melted. There is this fear psychosis that the Central Government is the nation. And if the Central Government goes, then the country will go. We have to grow out of this fear psychosis. The country will not go. In so many countries governments change, but the country does not fall apart.

Q. *Mrs Gandhi had described her government as the government that works. Rajiv said his was the government that worked faster. What kind of government are you promising?*

A. A government of people's participation. *Garib ka pakhsha, sarkar ka paksha* (government of the poor, for the poor).

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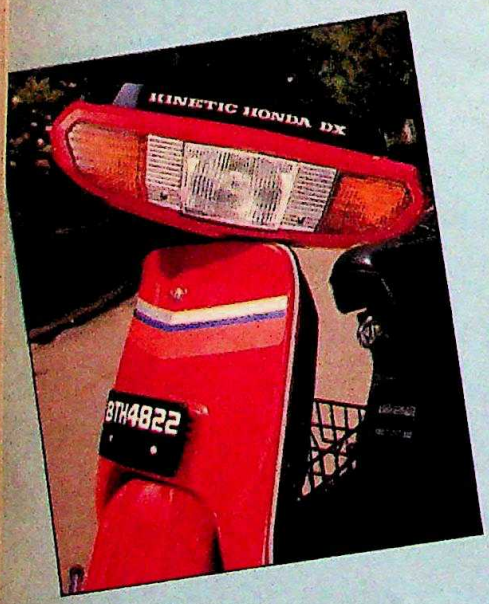

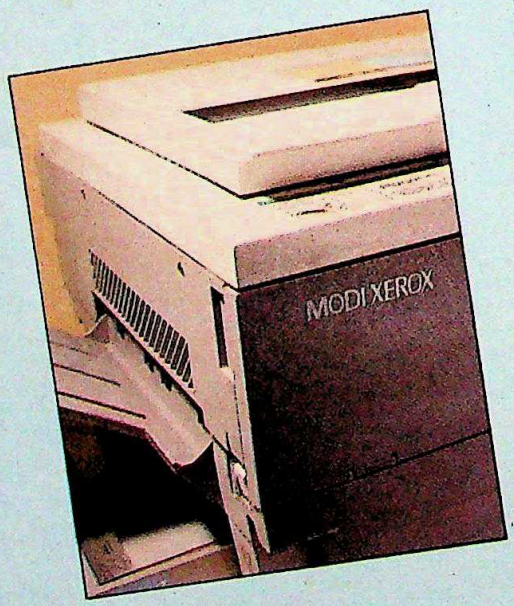

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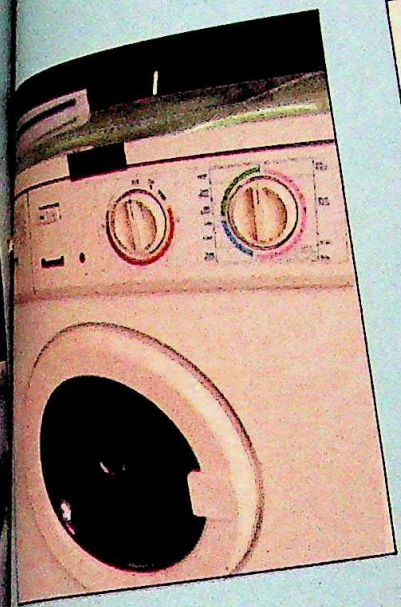

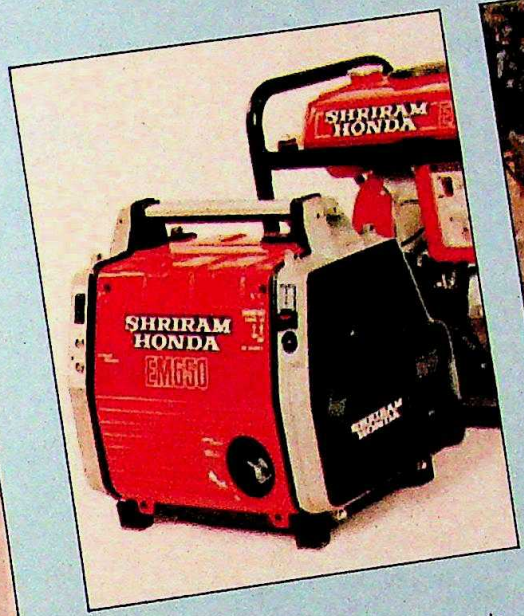

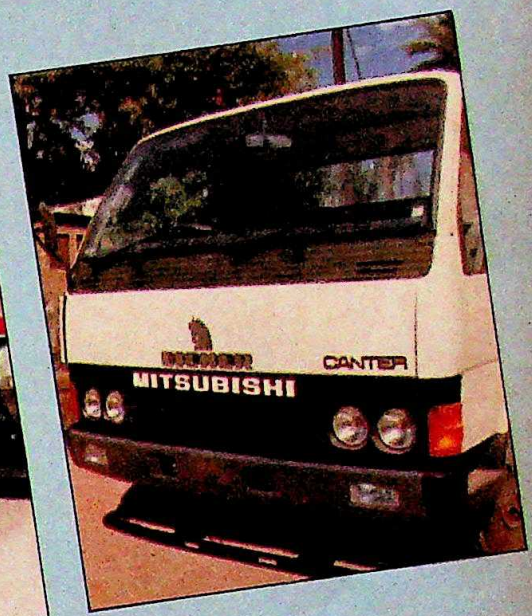

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UTTAR PRADESH

Mauled Mercilessly

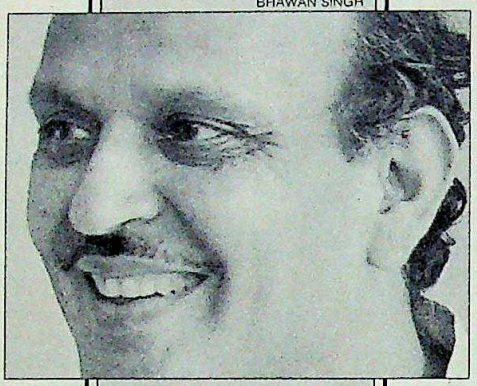
Faulty campaign, opposition wave, rout the ruling party

KINGPINS fell like ninepins during the Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha elections. And though the man who would be king—chief minister Narayan Datt Tiwari, till yesterday considered a candidate for the prime ministership—won his own seat, his image crumbled overnight as he failed to deliver the nation's most crucial state to his party. It was an anti-Congress(I) mandate all the way: not only did the Janata Dal win 198 of the state's 422 seats where elections were held, the V.P. Singh wave consumed all but one of Tiwari's cabinet ministers. At the end the final Congress(I) tally of 89 seats had reduced it to insignificance and relegated it to a position it had not known for a long time—on the opposition benches.

There were sound explanations for the party's rout in the state in the Lok Sabha elections: Rajiv Gandhi's downslide, the Hindu backlash, Muslim insecurity, corruption charges, and most crucially, the Opposition's seat adjustments. But the crushing defeat in the assembly polls—where the ruling party faced triangular or even quadrangular contests in as many as 355 seats—indicated that virtually all castes and communities in the state had deserted the Congress(I).

Along with the Congress(I)'s morale, the people's clear mandate shattered many beliefs. Principal among these, was that Tiwari was an astute politician, well equipped to steer the nation's most complex state—and perhaps even the nation. This, because Tiwari made all the wrong moves. He, in fact, probably hastened his Waterloo by insisting that assembly polls be held along with the Lok Sabha elections. The rationale behind the move seemed sound at the time it was made: to rent the opposition camp by creating confusion. Unfortunately, the reasoning which looked good on paper did not work. What happened, instead, was that he lost twice over in a state that was home to the Congress(I)'s top leadership.

Unfortunately for Tiwari, Uttar Pradesh was also home to the Janata Dal's top leadership. And in what was expected to be a fight among equals, V.P. Singh clearly dwarfed Tiwari. The Raja—and other Janata Dal notables—criss-crossed the state, putting heart and soul into the campaign. To Tiwari's credit, he carried out the campaign with aplomb even if he could not see the writing on the wall. He had the state Government's French-made Dauphin helicopter leased to his party and used it to reach the remotest corners of the state. Obviously, the political headwind he ran into, proved too much to cope with.


BHAWAN SINGH

Sustained campaigning by V.P. Singh turned the pro-opposition mood into an anti-Congress(I) tidal wave.

But because of the many triangular contests, the Janata Dal was not able to get a comfortable majority.

The Tally

Congress(I)	92
Janata Dal	203
BJP	57

Besides, the Opposition had the advantage of not being dependent on one leader. It had several effective campaigners, influential in different regions of the state, particularly in the western grain bowl where Ajit Singh and the Janata Dal state unit president Mulayam Singh Yadav—the front runner for the chief ministership—came up with a winning campaign. Mulayam Singh Yadav not only defeated his Congress(I) rival comfortably in Jaswantnagar in Etawah, but virtually wiped out the party from the district. Said he after the victory: "The Congress(I)'s defeat shows that people have taken the right decision."

The clearest message was this: Uttar Pradesh's electorate was voting against misrule, vacillation and confusion, blamed primarily on the Centre, but also on the state leadership. In one of the nation's poorest states, the common man had stood up to be counted. He would not tolerate a government that not only failed to deliver, but also fudged on principles. And he would do so without displaying any confusion or a half-hearted approach even if the opposition parties confused the scenario by fielding candidates against each other.

One look at the figures make it clear that this time, multi-cornered fights did not distract the voters from giving a firm verdict against the Congress(I). In most places, people overwhelmingly favoured the Janata Dal, and to a smaller extent the BJP—which won 56 seats—to the Congress(I) candidates. Even in most of the 22 seats where there was a direct clash between the Janata Dal and the BJP, the Congress(I) was trailing in the third position. While the combined haul of the Janata Dal and the BJP touched the 250 mark, the Congress(I) was hard put to cross the nineties its worst ever performance, but for 1977 when it got a mere 47 seats.

The Congress(I) had only itself to blame for the BJP's strong showing. If the party's vote bank had gone up from around 10 per cent in 1984 to 18 per cent this time, it was thanks to the Hindu backlash over the Ayodhya controversy—a problem that the Government itself had created—which subsequently led to fierce communal bloodletting in the state. To a certain extent, the BJP piggy-backed on the shoulders of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) which succeeded in whipping up considerable Hindu

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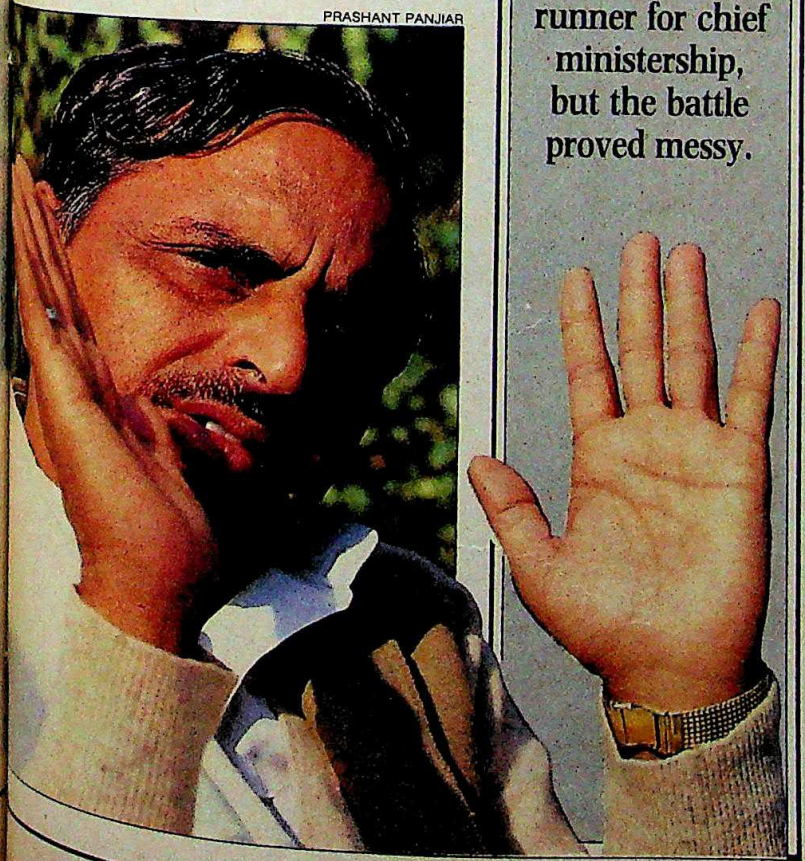
hysteria over the Ramshila pujas and the laying of the foundation-stone of the proposed Ram temple in Ayodhya. The BJP's haul had a clear tinge of saffron.

That disaster came from all sides for the ruling party was evident from the desertion of the Muslims—who had till now proved faithful supporters. Outraged and humiliated over Ayodhya—the very issue that angered Hindus of all castes—the Muslim vote was scattered among all the opposition parties barring the BJP. Most backed the Janata Dal, but many plumped for candidates of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) which bagged an unexpected 13 seats. In stray instances, the Muslims voted for the communist parties, who got a combined tally of 7 seats.

THE results from the Rohelkhand region, which has a huge Muslim population of about 31 per cent and accounts for 50 assembly seats, illustrate the Muslims' disillusionment with the Congress(I). The party retained only eight of the 35 seats it won from here in 1985. Also notable was the apathy of the Muslims in the state—who did not prove an enthusiastic voting section as before. Another pointer to their loss of heart.

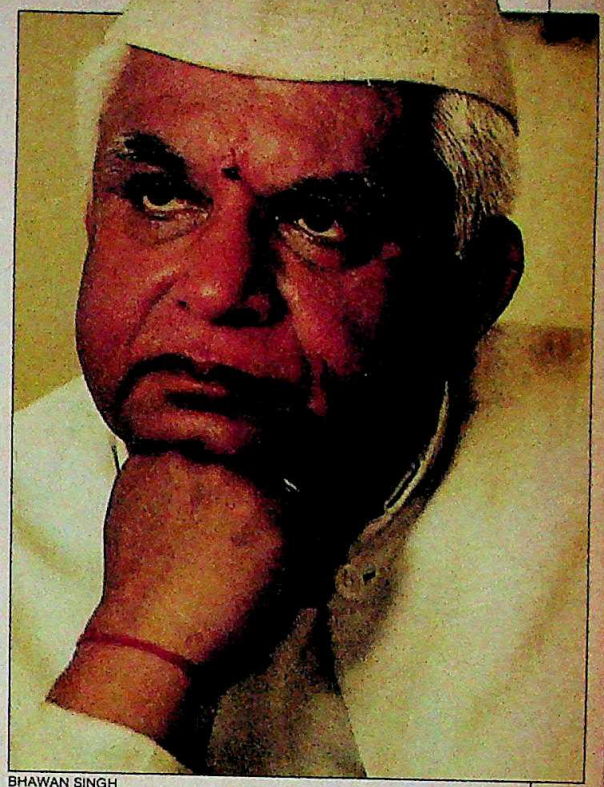
And to compound the loss of the Muslim vote bank, two other traditional vote banks also turned away from the Congress(I). While Brahmins backed the BJP, Kanshi Ram's BSP made huge inroads in Harijan-dominated areas throughout the state. Together, all these factors exacted their toll of the Congress(I). In fact, it was only in the hill region that the Congress(I) could stand its ground. And that was due to the

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Tiwari's decision to simultaneously hold assembly and Lok Sabha elections has put a question mark on his own political career.

Mulayam Singh Yadav was the front-runner for chief ministership, but the battle proved messy.



BHAWAN SINGH

personal influence of Tiwari himself. In his own constituency, Haldwani, where he did not campaign at all, he won with a huge margin of 37,000 votes.

While Tiwari's victory was predictable, somewhat unexpected was the emergence of the BSP which finds representation in both the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha from Uttar Pradesh for the first time. The fact that BSP candidates—who contested 375 seats undercutting both the Congress(I) and in some instances the Janata Dal's support—polled around 16 per cent of the votes, indicates that the party had arrived. Kanshi Ram had clearly succeeded in polarising the crucial Harijan votes. In fact, the BSP's coming of age was one of the most interesting aspects of the assembly results.

Though the party did eat into the Congress(I) vote bank, by and large, the ruling party dug its own grave. The renomination of most sitting MLAs except for those considered to have been close to Tiwari's predecessor, the late Bir Bahadur Singh, caused widespread resentment among many partymen. The party also made a massive blunder in not giving adequate representation to the Youth Congress(I). "They alienated the youth just when their votes had increased substantially because of the lowering of the voting age," said a senior Youth Congress(I) leader. As the INDIA TODAY-MARG exit poll has shown, the youth were clearly inclined to vote in favour of the Opposition.

These tactical errors combined with the communal mess-up and a shrill opposition campaign about corruption at the Centre to spell unqualified disaster for the ruling party. Only one of Tiwari's cabinet ministers—Arun Kumar Singh—managed to return to the

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Vidhan Sabha besides four ministers of state, Awatar Dixit, Surendra Singh Chauhan, Gulab Singh and Moid Ahmed. The rest in the 50-member ministry were handed out crushing defeats.

The Congress(I)'s only consolation was its candidates' victory in all the five assembly segments of the Amethi Lok Sabha constituency. This included the defeat of Janata Dal leader Sanjay Singh by more than 34,000 votes in Amethi segment. That Sanjay Singh lost by such a large margin despite the attack on him and resultant sympathy must have surprised even many persons in the Congress(I) camp (*see box*).

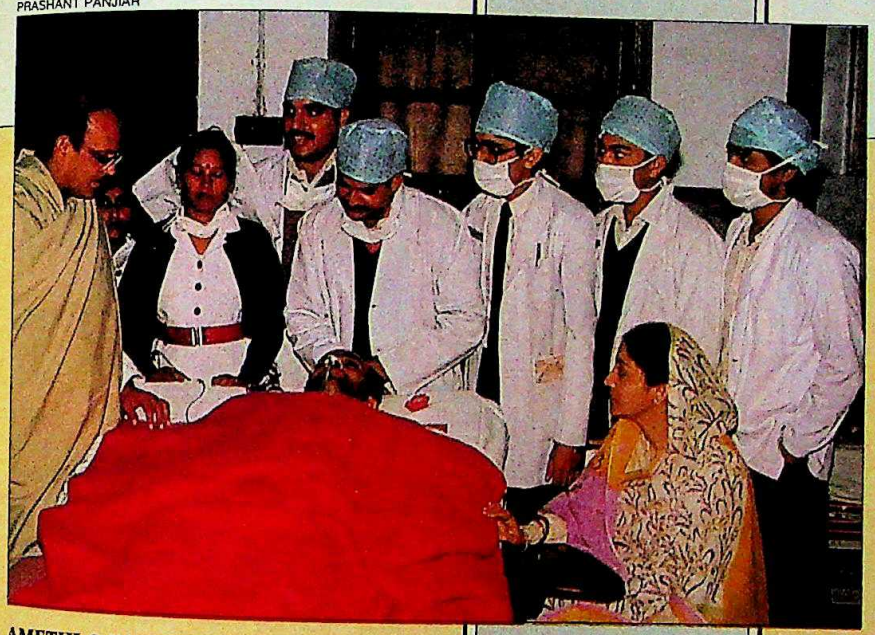
Tiwari, on his part, admitted gracefully: "It was the people's verdict against the ruling party. I thank the people for participating in this poll and I assure them that we respect their verdict." Tiwari who would always begin his election speeches by saying: "*Loktantra ka tyohar, jamhooriat ka mela*" (a celebration of democracy), has obviously learnt a few new lessons about the power of the people.

One of these is that a man who cannot hold his own at Lucknow certainly cannot rule the roost at New Delhi. The reverberations from the electorally crucial state have always been felt in the nation's capital. Even the state's new victors—the Janata Dal-BJP coalition—have a lesson to learn from the Congress(I)'s rout. If they create chaos in Lucknow, the resultant cacophony will be heard not only throughout the length and breadth of Uttar Pradesh, but will resonate in New Delhi as well.

—DILIP AWASTHI

Being the land of Ayodhya, the Janata Dal-BJP relationship will be put to the severest test in Uttar Pradesh.

PRASHANT PANJIAR



V.P. Singh visiting Sanjay Singh in hospital

AMETHI & FATEHPUR

Violent Ways

THE widespread nature of electoral violence this time came into stark focus with even Rajiv Gandhi's and V.P. Singh's constituencies being affected by the poll malaise. There was tremendous public outrage at the near-fatal assault on Janata Dal leader Sanjay Singh near Amethi. Sanjay Singh reportedly became a victim of an inter-group altercation. This is ironical since Sanjay Singh had been known as Rajiv's and the Congress(I)'s manager of polling day dirty tricks.

However, there are widespread allegations that the Janata Dal leader fell into a trap laid by the Congress(I). In fact, when Rajiv went to Lucknow but refrained from visiting Singh at the hospital, it was obvious he feared his presence might provoke the crowd.

On the day of the incident, November 22, Sanjay Singh was in the Ram Nagar court—his ancestral palace near Amethi town. Some of his workers, supervising the polling came in to inform him that some Congressmen accompanied by criminals were terrorising voters in the countryside.

With his supporters in cars, jeeps and motorcycles, he rushed towards Bhusiyanwan. But within 5 km, a jeep emerged from a side road with Congress(I) supporters shouting abusive slogans at Sanjay Singh. His supporters—led by him—immediately gheraoed the jeep, and attacked it. Soon, another car parked itself on the opposite side, and five or six jeeps appeared on the side road. About 20 armed men took up positions. Indiscriminate shooting began and when it stopped 20 minutes later Sanjay Singh had been shot.

V.P. Singh, visiting Dugrai village in Fatehpur, to check on reports of booth-capturing, also faced poll violence. Even as he began speaking to the presiding officer, three men fired from a temple about 150 yards away in full view of newsmen and photographers. Three shots were fired before Singh's police escorts took up positions and the men fled. A shocked Singh said: "Have they gone out of their mind?"

The ninth general elections, which have claimed one hundred lives, have seen a graduation of poll violence in extent and territory—raising serious questions about the nature of the electoral process.

—DILIP AWASTHI

The firing on Sanjay Singh and V.P. Singh highlighted the dangerous level to which the gun dominated the campaign.

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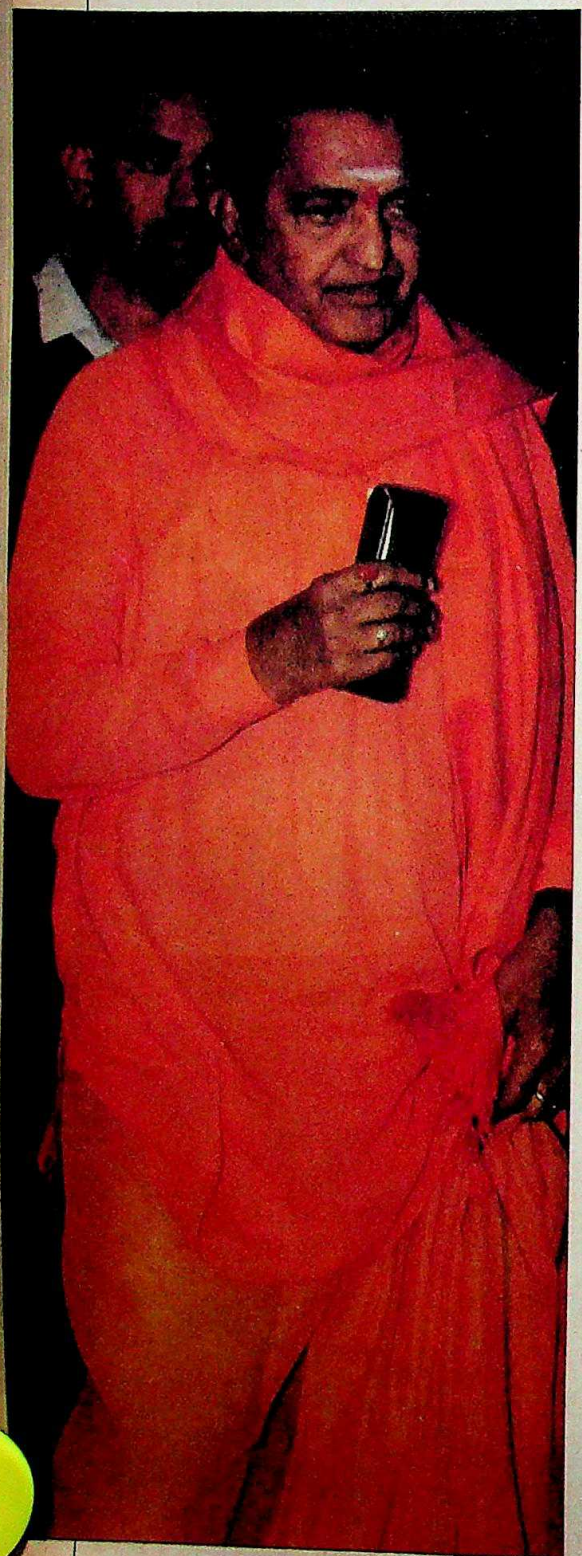
ANDHRA PRADESH

Dramatic Drubbing

Voters' reject Rama Rao's eccentric politics and incompetence



PRASHANT PANJIAR

"Lord Krishna said do your duty and don't worry about the results."
N.T. RAMA RAO

"People are the masters. They can say anything they choose to anyone."
M. CHENNA REDDY

Rama Rao's whimsical ways wrote the script for the disaster reflected in the final tally.

The Tally

Congress(I)	180
Telugu Desam	74
BJP	5

D. RAVINDER REDDY

WHEN history last fortnight replayed a decade-old drama in Andhra Pradesh, it was not just the protagonist who was the same. Even the number of seats that the Congress(I) won in the repeat show was almost stunningly similar.

In 1978, Chenna Reddy had led the party to a 175-seat victory. In November, the 71-year maverick APCC(I) president who has done a few political cartwheels in his chequered career, once again overran a triumphant wave to overthrow the Chaitanya Ratham and its saffron-clad occupant, to win a comfortable majority of 180 seats for the Congress(I). Chenna Reddy, who was elected the new chief minister, said: "People are the masters. They can say anything." Chenna Reddy knows only too well the power of the people. From the time he was a minister in the B. Ramakrishna Rao ministry of Hyderabad state as a 33-year-old to his comeback as chief minister, Chenna Reddy has been through the troughs and waves of political life. In between long periods in political cold storage, he has founded two short-lived political parties—the Social Democratic Party and more recently the National Democratic party. He was one of the leaders of the Telengana agitation in 1969-70 and governor of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. He came home to the Congress(I) last year following the call by former general secretary G.K. Moopanar to old Congressmen to rejoin the parent party.

If Chenna Reddy's return to power was dramatic, the fall of N.T. Rama Rao was surpris-

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ing—the Telugu Desam won only 74 seats compared to its 202 seats and the Congress(I)'s 50 in the 1985 poll—and had all the trappings of a classical Greek tragedy. Especially considering the dizzy heights he sat on as the nation was poised on the threshold of the general elections. As chairman of the National Front he had hoped to play the king-maker in Delhi after the elections, but what the country saw was a shattered Rama Rao handing in his resignation letter to Governor Kumudben Joshi. "Lord Krishna said do your duty and don't worry about the consequences. I have served the people and respect their verdict," Rama Rao said, tears welling in his eyes.

For once, the man who had played Lord Krishna on screen seemed alienated from the people and as unreal as the cut-outs of his divine cinema roles that appeared on street corners. Though he went on a 16-day campaign through the state in his Chaitanya Ratham and by helicopter he failed to find out why the crowds had thinned. Instead he laid faith on the film clips and videos to give him the aura that reality didn't.

REALITY had in fact been gnawing at Rama Rao for some time now. His whimsical ways including the sacking of his own cabinet in February 1989, the rise of his sons-in-law Chandrababu Naidu and Dr Venkateshwara Rao, a pro-Kamma bias in important appointments and forgotten promises like the 30 per cent reservation for women had created an aversion for him that he failed to see. No wonder, he was lost in the glitzy studio sets of his ambitious opus *Brahmarishi Viswamitra*, meditating as Menaka danced seductively in front of him. The people, however, danced to a different tune this time. Said Telugu Desam politburo member Minte Padmanabham: "Earlier victories had made us complacent and this turned to the advantage of the Congress(I)."

According to the Janata Dal general secretary and outstanding parliamentarian S. Jaipal Reddy who lost the Mahabubnagar Lok Sabha seat to a marginally active M. Mallikarjun of the Congress(I), Rama Rao made a mistake by calling for simultaneous assembly elections. "Local issues and regional issues are more important for the electors and with the simultaneous assembly poll the national issues were forgotten," argued Reddy. The state Janata Dal president P. Babul Reddy, the state BJP president M. Venaiah Naidu and 21 former MPs of the Telugu Desam and other parties fell by the wayside. And in the assembly elections at least 14 of the 23 ministers were defeated.

The ad hoc planning and lackadaiscal approach in the choice of candidates also affected the party's prospects. The decision by Rama Rao to file his papers for Kalwakurthy, for instance, was made at the Secunderabad railway station when he was about to board a train to Hindupur from where he was elected in 1985. Partymen from Mahabubnagar suggested Rama Rao should represent Kalwakurthy in the backward district and he readily agreed. But Rama Rao had not visited the area during his tenure as chief minister. "He took the voters for granted," said the sitting Congress(I) MLA, J. Chittaranjan Das who defeated him. It was only after he was told the prime minister was visiting the constituency that Rama Rao decided to campaign there for about three hours on the last day of electioneering.

> "Earlier victories had made us complacent; this helped the Congress(I)."
> PADMANABHAM
> *TDP Politburo member*

> "Local issues are more important for the voters and with the simultaneous poll, national issues were forgotten."
> S. JAIPAL REDDY
> *Janata Dal General Secretary*

> The turning point in the Congress(I) campaign was the separate manifesto for the state which promised anti-poverty programmes.

Chenna Reddy had on the other hand taken nothing for granted. He had activated all the units of his party by launching agitations and convinced other leaders of the party to stay together. The turning point in the Congress(I) campaign was the deft move by Chenna Reddy to come out with a separate nine-page manifesto for the state, typed overnight, to counter the Telugu Desam manifesto which promised to set up a land army to tackle unemployment. The Congress(I) promises: continuance of the anti-poverty programmes and the Telugu Desam scheme of providing rice at Rs 2 a kilo, the revival of the legislative council abolished by Rama Rao and to scrap the entry tax.

In one stroke Reddy managed to make disgruntled party workers close ranks, gain the goodwill of traders and reassured the rural poor. Said APCC(I) Vice-President K. Rosaiah: "This helped the party to win the total support of sections which were angry with Rama Rao." Added ex-chief minister and the new party MP from Kurnool K. Vijayabhaskara Reddy: "For the first time Marwaris and other traders invited us and assured their support."

The Congress(I) did exceedingly well everywhere except in north coastal Andhra Pradesh from where the Telugu Desam got 21 of the 37 Assembly seats and retained the Bobbili Lok Sabha. The only other area in which the Telugu Desam did well was West Godavari district where the party bagged half the assembly seats and retained the Narasapur Lok Sabha seat. The Congress(I) fielded a Madras-based film producer Nachu Seshagiri Rao, banking on the predominant Kapu community to vote for one among them. Said the Telugu Desam's Vijaya Kumar Raju who was re-elected from Narsapur: "The caste card may work against a candidate who does not know or work for his constituency."

Though Rama Rao cleared the dues of government employees and the arrears of college teachers soon after elections were announced, very few of them were inclined to support the Telugu Desam. Admitted BJP's Venkaiah Naidu who lost the race for the Bapatla Lok Sabha seat: "The Telugu Desam and its friendly parties banked heavily on the rural voters who have benefited by the Government's programme to provide food and shelter."

Perhaps the only section to support the Telugu Desam was the backward classes for whom Rama Rao extended reservations in the state till 2000 A.D. even before the elections

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were announced. The representation for backward classes is the vexatious question nagging Chenna Reddy. Those in the Congress(I) have accused him of ignoring the backward classes in appointing district Congress(I) Committees and in the choice of candidates for the election. The party will have to give them more seats if the legislative council is revived. This will be electorally crucial.

A particularly thorny problem Chenna Reddy faces is keeping the quarrelsome district level leaders of the Congress(I) together even though many of them will be accommodated in the promised Legislative Council and in the boardrooms of the state-owned corporations.

Unlike Rama Rao, Chenna Reddy will enjoy the support of bureaucrats in spite of his well-known ill-temper in these circles. Said one civil servant: "Dealing with him is easier—he knows the ropes of administration and has the perception to take his own decisions." Many of them gathered in groups in their houses in the posh Banjara Hills in Hyderabad on the night the results were out to toast to the Telugu Desam's defeat. Said a senior bureaucrat: "Happy days are here again. The early morning summons at Rama Rao's residence forced us to cut short our evenings." Given his experience, Chenna Reddy will be able to tone up the administration and get the best of government employees.

Unlike Rama Rao, Chenna Reddy will enjoy the support of bureaucrats though he is known for his outbursts.

For Rama Rao it will not be easy to continue as an unquestioned leader of a party out of power. Supporters of the two groups led by his sons-in-law Chandrababu Naidu and Venkateshwara Rao are already trading charges blaming each other for their party's defeat. What is apparent to impartial party insiders is Rama Rao's heavy reliance on them for advise. As one of them put it: "If Rama Rao does not change his style and become a democrat, the party itself will be wiped out before the next elections." If that is not to happen Rama Rao has to learn many lessons from the rout of 1989.

Shorn of that aura of invincibility and devoid of the trappings of power, Rama Rao has enough time to meditate on how he got alienated. Now at least there will not be the dancing Menakas and the cronies from his cabal to distract him and filter reality. And with his penchant for the incredible, he might then think up yet another political revolution.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

SIKKIM

Ruling the Hustings

THE Sikkim Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari lived up to his every boast—"I will get 33 out of the 32 seats"—as he led his Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) to a resounding victory. His party won all the 32 assembly seats, and also wrested the lone parliamentary seat from his estranged wife, Dil Kumari. The performance is a personal victory for the charismatic leader, smothering criticism that Bhandari has foisted a "corrupt and autocratic" rule on the state.

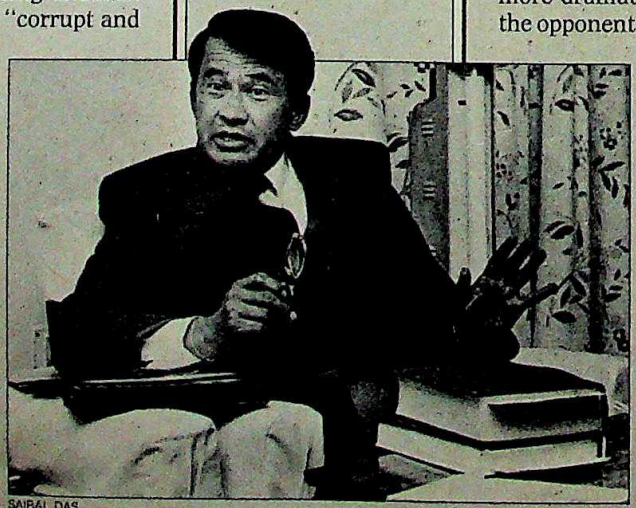
In fact, from the beginning of the campaign the SSP seemed confident. Santosh Kumar Rai, SSP publicity chief, says: "The year-old Rising Sun Party (RSP) and Congress(I) were no match for the SSP." But, with the elections being fought on purely ethnic and racial issues the going was certainly far from easy. The RSP and some other groups were raising new demands: citizenship rights for stateless people, reservation of assembly seats for the Nepalese and inclusion of the Nepali language in the eighth schedule of the Constitution.

The clear verdict is a personal victory for Bhandari, smothering charges of corruption.

Shrewdly realising the public mood, Bhandari used his enormous state and money power to convince the people that he represented both "continuity and change". Meanwhile, the formidable RSP leader, Ram Chandra Poudyal, declared: "The time has come for Bhandari to go." Bhandari countered: "The people are on one side and these two parties are on the other."

In the event the results proved even more dramatic than the campaign. And the opponents are now accusing the SSP of rigging the polls. Both Dil Kumari and Poudyal of the RSP claimed "massive rigging" had led to the massive mandate. Whatever the truth behind these allegations, what seems clear is that a huge sympathy vote in favour of Bhandari has created quite a peculiar situation—an assembly without any opposition. Bhandari's magical ability to rule the Sikkim hustings seems unmatchable.

—FARZAND AHMED



SAIBAL DAS

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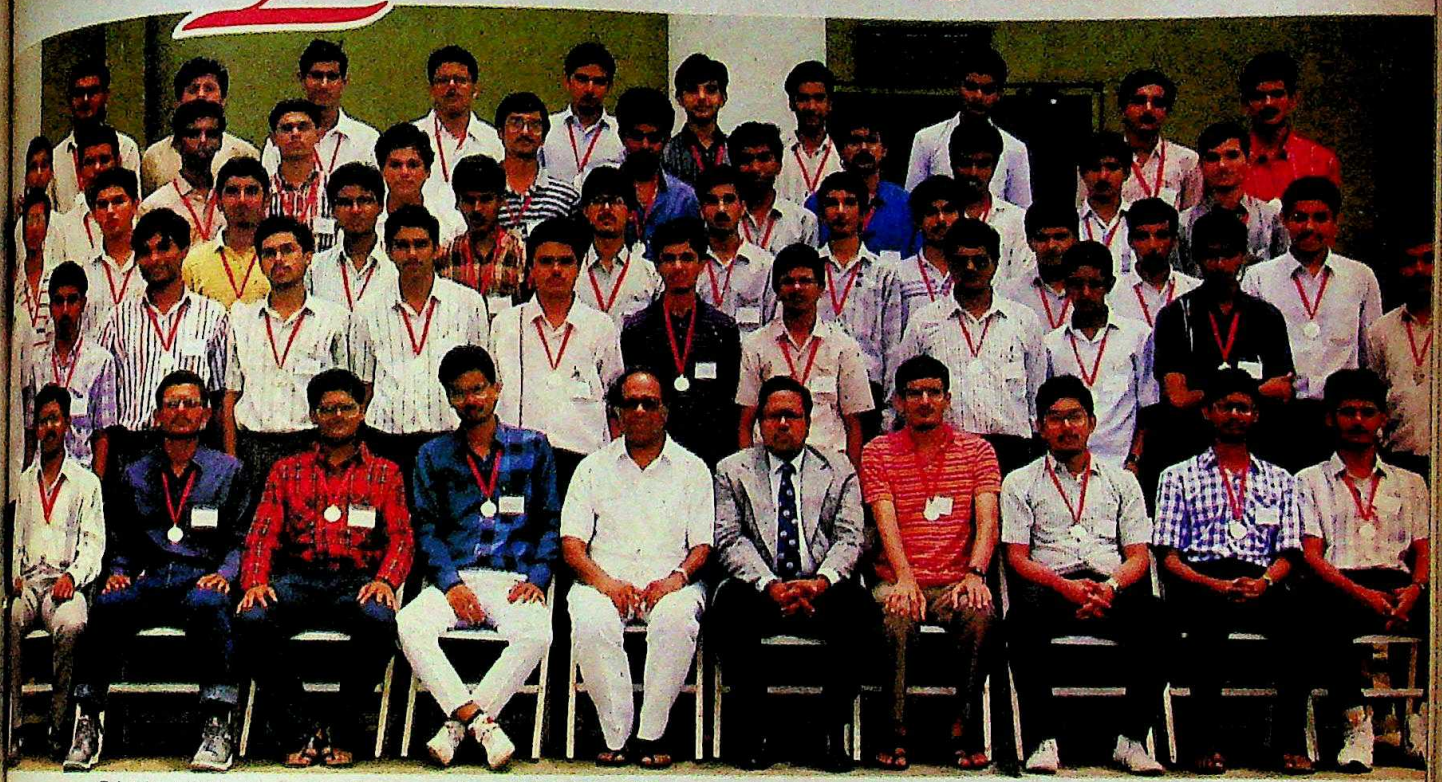
La Creme de La Creme



Principal G.D. Agrawal with some of our I.I.T. JEE, 1989, top-rankers at the 35th Annual Prize Distribution Function.

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Sitting (Left to Right)							
Sameet H Agrawal	4th	Vineet Buch	1st	Ashish Kr Banerji	2nd	K Shivkumar	3rd
Mandar Mitra	6th	G D Agrawal **(Principal)**		P G Agrawal **(Director)**		Kaustubh S Agashe	5th
		Charu Aggarwal	9th	T Vikram	10th		
Standing (1st Row)							
Sanjeev Khirwar	15th	Rosen Sharma	11th	Manoj P Samanta	13th	Sudhanshu Aggarwal	14th
P Naga Vamsi	22nd	Jayanth Majhi	16th	Jignesh R Jain	17th	P N Subramanya Rao	20th
Vijay Kumar	27th	R Anand	23rd	M S Sriram	24th	S Murali Dhar	26th
Standing (2nd Row)							
Rahul Singh	38th	Samir Agrawal	28th	Niten Malhan	36th	V N Padmanabhan	37th
Chander Kant	47th	Sanjeev Kumar	39th	Supratik Chakraborty	45th	Atul Gupta	46th
Rajiv Pratap	58th	Rohit M Lotlikar	48th	V Sivakumar	51st	Naveen Ashish	53rd
Standing (3rd Row)							
Hari Balakrishnan	68th	Vishal Gaur	60th	Purushottam S Prabhu	63rd	Prateek Sarkar	67th
Dakshi Agrawal	75th	Amit Narayan	69th	Ashwin J Rao	73rd	R Prakash Iyer	74th
Manoj Sehgal	80th	Gaurav Suri	77th	Sandeep S Kulkarni	78th	Gaurav Gupta	79th
Standing (Top Row)							
Sachin U Naik	86th	Sandeep Chhabra	81st	Chandra Prakash	82nd	Nischal Sheth	84th
V Kasturi Rangan	95th	Vishal Mishra	88th	B Girish	91st	Nitin Sharma	92nd
		Puneet Sharma	96th	Srihari Cadambi	99th		
Absentees							
Archan Misra	30th	B Sreekanth	8th	Kunal Kishore	12th	V S Anil Kumar	21st
Sudiplo Ghosh	54th	Avnish Kr Rastogi	31st	D Harish	34th	Amit Goyal	35th
Sandeep Gupta	66th	Jeetendra S Dublish	55th	K Vijaya Chander	62nd	V Vivekananda	64th
		Rajesh Bhatt	76th	Ravi Shekhar	90th	A Veena	93rd

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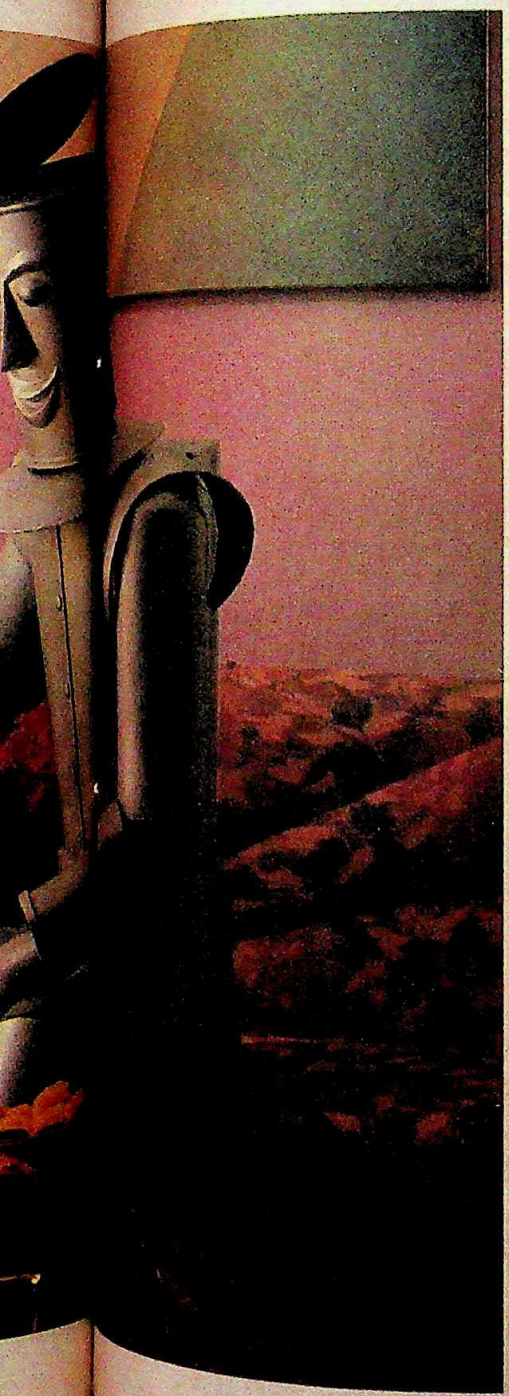

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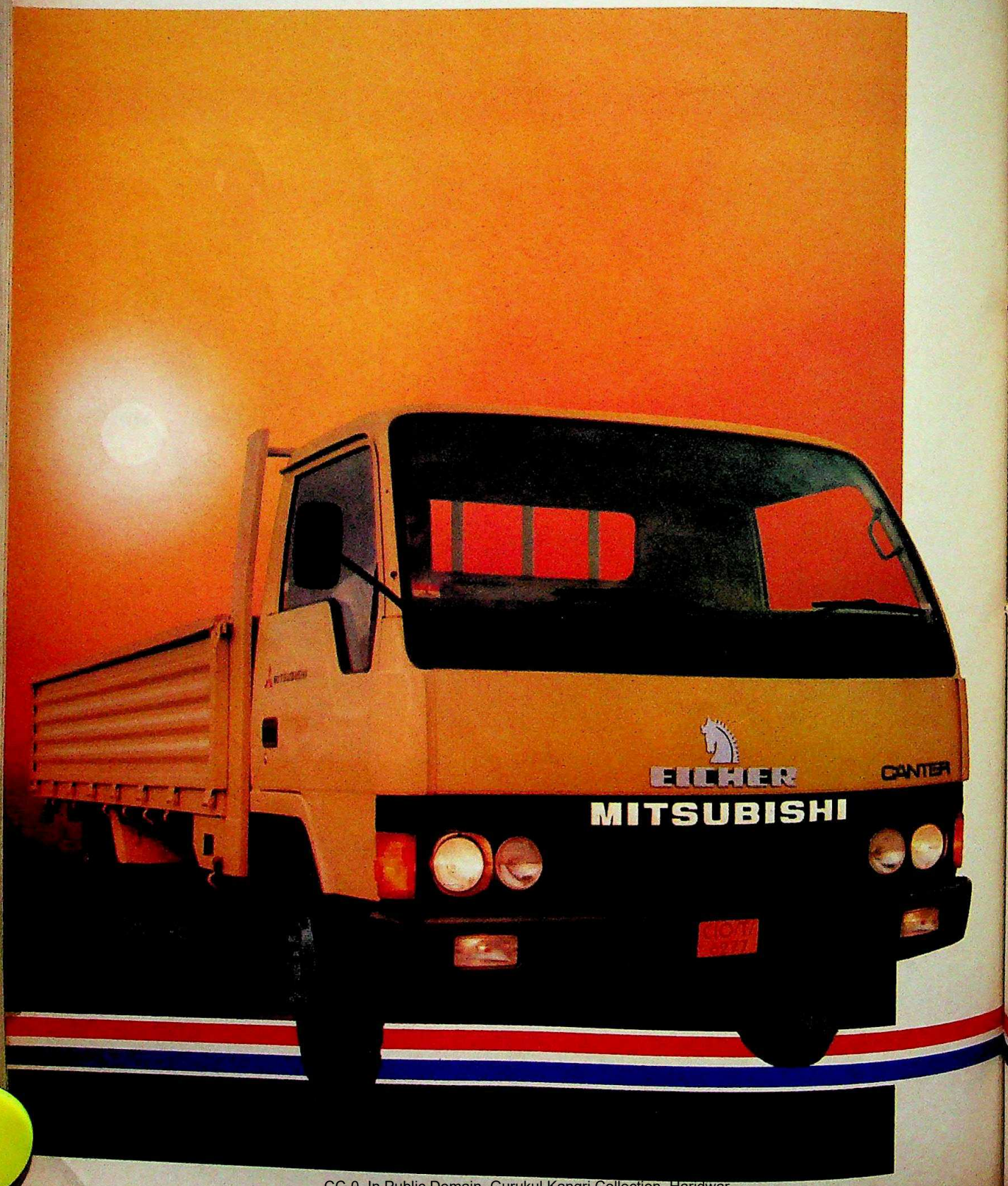

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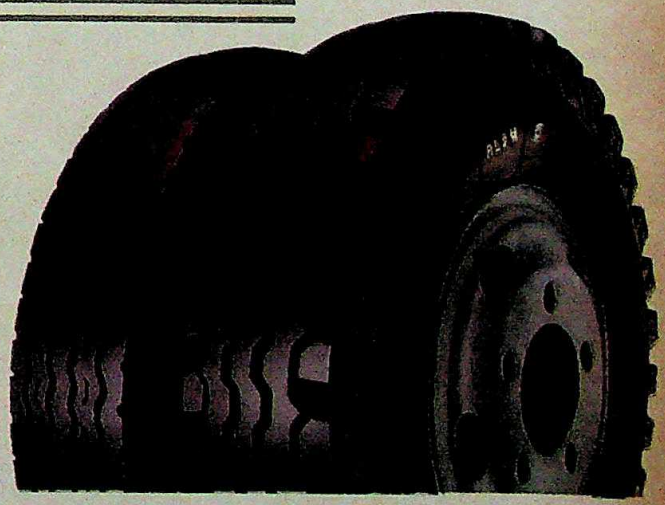

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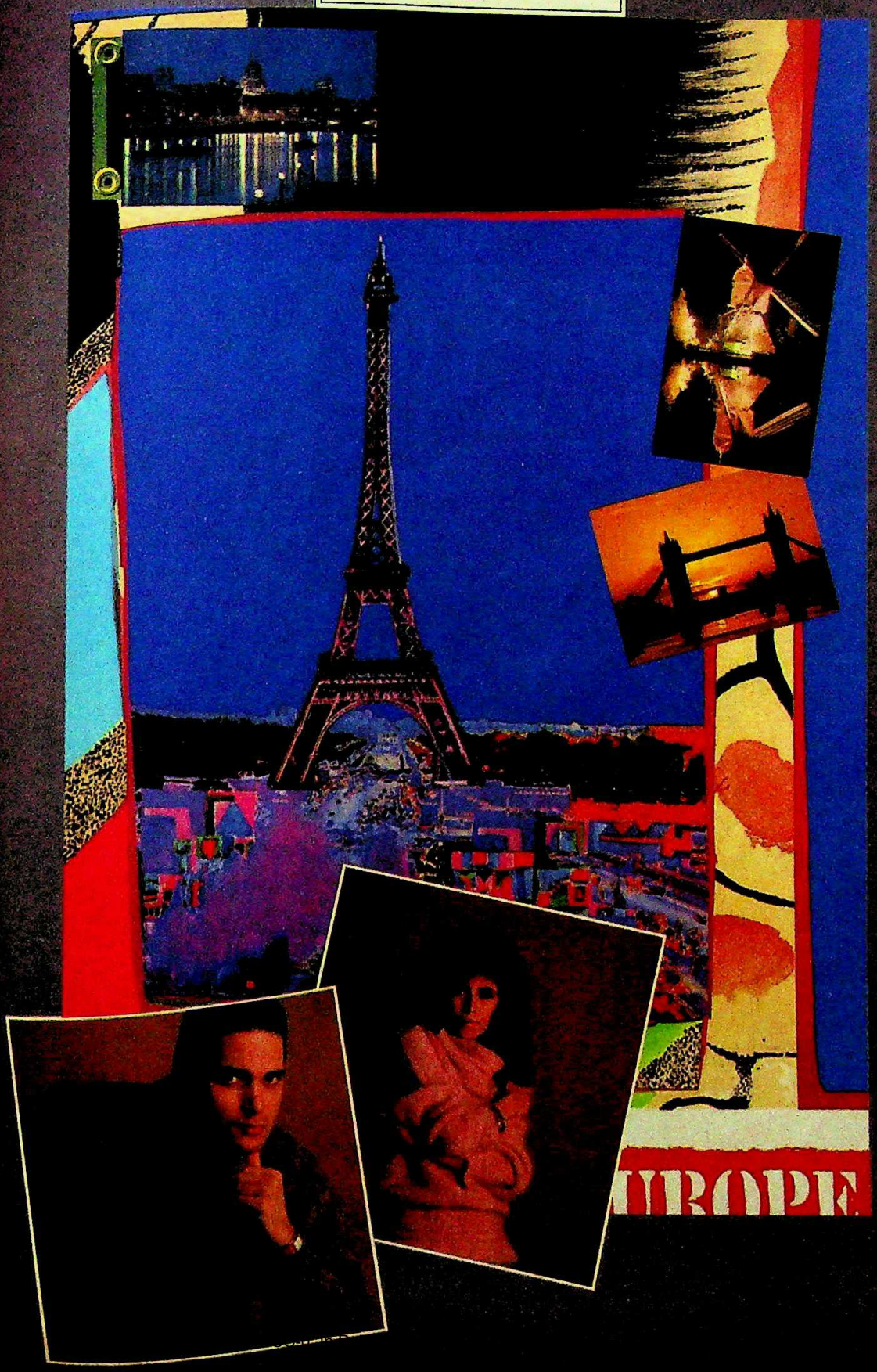

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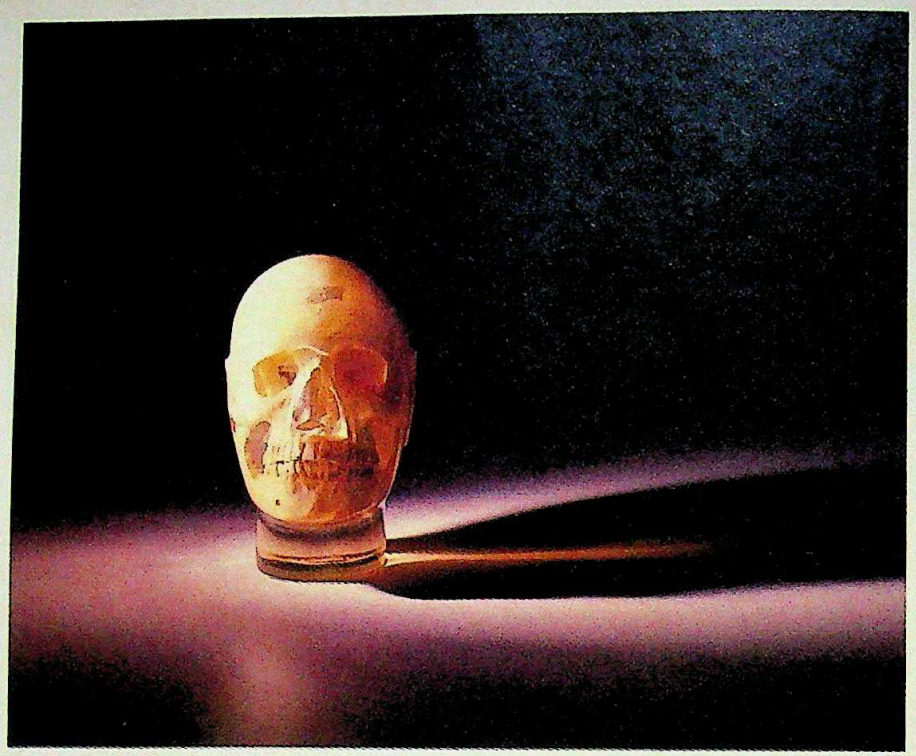

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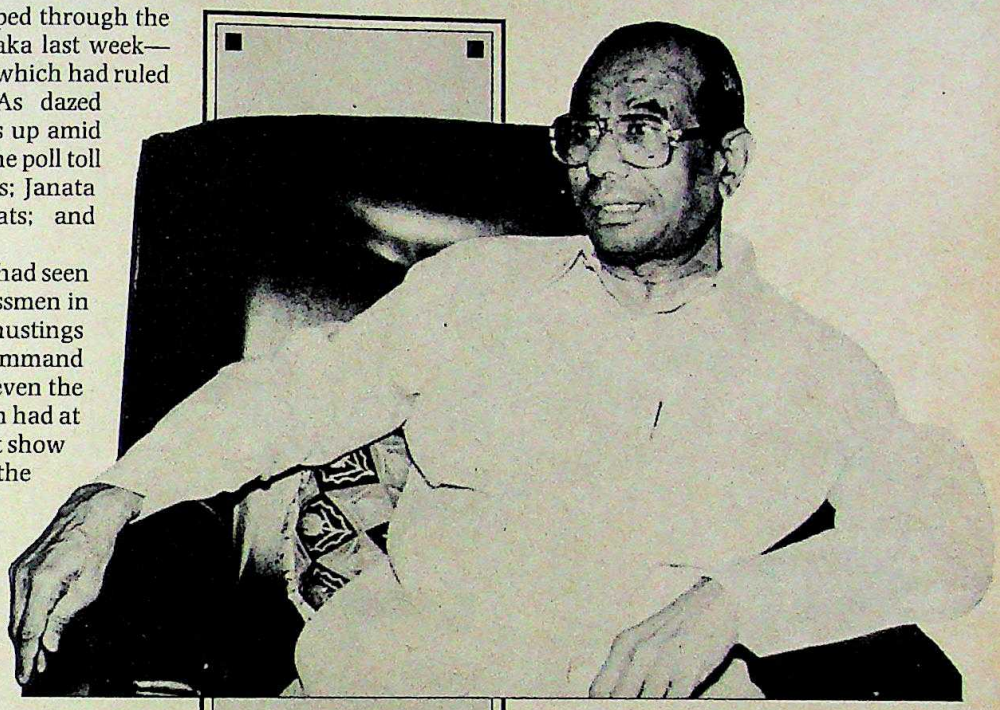
KARNATAKA

Ruthless Retribution

Janata pays for a shoddy record as Congress(I) storms back to power



AN electoral tornado ripped through the Janata Dal in Karnataka last week—uprooting the party which had ruled the state for six years. As dazed partymen picked themselves up amid the debris of the wreckage, the poll toll read: Congress(I)—177 seats; Janata Dal—24 seats; BJP—4 seats; and Janata Party—2 seats.

It was a gale that no one had seen coming—least of all Congressmen in the state. Bumbling into the hustings under a beleaguered high command and an anarchic state unit, even the most optimistic Congressmen had at best hoped to put up a decent show to offset the ruinous losses in the northern Hindi belt.

In fact, even as late as on the morning the results were declared, former chief minister R. Gundu Rao predicted a haul of only around 120 seats for the Congress(I) in the 224-member Assembly. But what they finally reaped simply astounded them—a four-fifths majority and a complete decimation of the Janata Dal in the state. Crowed state PCC(I) chief Veerendra Patil: "The people of Karnataka have again shown that the Congress(I) is the only party they trust." Patil, the seniormost Congressman in the state was sworn in as chief minister soon after.

The unexpected disaster in Karnataka held several lessons for the party. The Congress(I) had been swept back to power in the state not due to a positive vote in its favour, but due to a harsh negative vote against the Janata Dal. The reasons: unfulfilled promises and infighting. Said Ramakrishna Hegde, a former Janata chief minister: "Once again we paid for our complacency."

And heavily. The anti-Janata Dal wave was ruthless in its sweep, brushing aside a galaxy of state leaders, barring Hegde and a few of his faithfuls like ministers Jeevaraj Alva, R.L. Jalappa and R.V. Deshpande. Among the victims to fall under the Congress(I) tornado were former chief minister S.R. Bommai, senior minister J.H. Patel and a score of former ministers. In fact, with just 10 per cent of the seats. The Janata Dal has barely managed to be recognised as an opposition party in the House.

That the electorate was in a punishing mood was clear from the fact that the Congress(I) candidates won by big margins in many constituencies irrespective of caste and communal factors and the division in opposition votes. The verdict was against the Janata Dal government's non-performance, particularly during its last two years in power when dissidence led to a drift in the administration. Said victorious Congress(I) leader Veerappa Moily: "They just could not deliver the goods." A remorseful Bommai agreed: "The infighting disrupted the functioning of the Government." After-the-event analysts recalled that the dismissal of the Janata Dal ministry by the governor early this year had hardly evoked any sympathy among the people. And if they were reticent at that time, they had spoken their opinion now through the medium of the ballot box.

Still, the people's anger against the Janata Dal was not the only reason for the party's miserable showing. The rout may not have taken place had the Janata Dal managed to stitch together an alliance with other opposition groups. It could not. While the breakaway Janata Party of Deve Gowda and the Rajya Raitha Sangha were inimical to any understanding, the Dal leadership failed to even carry along friendly parties like the BJP and the CPI. The beneficiary was clearly the Congress(I). It won upwards of 60 seats due to the division in opposition votes.

Such was the electorate's revulsion to-

Karnataka is once again the bastion of the Congress(I).
VEERENDRA PATIL

The Congress(I) astounded with a four-fifths majority and a complete decimation of the Janata Dal.

The Tally

Congress(I)	177
Janata Dal	24
BJP	4

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wards the squabbling Janata Dal that it even forgave and resurrected dozens of Congress(I) politicians thought to have been consigned to the dustbin of electoral history for their past misdemeanours. Among them were former ministers Renuka Rajendra, A.B Jakanur, Chandraprabha Urs and Nagamma Keshavamurthy.

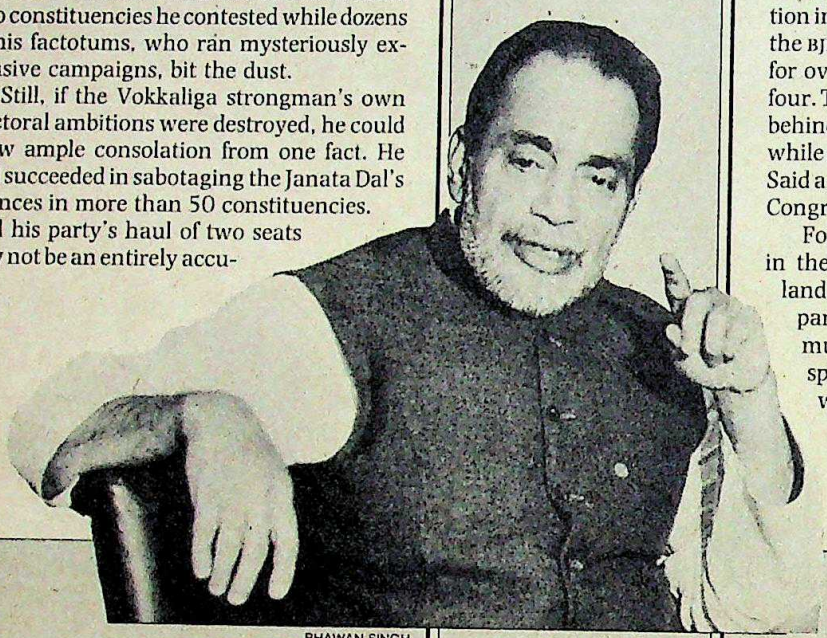
The electorate virtually obliterated the rump Janata Party of Deve Gowda, rewarding the projected third force with a pathetic two seats. Gowda himself hurtled to defeat in the two constituencies he contested while dozens of his factotums, who ran mysteriously expensive campaigns, bit the dust.

Still, if the Vokkaliga strongman's own electoral ambitions were destroyed, he could draw ample consolation from one fact. He had succeeded in sabotaging the Janata Dal's chances in more than 50 constituencies. And his party's haul of two seats may not be an entirely accurate reflection of his party's influence. To his credit, Gowda's candidates came in second to the winning candidate in nearly a score of constituencies. Still, for a leader who nurtured chief ministerial ambitions it was hardly a noteworthy performance. Nevertheless, at the end of the self-defeating exercise, Gowda was unrepentant, exhorting his party- men to re-establish themselves, and insisting that on the state's electoral scenario, the Janata Party had a place.

While Gowda emasculated the Opposition in the state by contesting over 200 seats, the BJP contributed by putting up candidates for over 120 seats, ending up winning only four. The Rajya Raitha Sangha did not lag far behind, scratching together just two seats while affecting opposition chances in a dozen. Said a rueful Jeevaraj Alva: "We gave it to the Congress(I) on a platter."

For the state Congress (I), which has been in the political wilderness since 1983, the landslide victory came as an elixir. The party, which was beset by infighting and mutual recrimination till yesterday, sprang to life overnight. S. Bangarappa, who had walked out of the Gundu Rao cabinet in 1982 signalling the downfall of the Congress(I) in Karnataka, was among the first to rush to Rao's house and give him a bear hug.

> Once again we in the Janata Dal have paid for our complacency.
>
> RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE



BHAWAN SINGH

RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE

The Fallen Mighty

"OH, what a fall!" That could easily be Ramakrishna Hegde's current bio-graphical sub-title. The suave opposition leader's political career graph hit an all-time low as the Janata Dal was annihilated at the hustings in Karnataka. Having sought the title of campaign commander before the elections, Hegde now takes the rap for the party's disastrous performance in the state.

The immediate fall-out of the rout is the question mark it puts on Hegde's place in the opposition hierarchy. By opting to lead his party in the state elections and contest for the Assembly, the Janata Dal vice-president had taken a calculated risk. The effort was to refurbish his scandal-scarred image and reinforce his stature as a leader of substance. But the electoral rebuff has certainly sent his political stock plummeting.

Yet, things did not look so bad for Hegde when he was on the campaign trail. In fact, they looked quite encouraging. In north Karnataka he often pointed to the big crowds that waited for him till the wee hours of the morning and exclaimed: "See, I am not a paratrooper politician, the kind that Devi Lal despises. I have a base of my own."

> The verdict was against the Janata Dal's non-performance, particularly during its last two years in power.

But retaining his base was not easy. He defeated his nearest Congress(I) rival, Harnali Ramaswamy, from the Basavangudi seat in Bangalore by a narrow margin of 8,400 votes.

The rest of the party's results too were not commensurate with the large crowds it had drawn. Political observers were stunned as the Congress(I) swept the assembly polls. Said a dejected Hegde: "The mysteries of the ballot boxes are difficult to unravel."

And as the news of the rout trickled in, downcast, he retired to play with his granddaughters. But later, in a moment of self-reproach he told INDIA TODAY: "Perhaps, I should call it a day."

Yet, two days later, Hegde was flying off to Delhi to congratulate his victorious colleagues from the north—perhaps the first indication that he would soon strive to rise again.

—CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA

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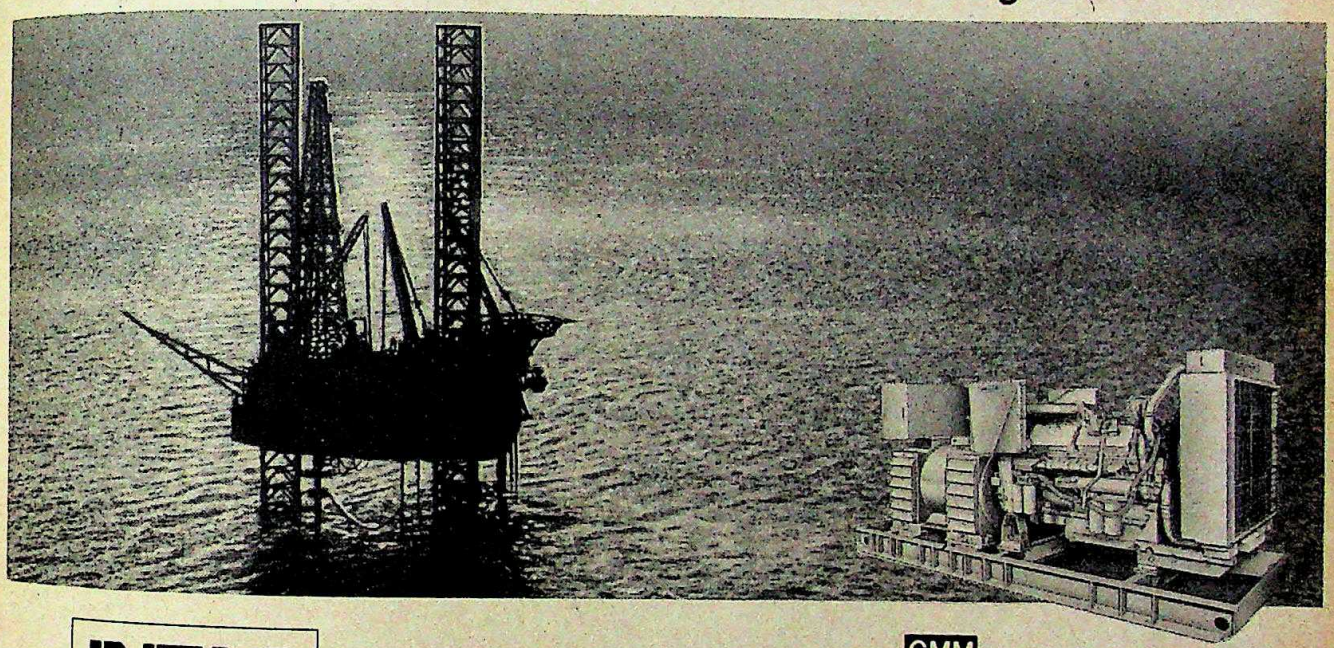

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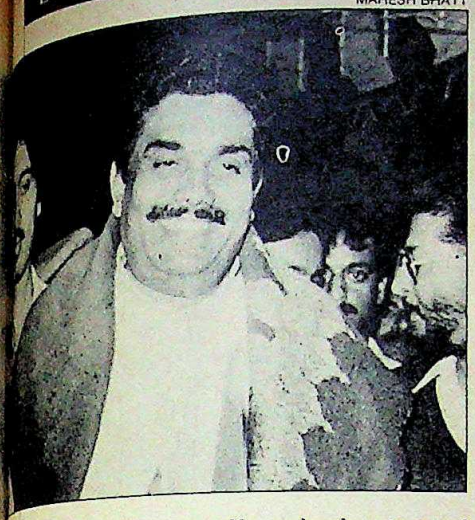
MAHESH BHATT



Gundu Rao himself, resplendent in a red silk shawl, swaggered into the centralised results hall. This was his hour of glory: dozens of his supporters, including at least 20 for whom he had secured tickets at the last moment, had swept to victory. Other Congress(I) leaders were more restrained, but overjoyed nevertheless. With the party routed in the north, Congressmen here seemed to realise that they would be accorded special treatment by the party high command, after having been treated as poor cousins during the last six years. Gushed a jubilant Patil: "Karnataka is again the bastion of the Congress(I)."

That it is. Along with the other four southern states. For the Janata Dal in Karnataka, it is back to the opposition benches after six heady years in power. Being out of power should give the party adequate time for some introspection.

But the Congress(I)'s assumption of power was not without hiccups. Almost the entire state Congress(I) resisted the choice of Patil as chief minister. But with some deft manoeuvring and diplomacy, Patil rallied the support of a majority of 177 MLAs to present the high command with a fait accompli.

The people could demolish the Congress(I) as easily as they did the Janata Dal. The price of non-performance and infighting could be heavy. Power is not for keeps. That is the lesson all governments would have to learn.

—CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA

Dozens of Gundu Rao's supporters, including 20 who got tickets at the last moment, swept to victory.

With just 10 per cent of the seats, the Janata Dal barely crossed the benchmark in order to be recognised as an opposition party.

The key to end the impasse in the Goa assembly now lies with the two seats that were countermanded due to death of a candidate.

GOA

Tiebreaker Solution

IF the rest of the country went through the suspense created by a hung Parliament, the picturesque coastal state of Goa experienced it close at home too. The ruling Congress(I) and its rival Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) won 18 seats each in the 40-member assembly. Election for two seats was countermanded while the remaining two went to independents who then held the electoral key to the Assembly.

Faced with an electoral deadlock, both parties staked their claims to form a government after winning over an independent candidate each. To help resolve the deadlock, the Election Commission will speed up the election to the two countermanded seats, which might be held on January 10. Pratapsinh Rane has been asked to continue as chief minister till then.

Earlier it seemed that the only possibility was President's Rule. At one stage, both independents had pledged support to the MGP. But one of them, Dr Carmo Pegado was lured into the Congress(I) as he was about to announce his alliance with the MGP. There was high drama as he was taken to Rane's house and the following morning flown to Delhi with Rane as MGP leaders waited in vain for him. Said MGP President, Ramkank Ghalap: "We will launch a agitation if the Congress(I) is asked to form the Government."

Khalap with supporters: close call

Both sides are now eyeing the two all-important seats where election wasn't held. "We will press for early election to break this deadlock," says Goa Pradesh Congress(I) President Sulochna Katkar. The Congress(I) is banking on the fact that both seats are in its traditional stronghold, south Goa. While the MGP, having made major inroads into the Congress(I) citadel, is hoping its plank, the recognition of Marathi as the second language, a sensitive issue in the state, will sway the vote its way. Till then, in electoral terms, Goa seems likely to remain in a state of suspended animation.

—RAGHUNANDAN DHAR

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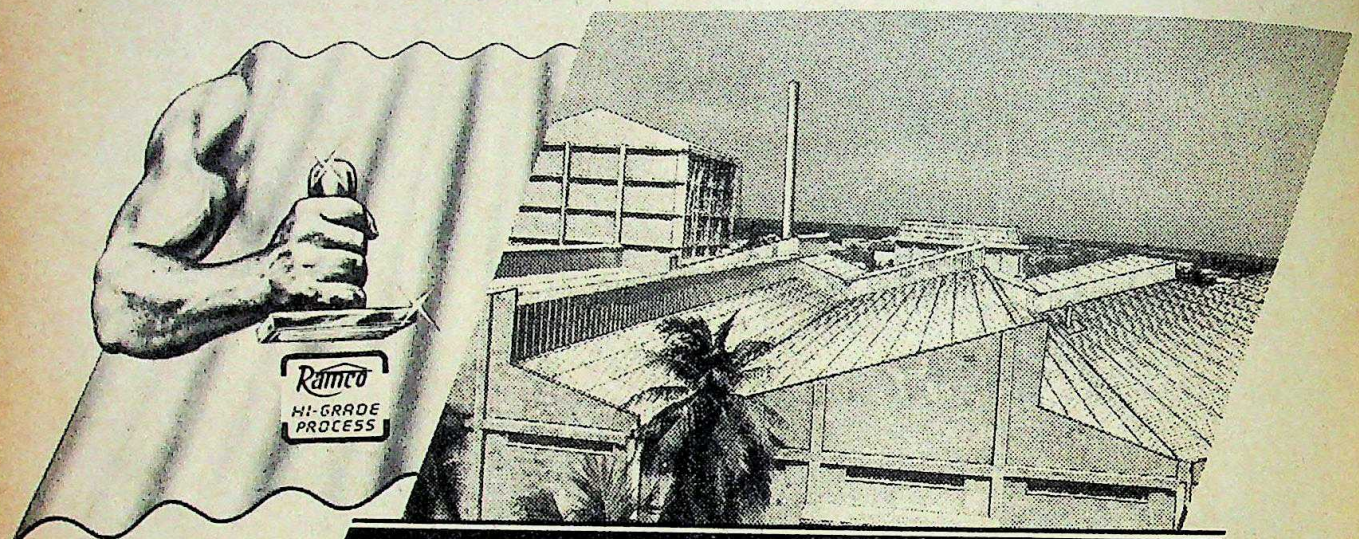

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EXIT POLL

The Voters' Profile

INDIA TODAY *commissioned Marketing and Research Group* (MARG) *to conduct an exit poll—the first such nationwide poll—during the Lok Sabha elections.*

The poll was carried out on November 22 and 27 in 50 constituencies spread all over the country, which were selected by psephologist Prannoy Roy.

With a countrywide sample of 77,107, this exit poll is perhaps the largest of its kind in the world. In each constituency, MARG *employed three supervisors and six interviewers, divided into three teams.*

These teams traversed the constituencies, interviewing voters as they emerged from the polling booths. The interviewers recorded information on the voters' age, sex, caste/religion and the party voted for.

Some voters were also presented with a brief questionnaire (a total sample of 6,565 across the country) which sought information on reasons for voting, and the issues facing the next government.

The data was analysed by Prannoy Roy, and in this report information is presented on nationwide voting behaviour of different groups, caste/religious affiliations as well as their reasons for voting for the Congress(I)/the Opposition.

YOUTH PREFERENCES

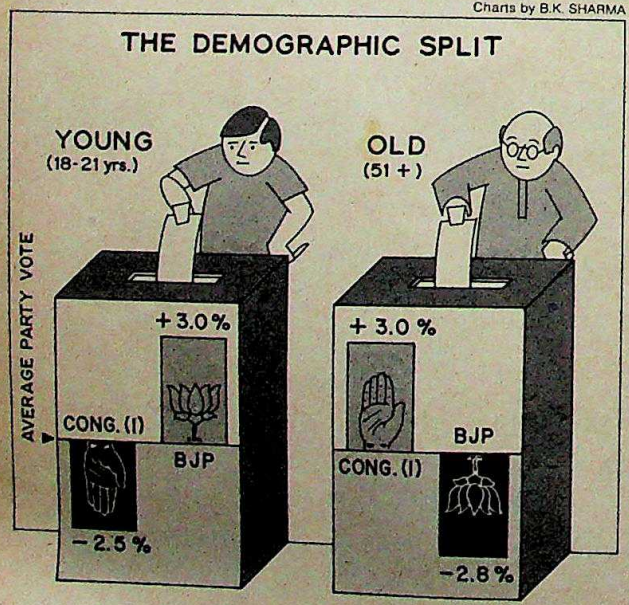
The poll shows that the recently enfranchised group of 18-21 year-olds has, on balance, voted against the establishment.

At the national level, a greater proportion of the BJP's backers was in the 18-21 group. The Congress(I) fared relatively better among older voters.

The Janata Dal's support was fairly even across all age groups.

In the opposition-ruled states of West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, the situation reversed itself with the Congress(I), and its allies, getting a greater share of their support from the younger voters.

Charts by B.K. SHARMA



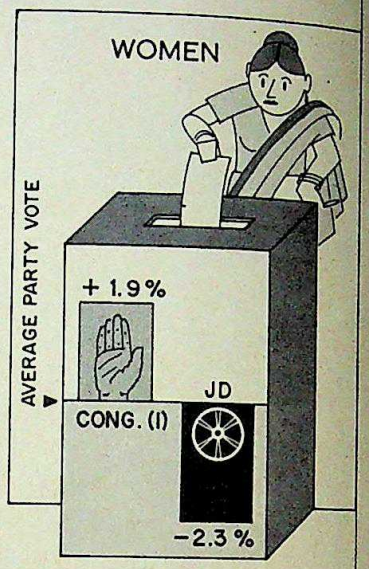
MALE-FEMALE DIVIDE

The voters' response showed that the Congress(I) continues to remain more popular among women than among men.

This time the women's vote it fetched was 1.9 per cent above its average party vote.

The Janata Dal, on the other hand, is a party that is much more male-supported. The women's vote it fetched is 2.3 per cent below the average party vote.

The BJP's support, however, is fairly evenly spread among both men and women.



A NEGATIVE VOTE

Quite a significant proportion of the opposition voters backed their parties in order to remove the Congress(I) from power.

This desire to humble the Congress(I) was greater outside south India. Forty-three per cent of the voters in the rest of the country were for it.

But it was considerable in the four south Indian states too—37 per cent.

Tables by RAJEEV MADAN

VOTED FOR THE OPPOSITION

	South India	Elsewhere
Because an opposition government would be good	63	57
Remove the Congress(I)	37	43

Don't knows excluded — All figures in percentages

THE BIG CHURN

Voters were asked to state when they had decided on the party they were going to vote for.

Twenty-nine per cent claimed they had made up their minds during the three-week election campaign (of which 9 per cent had decided on the day of the election or on the previous day).

There was a clear *'hawa'* (wind) blowing in favour of the Janata Dal with almost 40 per cent of the voters deciding to back it during the campaign. Eleven per cent of the Janata Dal's

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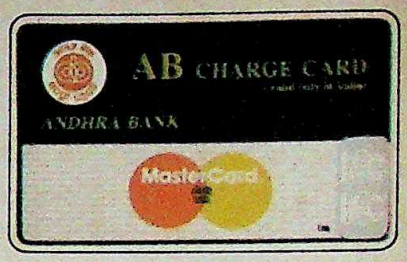

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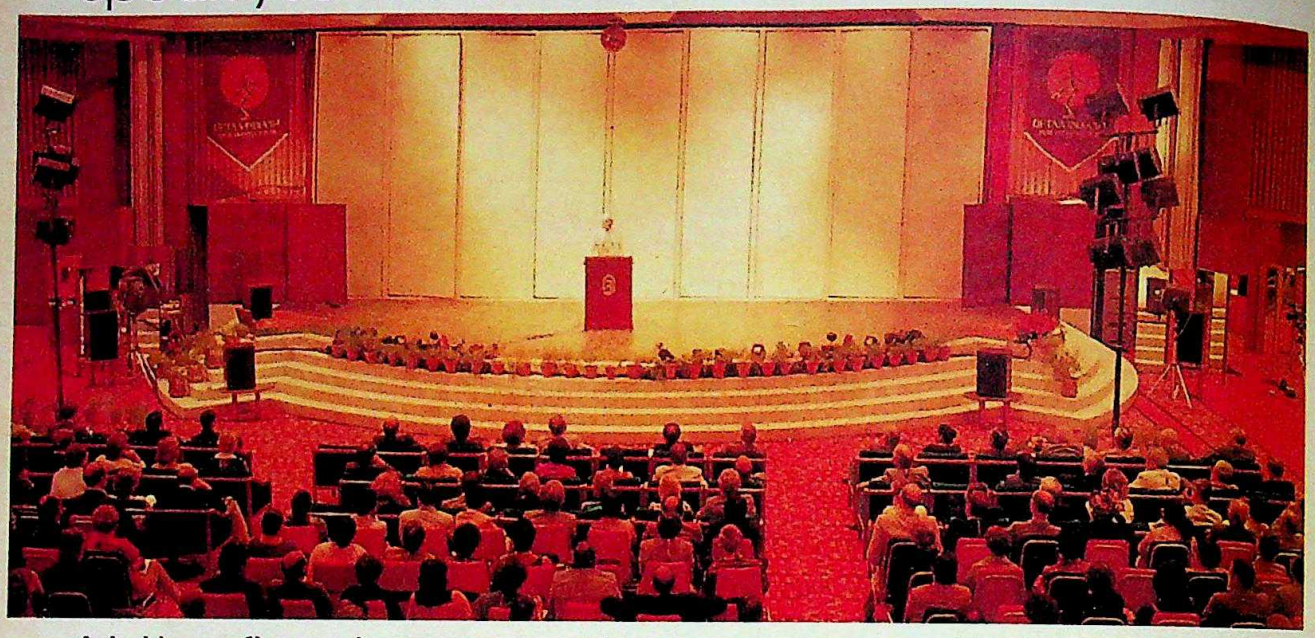

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support came in the last two days before the election.

The campaign had little effect on the cadre-based CPI(M), 80 per cent of whose supporters put their weight behind it even before the campaign began.

While 29 per cent of all voters had made up their minds only after the election campaign began, a higher proportion of the Muslims (36 per cent) made their voting decision quite late. This suggests that the Shilanyas ceremony by Hindu fundamentalists in Ayodhya on November 9 could have affected their voting behaviour.

Thirty-five per cent of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes also made up their minds in the last three weeks.

WHEN DECIDED

	ALL	BJP	CONG(I)	CPI(M)	JD
On polling day/day before	9	7	9	3	11
During the campaign	20	22	16	15	28
Earlier	67	67	72	80	59
Can't say	4	4	3	2	2

Don't knows excluded — All figures in percentages

ISSUES BEFORE NEW GOVERNMENT

The voters were asked to name the two major issues facing the next government.

Inflation and corruption were perceived as the main problems.

MAJOR ISSUES

	All Voters	Muslim Voters
Controlling inflation	37	33
Establishing Panchayati Raj	9	9
Controlling corruption	33	22
Communal harmony	21	36

Don't knows excluded — All figures in percentages

The Muslim voters, however, felt that the main task before the new government was to improve communal relations. The second priority they spelled out was the question of spiralling inflation.

The Muslim voter did not place too much of emphasis on the issue of corruption.

The Congress(I)'s primary election plank, the Panchayati Raj, was rated a distant last among the four issues by all the voters.

OPPOSITION CANDIDATES FOR PM

Vishwanath Pratap Singh was the overwhelming choice for prime minister. This, in the event that the Opposition grouping, the National Front, formed a government at the Centre.

CHOICE FOR OPPOSITION PM

	ALL
V.P. SINGH	63
N.T. RAMA RAO	7
R.K. HEGDE	6
DEVI LAL	10
OTHERS	14

Don't knows excluded — All figures in percentages

Voters were asked to choose from one of the four specified leaders: V.P. Singh, N.T. Rama Rao, Ramakrishna Hegde, and Devi Lal.

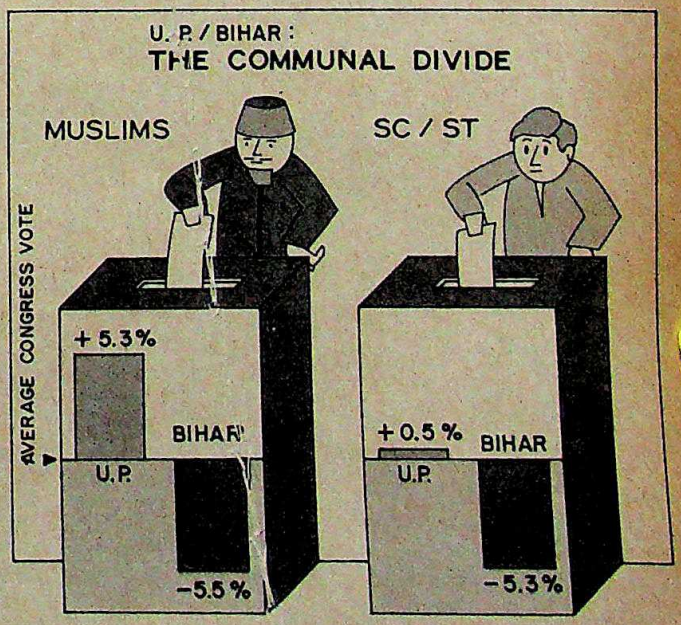
While around 80 per cent of the opposition voters opted for V.P. Singh, he was also considered the best opposition leader by a majority of Congress(I) supporters.

THE MUSLIM VOTER

In the major north Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Muslim voters moved away from the Congress(I). In Bihar, the drop in Muslim support for the Congress(I) was a massive 1.2 per cent: from a normally strong support of about 6.5 per cent above the average it dropped to 5.5 per cent below the average. The sudden swing away from the Congress(I) appears to have occurred at about the same time as the outbreak of large-scale violence in Bhagalpur in the run-up to the elections.

The drop in Muslim support for the Congress(I) in Uttar Pradesh was much less. Contrary to popular belief, the Congress(I) held on to a substantial part of its Muslim base in the state. Muslim support on the whole was 5.3 per cent higher than the average Congress(I) vote.

A set-back for the Congress(I) in these two states was the sharp swing away of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe vote. Normally, a strong bank for the Congress(I), Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe voters deserted it in Bihar and gave no extra benefit in Uttar Pradesh. The Bahujan Samaj Party was the beneficiary of this erosion in Congress(I) support.



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An Angry Verdict

Clear results in the states, but no national consensus

NO matter what the pollsters predict, no matter what the pundits proclaim, no matter what the politicians plot, on the day of reckoning the Indian voter manages to surprise everyone. His, ultimately, is the last word. The ninth general election was the most extensively and accurately predicted Indian election ever. But under the mass of figures and cold statistics lay the message that the Indian voter had delivered with such telling effect.

Witness the total destruction of the mighty Congress(I) monolith in its own homeground, the Hindi heartland. Witness the humiliation heaped on N.T. Rama Rao, once lionised as a demi-god by millions in his home state. Witness the devastation of Ramakrishna Hegde's Janata Dal by a people fed up of incompetence, corruption and squabbling. Witness how the Haryana voter cut Devi Lal to size—defying casteism, rigging and muscle power.

In the run-up, it had been fashionable to compare this election with the one in 1967 which brought India closest to a hung Parliament. But the very first trends from counting stations laid the fallacy to rest. This election was going to be one of a kind. Where a level of opposition unity unmatched except by the Janata experiment of 1977 changed electoral arithmetic and where the voter in each state or region gave a clear, resounding verdict even if he was not in agreement with the voter in the adjoining state.

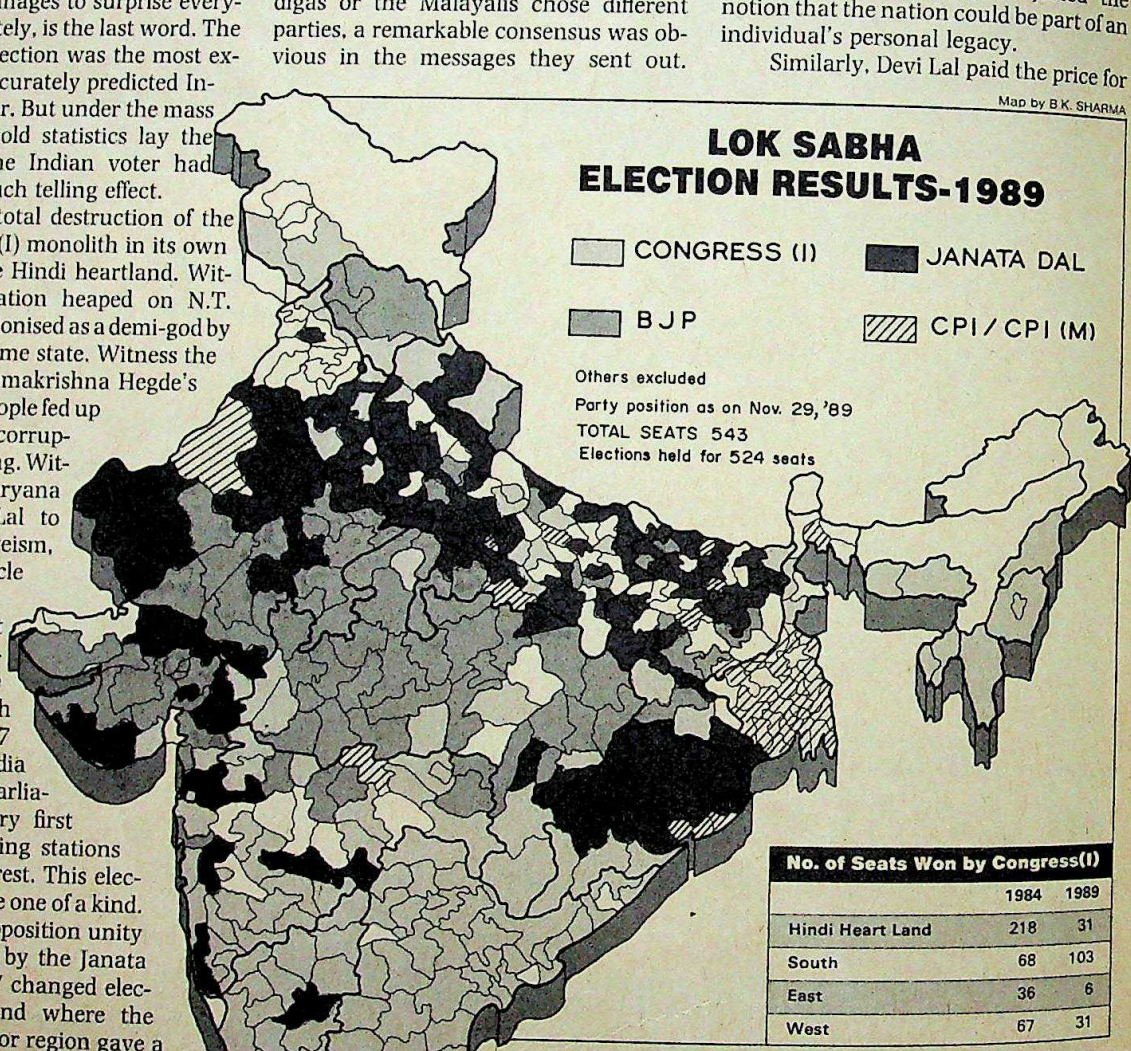
In the Hindi heartland the predominant pull was that of V.P. Singh as a new, honest alternative to Rajiv. There was also the BJP's communal appeal. The two pulls worked along different axis but led to the same goal, the rout of the Congress(I), considered corrupt and incompetent. The roles reversed in the south. The Andhra voter could not have expressed his disgust with Rama Rao's eccentric style of functioning more effectively. Nor could the Oriya have better conveyed his disenchantment with the non-performance of Janaki Ballabh Patnaik.

Even though the Biharis, the Tamils, the Telugus, the Gujaratis, the Kannadigas or the Malayalis chose different parties, a remarkable consensus was obvious in the messages they sent out. Throughout the country, it was absolutely clear that the vote was against corruption and a failure to deliver. The only regional group to survive the anti-establishment wave was the Left in West Bengal—a tribute to its clean record. Also to the fact that it does not suffer from the other bane of Indian politics: political dynasties. Despite the year-long hoopla over the Nehru centenary and the many tears shed on Mrs Gandhi's death and birth anniversaries on television, the people rejected the notion that the nation could be part of an individual's personal legacy.

Similarly, Devi Lal paid the price for the misdeeds of his sons, as Rama Rao did for his sons-in-law. It is not uncharacteristic of the Indian voter to get into a punitive mood. The devastation of Mrs Gandhi's Congress(I) in 1977 and then of the Janata in 1980 are still fresh in the memory. But never has the punishment been handed out so singlemindedly, so discriminatingly.

Perhaps the lack of a national electoral consensus had something to do with the absence of a truly national, trans-Vindhyachal issue. The centrist opposition unity that rewrote electoral equations so decisively in the rest of the

Map by B.K. SHARMA



No. of Seats Won by Congress(I)

	1984	1989
Hindi Heart Land	218	31
South	68	103
East	36	6
West	67	31

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country came a cropper in the south.

Also, while both Bofors and Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid were issues in the north, west and to an extent even in the east, they did not cut too much ice in the south. Again, in the Hindi heartland the voter was basically choosing between two leaders: Rajiv Gandhi and V.P. Singh. And though that particular duel resulted in a knockout victory for Singh, his failure to reach out to the south was colossal.

The Opposition had left the south to their regional partners, giving the voter the impression that its leadership was north-centric. Rajiv was identified as a national leader and his presence in the southern campaign was ubiquitous. Obviously, the voters preferred a known devil to distant claimants for their affections who did not even care to talk to them. Above all, the voter's message was: don't take me for granted.

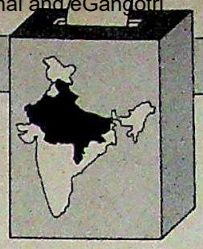
In the process the voter created quite a few complications as well. The geographical polarisation of political opinion rendered both major national parties—the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal—regional in character. This while the voter was firm in his rejection of regionalism in Andhra and Tamil Nadu. There are embarrassing ironies for both sides. Rajiv's party now draws two-thirds of its Lok Sabha strength from the south, but has no southern leader of real stature. As for the National Front it has a mere three Lok Sabha members from the south to choose its ministers from.

Unfortunately, the divide this election created is not merely politico-geographical. If this election was one of the most negative—no side promised anything but the destruction of the other—it was also certainly the most communal. The BJP was at least clear about its non-secular pretensions. The Congress(I) too tried to take advantage of the Ayodhya issue, but burnt its hand. The foundation stone laid at Ayodhya on November 9 is now a legacy of this election that could bleed many successive generations.

From the victory of the legion of Ram Shila puja organisers throughout the Hindi belt to the remarkable sweep of candidates supported by extremists in Punjab, this election brought the communal forces out in the open, fighting for votes with the gloves off. It also consecrated the arrival of the avowedly caste-based Bahujan Samaj Party as a major political pressure group. And it brought a new level of cynicism to the use of the bullet and muscle power.

Those who gain power as a result of this election will also inherit this legacy—a nation more fractured politically and communally than ever. —SHEKHAR GUPTA

HINDI HEARTLAND



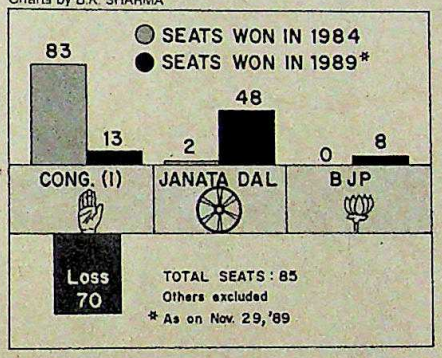
UTTAR PRADESH

Going VP's Way

Bofors, communalism, anti-Rajiv wave, defeat Congress(I)

COMPROMISE on principles, a blatantly communal ploy, and a host of corruption charges cost the Congress(I) the electorally crucial state of Uttar Pradesh. The raja of Manda rode roughshod over his former party, winning most of the state's 85 Lok Sabha seats, leaving

Charts by B.K. SHARMA



the Congress(I) with barely 13.

Rajiv Gandhi and Union ministers Kalpnath Rai, Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, Mahavir Prasad and Brahm Dutt won, but the other eight Central ministers were defeated. On the other hand, virtually all the opposition leaders—V.P. Singh, Arun Nehru, Maneka Gandhi, Chandra Shekhar, Ajit Singh, and Arif Mohammad Khan—won with a one lakh-plus margin.

The Congress(I) could only blame itself for the debacle. It lost both the Hindu and Muslim vote on one day—November 9—when it permitted the foundation laying ceremony of the Rama temple on the disputed plot in Ayodhya and then stopped construction. The Muslims—its traditional supporters—were outraged as the state Government had struck a covert deal with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. In many seats where Muslims form 30 to 38 per cent of the electorate, the Congress(I) lost. The Hindus remained unsatisfied—a sentiment that cut across caste barriers.

Apart from drawing mileage from the Congress(I)'s mistakes, the Janata Dal came up with a winning secular campaign—with V.P. Singh travelling throughout the state. The BJP, with which the Janata Dal had seat adjustments, won 8 seats by exploiting Hindu sentiments.

That the Congress(I) could not cash in on the Hindu backlash was evident from the poll percentages. Congressmen polled 31 per cent of the votes against 51 per cent in 1984, while the BJP's 30 candidates got 20 per cent from wherever it contested, up from 6.4 per cent in 1984. Janata Dal nominees got around 40 per cent, against the combined 25.2 per cent that went to Lok Dal and the Janata Party in 1984.

A poor poll strategy made the situation worse for the ruling party. While the decision to hold simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly elections created confusion in the Congress(I), the Opposition managed to confront the Congress(I) in one to one contests in the Lok Sabha election. The usually astute chief minister N.D. Tiwari had got his poll arithmetic badly mixed up. To accomodate his favourite, S.P. Guria, he denied Defence Minister K.C. Pant the Nainital seat. Pant refused to stand for the polls and Guria lost.

But the underdogs who proved giant killers were the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) candidates. They made inroads into the ruling party's two traditional vote banks—the Harijans and the Muslims—and hammered in the final nail in the Congress(I)'s coffin. The BSP's 72 candidates got around 13 per cent of the votes, undercutting many Congressmen and even a few Janata Dal nominees.

The clearest message was this: that virtually every caste and community was furious with the Congress(I)'s misrule and simple ineptitude. —DILIP AWASTHI

BIHAR

Janata Jells

Sweeping vote against corruption, incompetence

IT was a vote against non-performance. And as Congress(I) stalwarts like Tariq Anwar, Abdul Ghafoor, Madhuri Singh and Shyama Sinha fell like ninepins, the Bihar debacle dealt a virtual death blow to the political standing of Chief Minister S.N. Sinha.

Sinha had been catapulted to the post just eight months ago with an eye to Rajput votes. But ironically, all the party's Rajput candidates, including Sinha's relatives, were swept off their feet by the opposition wave. Said a gloating Janata

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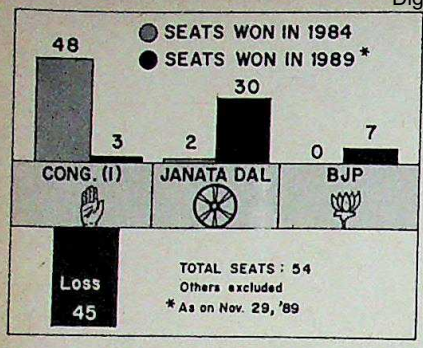


Dal worker: "The myth that Sinha is the leader of the Rajputs is finally exposed."

The ruling party's disadvantage was apparent the day the campaign began. Far from being taken by surprise at the announcement of elections, the Opposition managed to come to an understanding, agreeing to confront the Congress(I) in straight contests in as many as 34 seats. And the combination of the Ayodhya controversy, the Bhagalpur riots and the campaign of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha alienated its traditional vote-banks—the tribals and the Muslims. The tribals rallied round the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and other Jharkhand groups while the Muslims cast their lot with the Left. And many of the Hindus, who had voted for the Congress(I) in the last election, went over to the BJP. Compounding the chief minister's woes was the high command's decision to renominate most of the sitting MPs—who had angered the electorate with their non-performance and, more importantly, their lack of concern for their constituents.

Expectedly, the Congress(I) gains were in seats where the Opposition failed to ensure straight contests, leading to a split in the opposition votes. Damaging charges of rigging and clumsy attempts to terrorise voters were hurled at the Congress(I). In Jehanabad, three MLAs—Asghar Hussain, Jagdish Sharma and Krishna Singh—were reported to have indulged in booth capturing.

The Bihar PCC(I) President Jagannath Mishra said: "If the state Government had performed better, things would have been different." Giving an indication of the lack of cohesion that may have affected the Congress(I)'s chances, he blamed the Sinha Government for failing to control the communal riots in Bhagalpur.

The Lok Sabha election might possibly lead to the dissolution of the state Assembly. In any case, it is unlikely that Sinha will be able to continue as chief minister. Said a distraught party MLA: "We had kept quiet because of the elections. But now we must make it clear that we have no faith in Sinha."

—UTTAM SENGUPTA

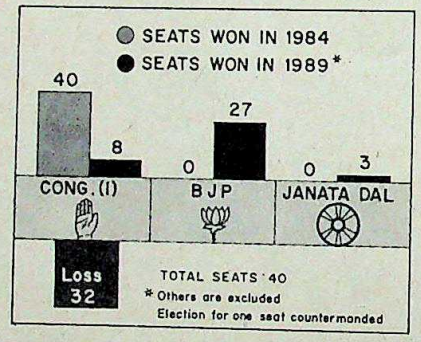
MADHYA PRADESH

Saffron Wash

BJP reaps the rewards for solid grassroots work

As in several other states across the Hindi belt, Madhya Pradesh too did a dramatic volte-face. While it had sent all the 40 Congress(I) candidates to Parliament in 1984, this time it inflicted a near-mortal wound on the party, giving it only eight seats out of the 39 for which elections were held. The elections made it obvious that the state has become the theatre for a mighty resurgence of the BJP, which has won a whopping 27 of the 31 seats it contested.

For the BJP the election results were the outcome of the dedicated and determined ground work the party had been doing for the last four years, including a highly successful campaign for writing off loans. Simultaneously, they subtly whipped up Hindu passions, a process which later culminated in the communal riots during the Ramshila pujas. Said the MPCC(I) chief Shivbanu Solanki: "The BJP has benefited by creating communal frenzy. They sent their supporters to polling booths with *chandan* (sandalwood paste) smeared on their foreheads." Retorted Sundarlal Patwa, chief of the BJP state unit: "Next he will object to people casting votes wearing dhotis."



If the BJP capitalised on the communal tension—23 people were killed in riots in Indore in October—the ruling party lost a major chunk of its vote bank because of the manner in which it had allowed the communal situation to drift. A Congress(I) candidate who was defeated admitted: "We failed to take a firm stand on the issue."

In the meantime, the Muslims, angered by the Congress(I)'s attempt to reap political harvest from the bloodied streets, swung away from the party which led to the party losing at least five seats. In Bhopal and Indore, for instance, two independent Muslim candidates walked away with 97,000 and 88,000 votes respectively. The loser was the ruling party.

So wide has been the BJP sweep that it has emerged as a viable alternative to the Congress(I). The Janata Dal has pockets of influence—it won three out of the 10 seats it contested—but the fact that even its state chief V.C. Shukla could just about

PUNJAB

Rebels' Win

The people of Punjab, faced with unending misery and unresponsive administrations, hit back with a vengeance in the Lok Sabha polls. They opted for an extreme radical group, Akali Dal (Mann), and its allies in 10 of the 13 seats. They cast a negative vote not only against the Congress(I) but also against the Badal and Barnala factions of the Akali Dal, making it clear that they were fed up with their selfish and dithering policies.

While the victory of those like jailed former IPS officer Simranjit Singh Mann, Beant Singh's widow Bimal Khalsa and alleged terrorist Atinderpal Singh was expected, it was the triumph of Dhian Singh 'Mand' from Ferozepur that provided the accurate pointer to the factors that dominated the poll in the strife-torn state. Dhian Singh, an unknown, defeated both Congress(I) leader Jagmeet Brar and Jat supremo Devi Lal. His credentials for this resounding success: he was supported by the Mann group, which did so because three of Dhian's brothers—alleged terrorists—have been killed in encounters with the police.

Obviously, the biggest factor that worked in favour of the Akali Dal (Mann) is the growing resentment among the masses against police excesses. An obvious example of this was Rajinder Kaur. Her husband had been killed in an 'encounter', and the Government had refused to order a probe into the matter. A reluctant candidate, she won from Ludhiana by over a lakh votes. Said Major Jagjit Singh (retd), a leader of the Mann group: "Governor Ray should accept moral responsibility for the vote against his misrule and resign." Underlining this resentment was the fact that higher turnouts were witnessed at rural areas as compared to urban.

This election also saw an increased polarisation of votes. The Mann group

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scrape through with a majority of only 12,000 votes serves to expose the party's limitations.

Madhavarao Scindia, who once again won from Gwalior, and Kamalnath, who won from Chindwara, were amply rewarded for nursing their constituencies. The Congress(I)'s victory in Jhabua, Bastar and Kanker was mainly because the Opposition was divided.

The basic reason for the fall of the Congress(I) is of course the issue of communalism, corruption, price rise and political hooliganism that has eroded the party's base in the other north Indian states as well. The electoral adjustment between the BJP and the Janata Dal—only in two constituencies did they fight each other—and the factional infighting in the Congress(I) did not help matters either.

The debacle—the party lost all seats except Chindwara and Seoni in the Mahakoshal region and was swept away from the Vindhya region—is only the beginning of what appears to be a continuing trauma for the Congress(I) in the state. The badly mauled party will have to withstand the pressure from the saffron brigade as well as the unavoidable siege from within, led by Arjun Singh who will not rest before the political burial of Chief Minister Motilal Vora. But Patwa sounded magnanimous: "I will not ask them to quit. They ought to think about it on their own." The problem is the Congressmen are too numbed to think.

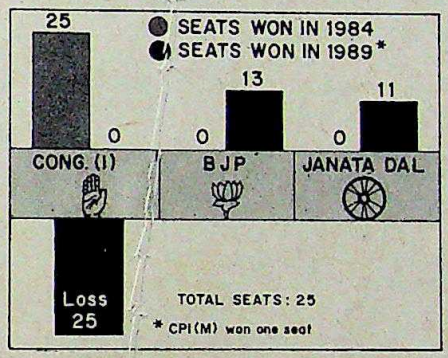
—N.K. SINGH

RAJASTHAN

Royal Rout

A demoralised Congress(I) receives a sound drubbing

IN Rajasthan, they call it flipping a *chapati*. And it's an apt metaphor. From giving a 100 per cent mandate to the Congress(I) in the last Lok Sabha elections, the electorate did a complete turnabout this time round—plumping for the Opposition in each of the desert state's 25 constituencies. Only in 1977 had the Opposition triumphed with such an overwhelming majority, when all but one seat had gone to Charan Singh's Bharatiya Lok Dal. The bitter anti-Congress(I) mood of the people was illustrated by the fact that of the opposition victors, as many as six romped home with margins of over 1.5 lakh votes.



Things moved with clockwork precision right from the time the elections were announced. The BJP and Janata Dal carefully carved out the state between them, burying all outstanding differences, at least temporarily. The BJP walked off with 13 seats, while the Janata Dal got all the 11 it contested. Said BJP strongman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat: "People were very angry with the Congress(I). The results were no surprise." If the Congress(I) had a chance of victory anywhere at all, it was in Bikaner, where the opposition vote was divided. But there too the Congress(I) came a cropper. The CPI(M)'s former MLA, Sheopat Singh, humbled both the BJP and the Congress(I).

Apart from a strong show of opposition unity against a fragmented Congress(I), what really did turn the tide against the ruling party in the state was a shrill campaign by the BJP on the Ayodhya issue. Its victorious candidate from Pali, former judge Guman Mal Lodha, is the state chief of the Ram Janmabhoomi Samiti and is a counsel for the Hindus in the court tussle. What further helped polarise votes for the BJP was the communal rioting that broke out in Kota months before the polls.

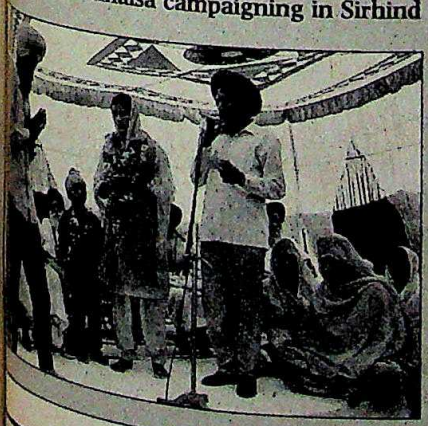
Said a bitter state Congress(I) chief, Heeralal Deopura after submitting his resignation: "It was an immoral campaign where religious issues took precedence over political matters." Immoral or not, it carried the day for the Opposition.

—PANKAJ PACHAURI

swept the Sikh majority areas, but its candidate Chanan Singh Sidhu lost to Sukhbans Kaur Bhinder of the Congress(I) in Gurdaspur, which is a Hindu-dominated area.

One seat that went against the polarisation trend was that of Jalandhar, where the former diplomat I.K.Gujral of the Janata Dal won on a platform of peace and communal harmony.

Bimal Khalsa campaigning in Sirhind



Among the factors that resulted in a poor showing by the Congress(I)—two seats as compared to six in the last general election—were the demoralised mood of the state party and the delay in announcing the names of candidates. Also the fact that party workers, fearing the militants, shied away from campaigning in the countryside. Moreover, the presence of BSP candidates in 11 of the 13 constituencies ate into traditional Congress(I) vote banks.

Another reason why the Mann group fared so well as compared to the older Akali groups is that it shone in better light when it came to the concept of 'sacrifice' that so dominated the religio-political mix of the Sikhs.

But the victory of the Mann group is creating consternation. While some feel that with the militants joining the mainstream the Punjab situation might ease, there are those who feel a dangerous legitimacy may be given to extremists who may end up using it to further their secessionist cause. —KANWAR SANDHU

DELHI

Capital Loss

Congress(I) fortunes dimmed by BJP star performance

AT election-end the message from Delhi's seven Lok Sabha seats was clear: the Opposition wins if it unites. The BJP wrested four seats and the Janata Dal one from the Congress(I) which had swept the capital in 1984. The star winner was BJP President L.K. Advani from New Delhi constituency.

It was the obstinacy of Devi Lal, who insisted on fielding his man Chand Ram against Information and Broadcasting Minister H.K.L. Bhagat, that split the opposition vote in East Delhi giving the Congress(I) one of the two seats it managed to retain. Bhagat beat the Janata Dal candidate Kishore Lal—who even trailed behind Kanshi Ram of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Chand Ram. In Chandni Chowk too, it was opposition disunity that helped Jai Prakash Aggarwal of the

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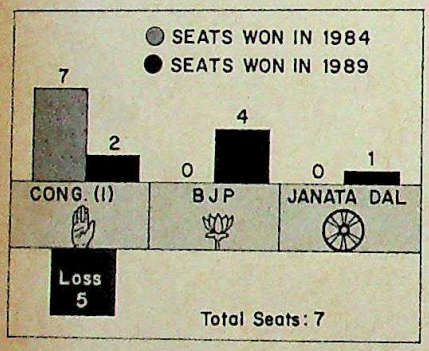
Congress(I) to retain his seat. Aggarwal's tally was 65,000 less than that of the BJP and Janata Dal combined.

The big upset for the Congress(I) in Delhi was the defeat of Union minister of state for food processing Jagdish Tytler at the hands of Vijay Kumar Malhotra, the national secretary of the BJP. By fielding its Delhi unit chief, Madan Lal Khurana, from South Delhi constituency, the BJP showed a desire to develop a second rung of leadership in Parliament. The vocal Khurana is expected to campaign for a statehood status for the Union territory in the Lok Sabha. After his victory procession, he said: "We are committed to this demand and we will get it for Delhi's citizens." This fits into the BJP's game plan of ruling a substantial portion of the Hindi heartland—Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi.

Even as the Opposition rejoiced, the Congress(I) was reeling under the impact of the electoral debacle. One of



the significant implications of the results is a diminishing of Bhagat's clout—whose writ ran large in the city's affairs for more than a decade. Dharam Dass Shastri from Karol Bagh, Subhash Chopra from South Delhi and Mohini Giri from New Delhi were all his choice—and they had to lick dust at the hustings. Explaining his party's poor performance, a pensive Bhagat said: "The kind of communal and casteist alliances these elections have seen are dangerous for the country."

The capital's citizenry has already shown its indifference to the electoral process, despite knowing that Delhi more than any other city is ruled by the party in power at the Centre. Actually it is the administrative confusion which prevails because of conflicting orders from various authorities—at the central and local level—that is the major reason for political apathy. It seems only a statehood can crystalise Delhi's political identity—something which it now lacks—and restore voter confidence in the political process.—PANKAJ PACHAURI

HARYANA

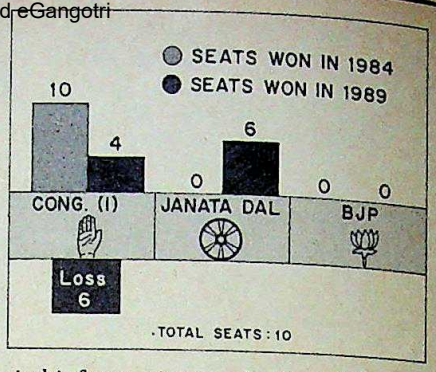
Rude Rebuff

Devi Lal keeps the edge, but suffers a firm electoral snub

JAT versus non-Jat. That in essence describes the poll outcome in Haryana where Devi Lal could win only six of the 10 Lok Sabha seats—of these Hisar, Sirsa, Rohtak, Sonepat and Mahendragarh are Jat dominated constituencies.

Two factors seem to have set back the Jat's juggernaut. First, the label of Jat misrule pinned onto his government by Congress(I) heavyweights Bhajan Lal and Bansi Lal, seems to have stuck. Added to this was the revolt of Kirpa Ram Punia and five other senior party members who resigned from the ministry a mere week before the state went to the polls. And the issue of family rule also worked against the Janata Dal leader. "We are fed-up with Devi Lal and Chautala's style of functioning. It seems to be a curse to be a non-Jat," said Punia, once Devi Lal's lieutenant. "Devi Lal wants to establish family rule in Haryana," the rebels chorused.

It is the battle for power between the two politically ambitious sons of Devi Lal that cost the party dearly. Interestingly, while the attack on the Jat leader helped consolidate the hardcore Jat electorate



in his favour, it severely affected the BJP contestants Suraj Bhan (Ambala) and Sushma Swaraj (Karnal) for the votes of the non-Jats went not to them but to the Congress(I). This election, thus, saw the widening of the rural-urban divide.

The Congress(I) did better than anticipated, winning four seats. That arch-rivals Bansi Lal and Bhajan Lal won by margins of over one lakh each also signalled troubled times ahead for Devi Lal, what with the tightrope he is being forced to walk between his warring sons.

Typically, however, Devi Lal feigned unconcern. "We have won six seats when in 1984 we had not got one. West Bengal and Haryana are the only two states which have not voted for a change," he said confidently. But that confidence must certainly conceal a host of worries, for he knows both Bansi Lal and Bhajan Lal are capable of extracting a mile if conceded an inch.

—HARINDER BAWEJA

THE SOUTH

TAMIL NADU

Sweet Revenge

Congress(I)-AIADMK alliance outmanoeuvres the DMK

AS electoral slaps in the face go, the DMK couldn't have been dealt a more resounding one. In the 1984 elections, it sent two representatives to the Lok Sabha. This time, it seemed, it could only improve on that dismal showing. Yet the party actually managed to do worse, losing all the seats it contested.

Worse, the DMK's allies too drew a complete blank, barring the CPI which won one seat. In sharp contrast, the AIADMK-Congress(I) alliance bagged 37 of the 38 seats to which elections were held, with the AIADMK netting every one of the 11 seats it contested.

But in a way, the results were true to form. The Tamil electorate, like other states of south India, has always distinguished between the party it voted to power in the state and the one it plumped for at the Centre. The traditional favourite for the Lok Sabha has been the Congress(I). This time it proved to be no different. Among the prominent victors from the Congress(I) were Union ministers P. Chidambaram, M. Arunachalam and R. Prabhu, and the sitting MP Vyjanthimala Bali.

DMK supremo M. Karunanidhi apparently had a premonition of impending electoral doom. Before the election, he had begun to insist that the results

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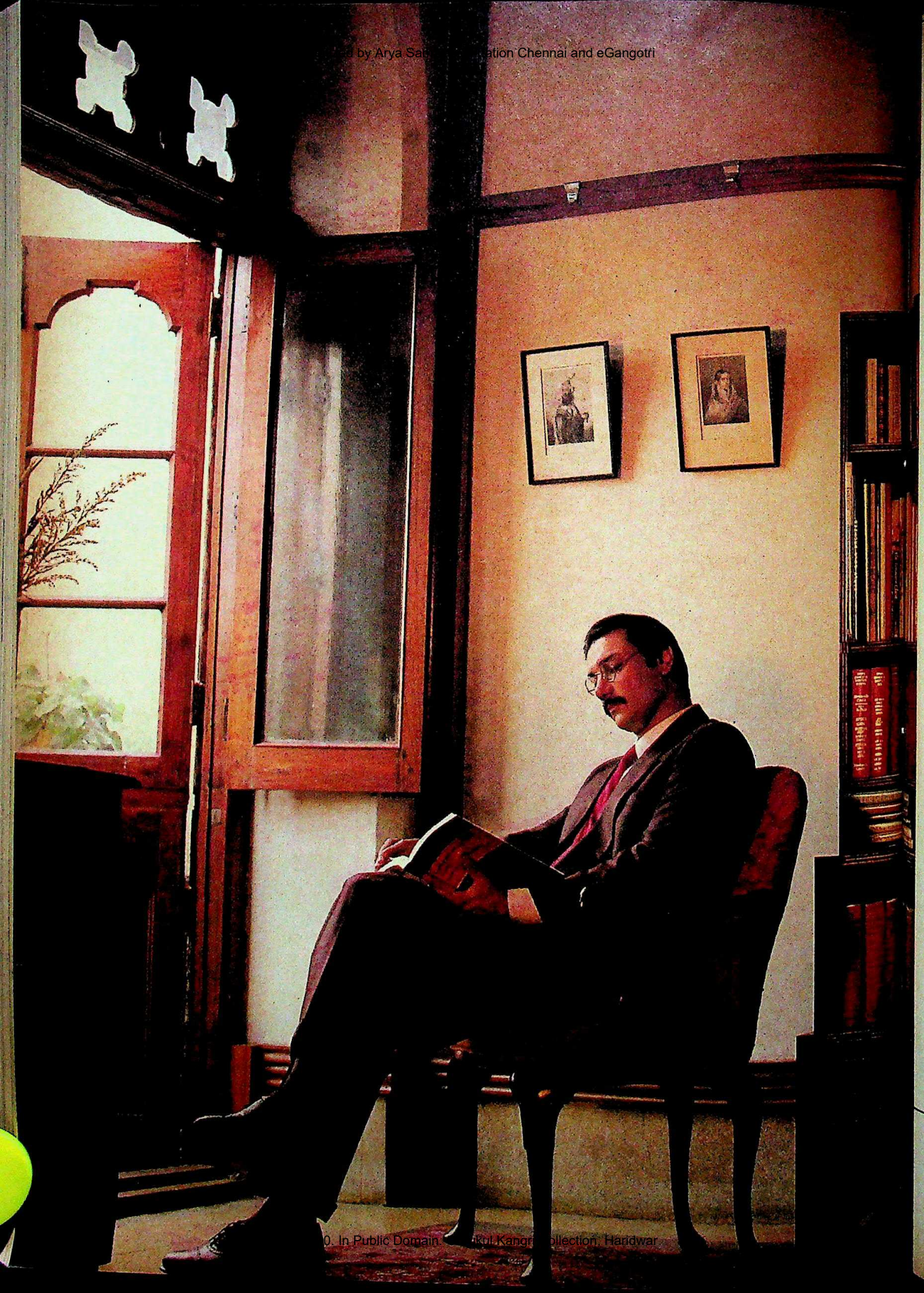

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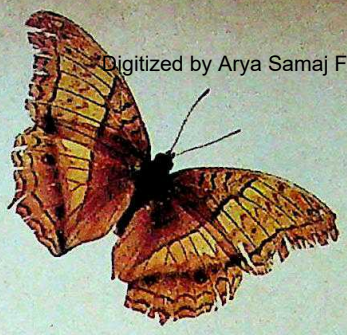

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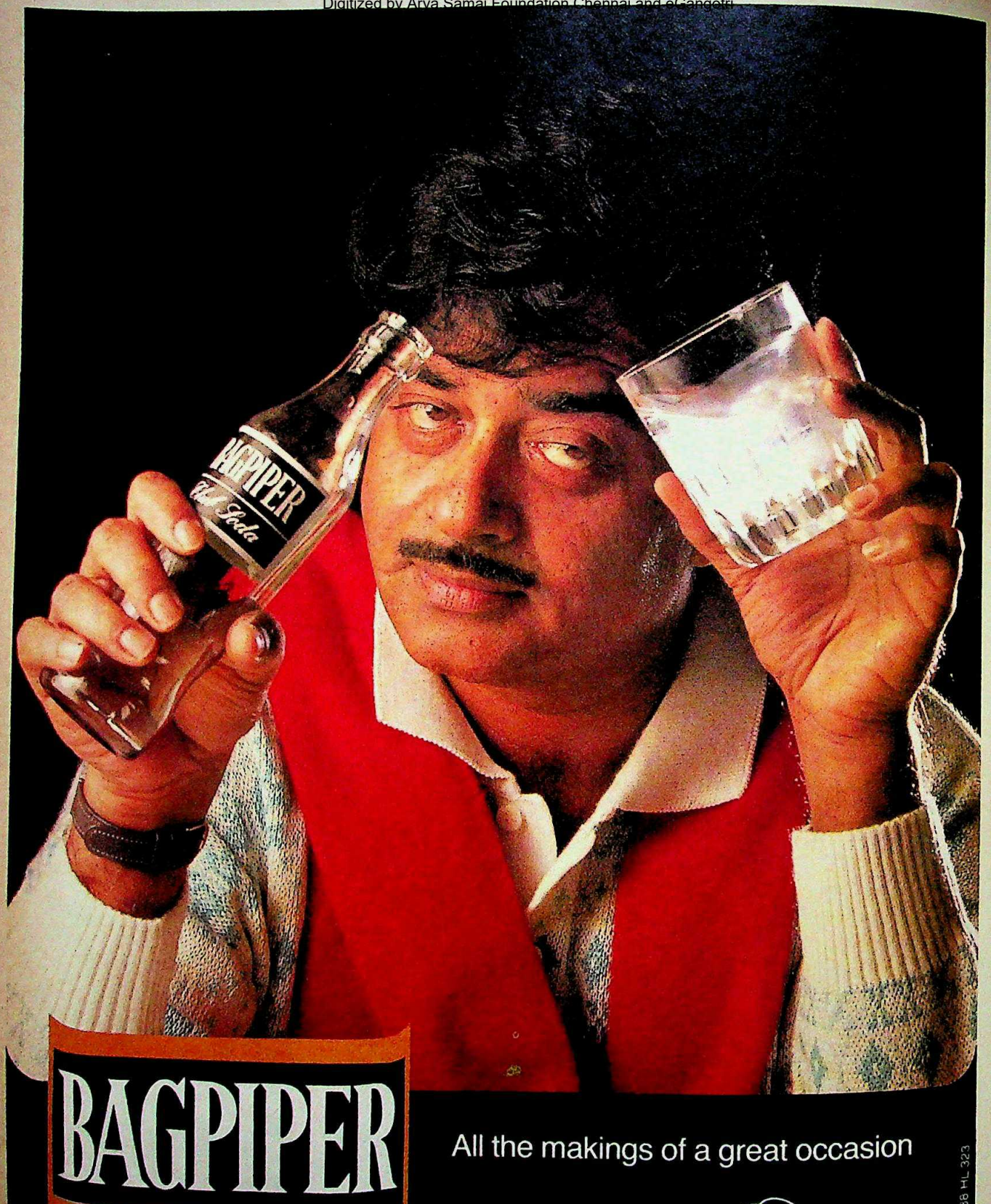

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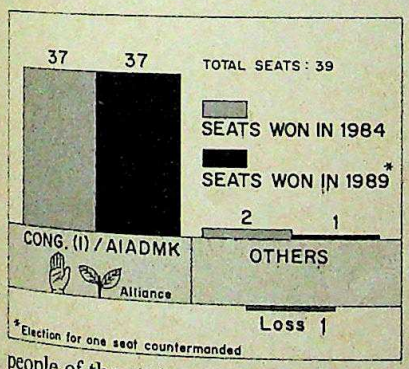
would not be a reflection of the performance of the DMK Government. On the other hand, the opposition alliance, and especially AIADMK chief Jayalalitha, had all along maintained that the election was a "referendum on the DMK rule". Declared an exuberant TNCC(I) President V.K. Ramamurthy, who assumed charge of the state party after its debacle in the assembly elections in January this year: "The poll results are a clear verdict against Karunanidhi."

The victory of the Congress(I)-AIADMK alliance is a victory of pragmatism. Ten months ago, the two had decided to go their separate ways. The result was a clean sweep for the DMK in the assembly elections—with a marginally higher vote.

Still, the alliance's victory is not just a matter of electoral arithmetic. In more than half the constituencies, it won by margins of over one lakh votes. The Bofors scandal cut no ice with the voter. What seems to have mattered was the shortage of rice and cooking oil—and both issues were vigorously raked up by Jayalalitha at every meeting.

For Jayalalitha, the victory is a personal triumph. Over the past year, she has emerged as the sole leader of a united AIADMK. And now she has won the supreme endorsement of her position—electoral stamp of approval from the



people of the state.

Though her party conceded most of the seats in the Lok Sabha contest to the Congress(I), it was undoubtedly the senior partner in the alliance. Now her sights are clearly aimed at the chief ministership. If there's a black lining at all in her silver cloud, it's that the Congress(I) may not return to power at the Centre and dismiss the DMK Government.

The corresponding fear in the DMK camp—of dismissal in the event of a Congress(I) government being formed at the Centre—was voiced by a party worker outside the party's headquarters in Madras. "V.P. Singh will come to power, won't he?" he asked dejectedly.

—KAVITHA SHETTY

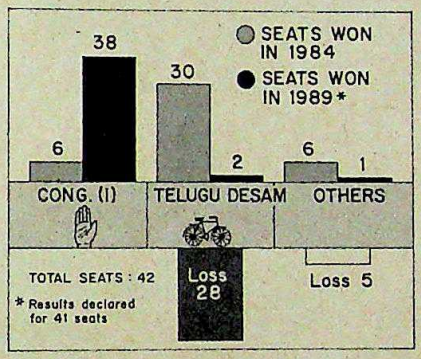
ANDHRA PRADESH

Wiped Out

N.T. Rama Rao is humiliated by an indignant electorate

FOR N.T. Rama Rao and his party, the results were apocalyptic. Piggybacking on the broken promises of the Rama Rao government, the Congress(I) romped home, with 39 of its candidates winning against the Telugu Desam's two.

The results were more than a reversal of the 1984 verdict when the Congress(I) had managed only six seats of the 42. Even the formidable N.T. Rama Rao suffered a humiliating defeat in Kalwakurthy assembly constituency,



one of the two seats he contested. And a weighty contestant like Janata Dal General Secretary S. Jaipal Reddy met the same fate at the hands of Congress(I) candidate, former Union deputy minister M. Mallikarjun. The normally cautious Reddy conceded: "There's no denying the public disgust with Rama Rao's style of functioning." This was a total about-turn in the fortunes of Rama Rao, an iconoclastic politician who successfully withstood even the Rajiv wave of 1984, rising in stature to become the chairman of the National Front.

Interestingly, all the Congress(I) candidates won by convincing margins except for K. Ramakrishna who wrested the Anakapalle seat from the Telugu Desam's P. Appalanarasimhan by the lowest margin of nine votes.

According to the Telugu Desam leader in the dissolved Lok Sabha, C. Madhava Reddy, the simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the assembly helped the Congress(I). While Rama Rao himself was still too dumbstruck to react to the devastating electoral verdict, a member of the party politburo said: "The choice of candidates for assembly constituencies and the lack of funds were reasons for the failure."

Rama Rao also paid a heavy price for going back on his earlier plan to give at least half the tickets to first-time contestants. And the conflict between his sons-in-law N. Chandrababu Naidu and D. Venkateswara Rao deepened dissensions within the party. Apart from this, the people were tired of Rama Rao's eccentric ways, typified by his whimsical decision to contest the Kalwakurthy assembly seat.

But primarily it was the anti-Rama Rao wave and the rejuvenated working of the Congress(I) that turned the tide against the Telugu Desam. Andhra Pradesh Congress(I) president M. Chenna Reddy, 75, attributed his party's success to "the willingness of Congress(I) workers to go to the field". The party also gained from Chenna Reddy's organisational abilities and his clout with the influential Reddy community in the Telengana region.

The rout has plunged the Telugu Desam into an uncertain, dismal future. If the party is not to be reduced to a rump, Rama Rao will have to build a team to organise programmes for the workers. Promises a hopeful Telugu Desam MP in the Rajya Sabha, Renuka Choudhary: "The Telugu Desam will rise like the phoenix." At the moment that sounds like wishful thinking.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

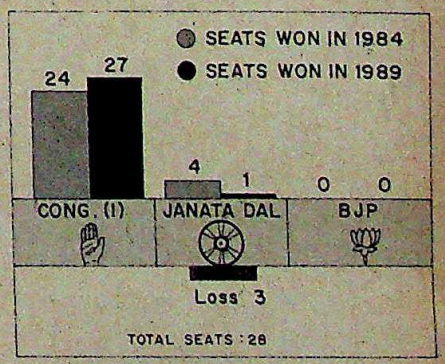
KARNATAKA

Swept Aside

Hegde pays the price for a riven party and poor tactics

KARNATAKA once again stood solidly behind the Congress(I)—propping up the shuddering political monolith.

The Congress(I) steamroller claimed even the four Lok Sabha seats it had conceded to the Janata Party in 1984. Primary among these was the prestigious Bangalore South constituency which sent non-Congress(I) candidates



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to the last three Lok Sabhas. The former chief minister, R. Gundu Rao's smashing one-lakh plus win over the Janata Dal's S.M. Raghupathy was indicative of the Congress(I)'s sweep.

Even as their colleagues in the north fell, key Congress(I) leaders in the state romped home with unexpected ease. Rural development minister B. Janardhan Poojary and AICC(I) General Secretary Oscar Fernandes coasted to victory with a lakh plus margin each, while minister of state Jaffer Sharief brushed aside the Dal's Lawrence Fernandes and relegated Janata-backed Syed Shahabuddin to third place. B. Shankaranand, who headed the infamous Joint Parliamentary Committee and who sneaked home by a mere 3,000 votes in 1984, cruised to victory this time. Said Sharief: "It's not the victory that surprises us, but the ease with which we won."

Clearly, the Congress(I) rode an anti-Janata Dal wave in the state. It was a deep resentment unleashed on polling day. Even Congress(I) leaders admit that the poor response to prime minister Rajiv Gandhi's chopper-stop tours concealed the bonanza the voters had readied for the party.

The Janata Dal in the state blundered in turning the Lok Sabha poll into a kind of referendum of the performance of the Janata/Janata Dal government over the last six years. The Janata Dal's chief campaigner, Ramakrishna Hegde, dropped major issues like Bofors, corruption and communalism from the agenda. Instead, he preferred to harp on the theme of performance, judged by even the most charitable voter to be lackadaisical.

The Karnataka Janata Dal also did not apply its mind to selecting strong candidates for the Lok Sabha, concentrating its energies on the list for the assembly election. This proved to be a fatal error. The party's assumption was that if the voters plumped for the assembly contestant, that vote would automatically transfer to the Lok Sabha candidate. What happened was quite the reverse. The result: nothing short of devastation. Concedes S.M. Raghupathy, who proved to be a lame duck candidate against Gundu Rao: "We got our sums all wrong."

It wasn't Raghupathy alone. Even relatively stronger candidates like the charismatic Anant Nag in Karwar came a cropper against the old bag of Congress(I) MPs. Once again, the state that resurrected Mrs Gandhi in 1978 from Chikmagalur provided a beam of hope for the Congress(I).

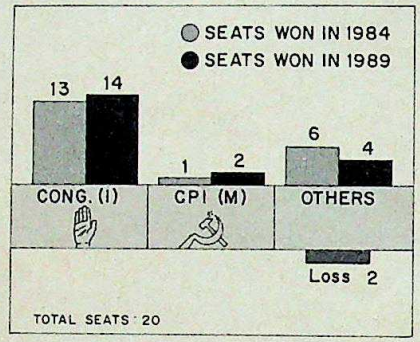
—CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA

KERALA

Tables Turned

Congress(I)-led front cashes in on the communal card

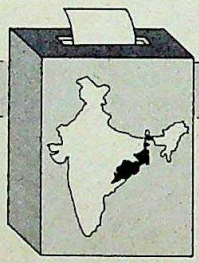
AN undeclared alliance of convenience knocked the stuffings out of the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) Government. The Congress(I)-led United Democratic Front (UDF) won 17 of the 20 Lok Sabha seats, leaving the communists with three. The polling percentages made it clear that the BJP had covertly supported the UDF in order to unseat the communists.



It was also evident that the UDF had cashed in on a communal vote, their candidates carrying the votes of one community or the other en bloc—the Catholic Christians in Trichur, Latin Catholics in Ernakulam, Marthoma Christians in Mavelikkara, Muslims in Ponnani, Manjeri and Calicut, Nadars in Trivandrum and Nairs in Kottayam.

The CPI(M)'s campaign based on corruption and growing communalism, obviously failed with the nation's most literate electorate; its unfulfilled poll promises acted as a further setback. In any case, the Kerala electorate has tended to back the Congress during general elections, and is wary of opposition unity experiments. "Remember 1977?" PCC(I) chief A.K. Antony would ask at each rally. By stressing local concerns and playing the communal card the UDF managed to rout many a dynamic communist, and put a question mark on the future of the LDF Government.

—RAMESH MENON



THE EAST

WEST BENGAL

Holding on Firm

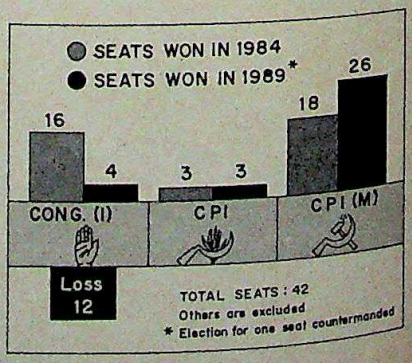
Left Front bastion remains unaffected by national trends

WHILE many chief ministers across the land were swept away by the winds of change, the redoubtable Jyoti Basu stood his ground. As the CPI(M)-led Left Front romped home in 36 of the 41 Lok Sabha seats in which elections were held, the state provided the one aberration from the election trend throughout the country: the electorate here preferred to vote for continuity rather than to clamour for change.

The Congress(I) could wrest just four seats, two of which went to seasoned war-horses—PCC(I) chief Ghani Khan Choudhury and Union minister of state for revenue Ajit Kumar Panja. But the Congress(I) win that proved to be a real surprise was that of new entrant Debi Prasad Pal. Pal defeated former Congress(I) Union law minister Ashoke Sen who was contesting from his Calcutta seat this time on a Janata Dal ticket.

Yet, even in Calcutta—the sole Congress(I) stronghold in the state—the party suffered surprise losses. Firebrand Mamata Banerjee lost Jadavpur while Union minister of state for commerce Priya Ranjan Das Munshi lost Howrah.

It was clear that the well-knit communist cadres had once again delivered. It was also clear that the ageing communist leadership had once again shown its shrewdness by fielding many new faces interspersed with a host of respected stalwarts. The ploy paid off, as several new entrants came good, such as Malini Bhattacharya, a lecturer



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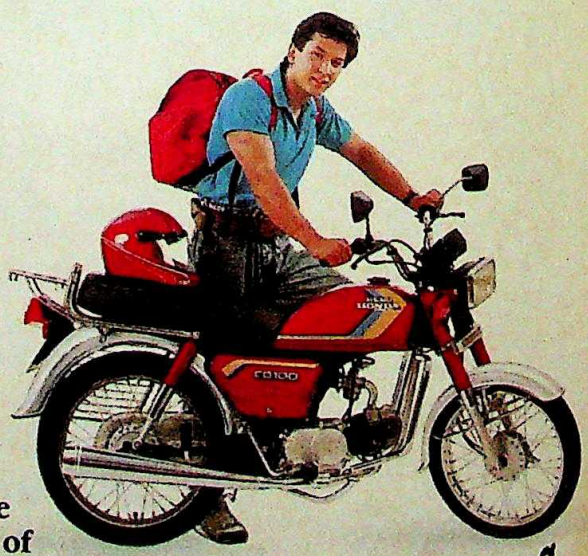

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who trounced Mamata Banerjee, and Dr Biplab Dasgupta, a renowned economist.

While the Left worked unitedly, confusion and infighting rent the Congress(I) camp, where heavyweights worked to undermine each other. Before the polls they attacked each other, and in the face of defeat they united to hurl abuse at the "communist goons" who they claimed indulged in booth capturing and rigging. Reports of violence and police firing, in which two people were killed, did mar the poll process. "This is not an election but a shameless rape of democracy," said Somen Mitra, Congress(I) MLA.

But the Left Front was unperturbed. Said CPI(M) leader Biman Bose: "Bengal has set another record in free and fair elections. The defeat of the Congress(I) shows the people's rejection of their policies and their faith in the Left." Clearly, unlike elsewhere, the rulers of Bengal had not disappointed, or else even their tough cadres would have been unable to withstand the storm that blew across the rest of the country.

—FARZAND AHMED

ORISSA

Knocked Out

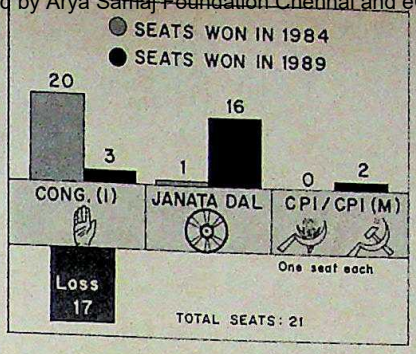
Patnaik's record and rifts spell doom for the Congress(I)

As one Patnaik, long in the wilderness, got the better of the other in Orissa, the message was clear. The people were not merely voting for a change, as Chief Minister J.B. Patnaik believed, they were revolting against his misrule.

So total was the rejection of the ruling party that it surpassed even the 1977 disaster when it had managed to salvage at least five seats. Consequently, the state Congress(I) unit is now in disarray with even party president Kanhu Charan Lenka seeking permission to quit.

The campaign for the Lok Sabha elections in the state did not follow the national pattern. Here the thrust was more localised. While J.B. Patnaik sought the people's sanction to continue his 10-year-old rule, Janata Dal leader Biju Patnaik sought a mandate to head the next state Government.

In the event the results stunned even those who had gauged the people's mood fairly accurately. As many as 18 Janata Dal-CPI-CPI(M) combine candidates won the elections with huge margins, while only three Congress(I) candidates, including Girdhar Gomango, Union minister of state for communications, managed to just about scrape through.



For the ruling party, easily the most demoralising blow was the defeat of its strongest candidate, Jayanti Patnaik, wife of the chief minister, at the hands of Janata Dal General Secretary Srikant Jena in Cuttack. J.B. Patnaik's supporters attributed the defeat to the infighting and the calculated move by dissidents headed by Lenka. The ruling party also suffered a setback with the defeat of stalwarts like former Union minister K.P. Singh Deo and former PCC(I) chief Nityanand Misra.

The general consensus seems to be that both Rajiv Gandhi and J.B. Patanik—with their tarnished images—proved to be more a liability than an asset. Now in the Congress(I), there appears to be a sense of panic although J.B. Patnaik has ruled out large-scale desertions. The chief minister, on his part, immediately let it be known that he was for the dissolution of the Assembly and for the party high command nominating his successor.

For 'Kalinga Samrat' Biju Patnaik, who has been storming the state for years, it has been a personal victory. However, when the electoral verdict became obvious, Biju maintained his cool. Said he: "The people, who are the masters, have now decided to change their servants."

—FARZAND AHMED

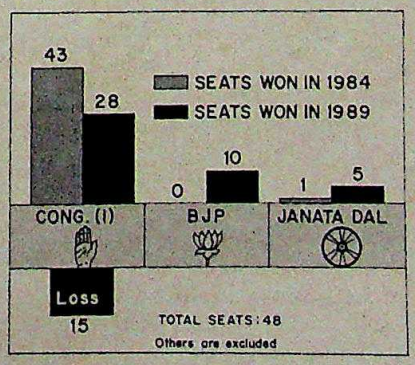
THE WEST

MAHARASHTRA

Shared Spoils

BJP-Janata Dal divide helps the Congress(I) save face

THE Congress(I) citadel in Maharashtra has been breached. And it has been done amid Hindutva war cries, as the BJP-Shiv Sena combine has bagged 14 of the 48 Lok Sabha seats. In Bombay, the combine grabbed four of the six seats. The Congress(I) just crossed the halfway mark, notching up 28. Though the Janata Dal disappointed, it increased its share to five. Even the CPI recorded one victory.



For the first time ever, the Shiv Sena will send its MPs to the Lok Sabha. Veteran Sena leader Waman Mahadik, who beat trade union supremo Datta Samant, Marathi journalist Vidhyadhar Gokhale and Parbhani's Ashok Deshmukh are among the debutants.

The Sena's head hunters felled state Janata Dal President Mrinal Gore in Bombay North and challenged Bombay Congress(I) chief Murli Deora to near-submission. Only actor Sunil Dutt won comfortably in Bombay North-West.

Although the Opposition has eroded the Congress(I) bastion, the ruling party maintained its hold in the sugar belt of western Maharashtra—winning nine out of the 10 seats. AICC(I) General Secretary V.N. Gadgil was among the important victors here.

Chief Minister Sharad Pawar had predicted the results soon after the campaign began. Out of the 44 seats the Congress(I) held in the last Lok Sabha, Pawar thought there could be trouble in at least 16 of the seats. He said: "The renomination of some sitting MPs affected party fortunes." As was the pattern elsewhere, a disgruntled electorate re-elected just 23 sitting MPs.

The Congress(I) defeat can be largely attributed to the Hindutva wave, which

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swept through even its traditional strongholds of Vidarbha and Marathwada regions. As the chief minister admitted: "In some areas, the Hindutva atmosphere created by the Ram Shila pujas paid off, garnering sizeable support for the BJP and the Shiv Sena." This is especially worrisome for the ruling party since even in 1977—when the Congress(I) won just 20 Lok Sabha seats, suffering its worst losses barring the present general elections—the party had won all the 11 seats from Vidarbha. This year, although Union external affairs minister Narasimha Rao and AICC(I) General Secretary Ghulam Nabi Azad have posted victories, the BJP has won four seats and the CPI has captured one. This is significant for the BJP, especially since the RSS is headquartered in Nagpur—Vidarbha's premier city. This breakthrough will help it erase the stigma of being just a 'Brahmin-Bania sideshow'.

In neighbouring Marathwada, the BJP won another seat while the Sena bagged two, including the prestigious Aurangabad seat—from where Rajiv Gandhi launched the Congress(I) campaign in the state. Marathwada has a higher than average Muslim population, and has been the scene of renewed communal conflict ever since the Sena's entry here some years ago. Nevertheless, Sena leaders said even Muslims voted for their candidates, a claim described as "a total lie" by Pawar.

Whatever may be the truth behind the controversy about the pattern of Muslim voting, it seems clear that the Other Backward Classes (OBC) like the Malis, Vanjaris and Dhungars now constitute the backbone of the Sena's victory trail. Comprising virtually half the state's population, they have been historically overshadowed by the Marathas, who are less than a quarter of the population, but dominate the Congress(I). The Sena—though led largely by the Brahmins—has now given OBC a new and militant voice.

The Hindutva juggernaut has marginalised even the formidable peasant leader Sharad Joshi in his strongholds of Nasik and Vidarbha. An optimistic Sena chief Bal Thackeray exulted: "The foundation has been laid for our victory in the impending assembly elections."

What does seem clear is that the Sena-BJP combine has stepped into the vacuum in the Opposition created by the return of Pawar and his Congress(S) followers to the Congress(I) fold three years back.

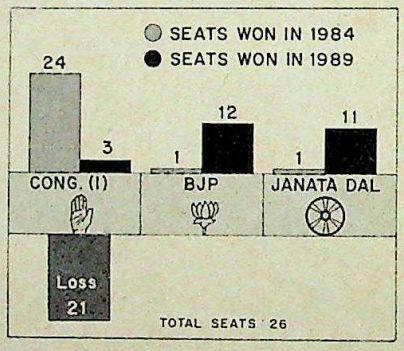
—M. RAHMAN

GUJARAT

Hindu Wrath

Communalism holds sway, defying caste equations

COMMUNALISM got the better of casteism in Gujarat. The Congress(I)'s carefully calculated KHAM equation (Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi and Muslim) got completely wiped off the electoral blackboard as the Hindus voted en bloc for the Opposition, routing the ruling party, which could pick up just three of the state's 26 Lok Sabha seats—one in each of the three chief regions, south Gujarat, central Gujarat and Saurashtra. In the north, it drew a blank. In sharp contrast was the performance of the Opposition. The BJP won with huge margins in all the 12 seats it contested, while the Janata Dal gained 11, giving the Opposition 23 Lok



Sabha seats in all—ironically, the same number that the Congress(I) had won in 1984. The Congress(I)'s performance was far worse than in 1977—when it had managed to retain 10 seats.

Caste considerations don't seem to have been important in the elections at all. But that's not cause for rejoicing. The reason for casteism taking a back seat was simply that it was overwhelmed by communal considerations. The Hindu wave meant that voters plumped for the Opposition sending the Congress(I)'s intricate caste calculations awry. Says Professor Pravin Sheth, a political scientist: "The victory margins of opposition candidates in Other Backward Classes (OBC) areas show that even they have voted overwhelmingly for the Opposition. This is clearly a result of the Hindu wave created by the Ram Janmabhoomi issue." Chief Minister Amarsinh Chaudhary attributes his party's drubbing to the same reasons.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad's (VHP) Ramshila pujas in about 8,000 villages had united Hindus in the rural hinterland. And a string of communal flare-ups on poll eve had sent them scurrying into the BJP's lap. The Congress(I) was projected as a "mischievous enemy of the Hindus," a line that served well not only the BJP but also the Janata Dal. The upshot was that many Congress(I) stalwarts faced humiliating defeats: Minister of state for finance B.K. Gadhvi who lost by a whopping 2.50 lakh votes, former PCC(I) chief Ahmed Patel and former Union minister Yogendra Makwana who lost by 2.13 lakh votes. In 13 constituencies, the Congress(I)'s margin of defeat ranged between 1.35 lakh and 2.68 lakh votes.

Several factors contributed to sealing the fate of the Congress(I). The Bofors scandal was a major campaign issue as in most other parts of the country. And along with the corruption charges against Rajiv Gandhi were those against Chaudhary and his ministerial colleagues. Even more damaging was the open split in the party between Chaudhary's men and supporters of former chief minister Madhavsinh Solanki, who worked to undermine each other. Asks Yashwant Shah, editor of the daily, *Jai Hind*: "Can a divided house remain intact?"

Other issues too played a role. Despite a record crop of groundnut, groundnut oil prices have soared. And the two farmers' bodies, the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh and the Khedut Samanvay Samiti, too issued a call to vote against the Congress(I). So in the farmers' eyes, the Congress(I) was virtually enemy number one. Clearly, the Congress(I)'s cup of woe was running over.

But despite all this, the party may still have managed to scrape through. That it did not was due to one overwhelming reason—that the Opposition managed to bury its differences and confronted the Congress(I) in one-to-one contests in all the seats. State BJP chief Shankarsinh Vaghela's words before the elections seem to have been prophetic. He had said then: "The Janata Dal's chakra will prove to be the Congress(I)'s kalchakra and the BJP's lotus will herald the emergence of a new beginning."

How important opposition unity was can be seen from two cases. In Vadodara, the Janata Dal's victory was ensured after its rebel candidate Jaspal Singh decided to retire from the contest. In Bhavnagar, the rebel Janata Dal candidate in the fray refused to withdraw and the Janata Dal candidate, state Secretary General Pravinsinh Jadeja, lost.

Perhaps there is a lesson in that somewhere for the Congress(I).

—UDAY MAHURKAR

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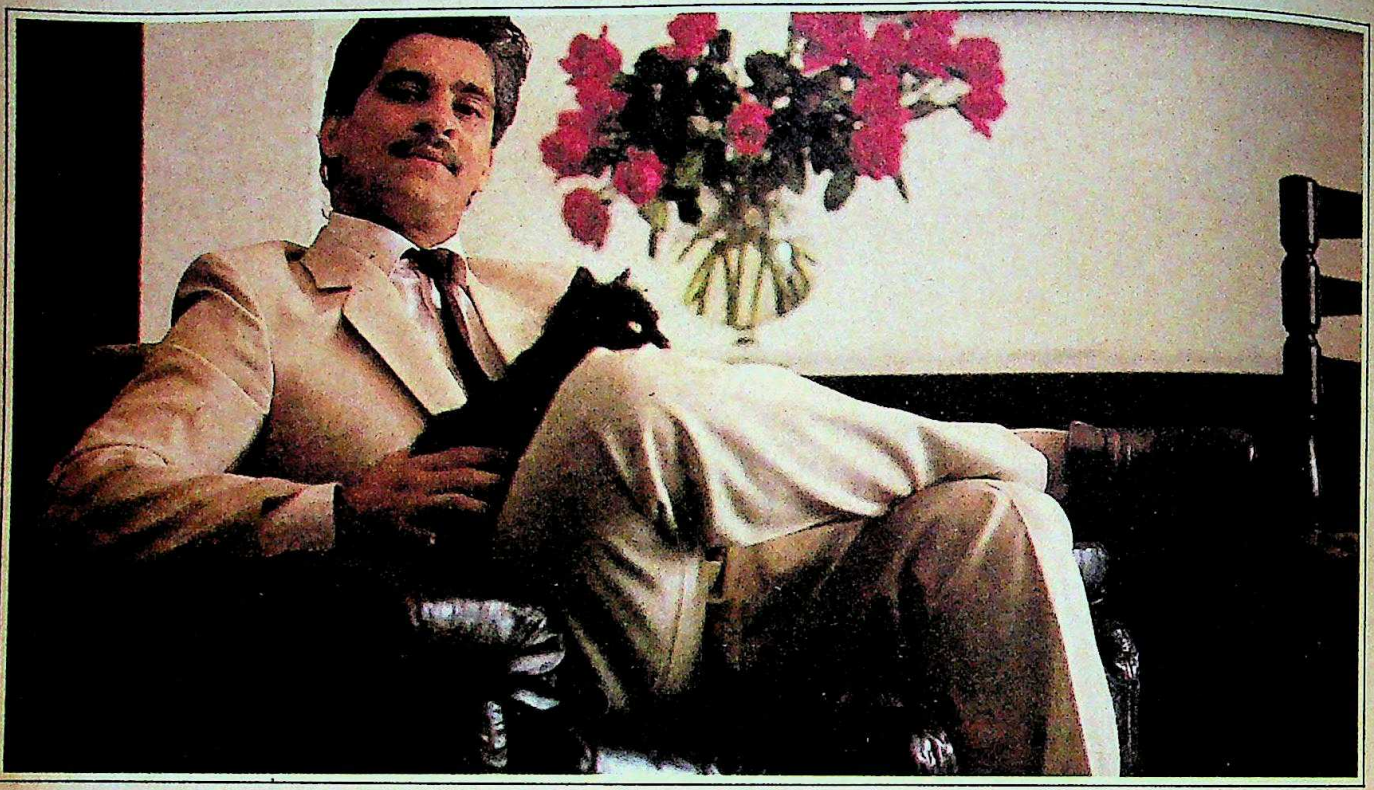

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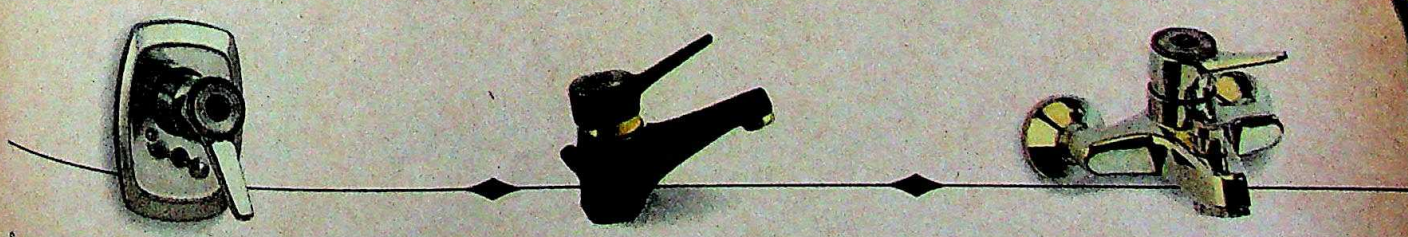

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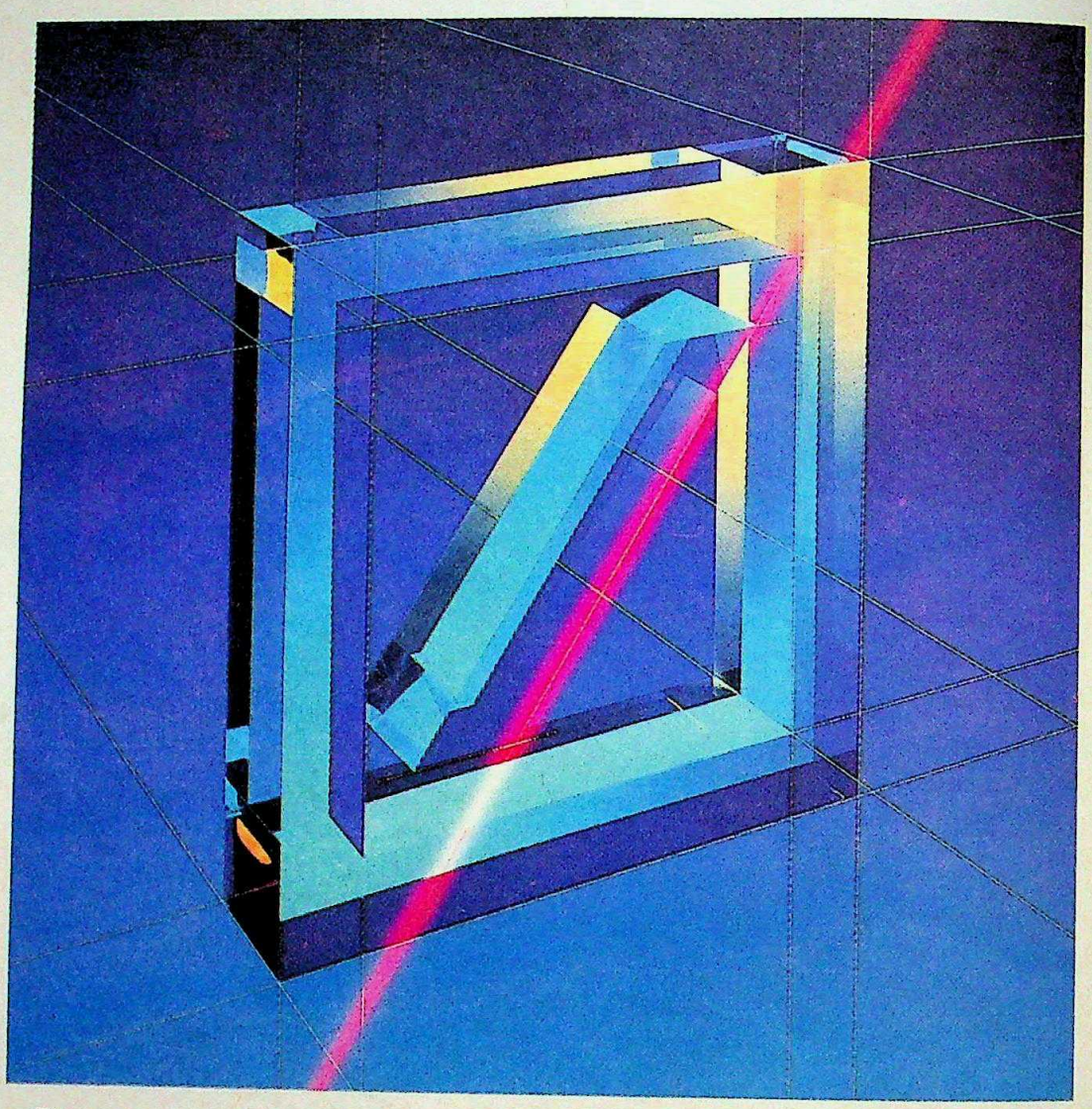

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Giants and Giant-Killers

This was expected to be the most tumultuous general election ever. And it has run true to form. Fought with all the stops pulled out, it has seen many a stalwart come a cropper, and many an unknown steal the limelight. A list of the giants who were felled, the giant-killers who felled them, and the dark horses who romped home winners.

BUTA SINGH, Congress(I), Jalore, Rajasthan

LOST BY 53,405 VOTES

RAGHU RAI

THE Buta is on the other foot. Rajiv's hatchetman and all-powerful home minister Buta Singh failed to keep his own electoral house in order, humiliated by a virtual unknown in Jalore. For the party, Buta's defeat was easily the most embarrassing. The number two man in Rajiv's cabinet, Buta had nursed the arid Rajasthan constituency with a mother's fervour, but was engulfed by a saffron wave—sadhus of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad who campaigned against him with equal fervour. Even Buta's bid to fight fire with fire—a Delhi tantric said the burly Sikh had paid him a large sum to perform a *havan* to ensure his win—failed to check the slide. His BJP rival, Kailash Meghwal, literally made the capital with a highly communalised campaign. Said a bitter Buta: "They had marked me for attack on the Ayodhya issue. This was not a political campaign." The *trishul*, obviously, proved mightier than the hatchet.

"They'd marked me for attack on the Ayodhya issue. This wasn't a political campaign."

S. JAIPAL REDDY, Janata Dal, Mahbubnagar, Andhra Pradesh

LOST BY 30,000 VOTES

THE greatest loss to the Lok Sabha will undoubtedly be the articulate and convivial Jaipal Reddy, the Janata Dal's general secretary. A fiery orator and astute parliamentarian, Reddy was the Opposition's main battering ram in the eighth Lok Sabha—a solidly effective counter to the loudspeakers of the Congress(I) such as K.K. Tewari and Kalpnath Rai.

Reddy's loss, by a wide margin, to Congress(I) candidate M. Mallikarjun, was clearly because of the anti-NTR wave that swept the state into the waiting hand of the Congress(I). Charged Reddy: "Rama Rao had outraged the democratic sensibilities of educated people by his style of functioning. By clubbing the Lok Sabha and assembly election together, he made defeat inescapable." Reddy is being tipped to get a Rajya Sabha nomination so he may still have his say in Parliament.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

"Rama Rao had outraged the people by his style of functioning."

MOHSINA KIDWAI, Congress(I), Meerut, Uttar Pradesh

LOST BY 1,22,041 VOTES

TWO years ago when she visited her Meerut constituency in Uttar Pradesh after communal riots devastated the city, Union minister for urban development Mohsina Kidwai was greeted with humiliating chants of "Go back, Go back". That should have been warning enough. This time, the people really did send her packing—by a margin of over 1,22,000 votes. Kidwai, seasoned politician that she is, had seen the graffiti on the wall and sought to contest from elsewhere. But the high command's quixotic match of candidates and constituencies ignored her claims. Once again, it was the polarisation of the communal vote that eased the way for her Janata Dal opponent, Harish Pal. Said one of Kidwai's aides: "Our strong constituency was the Muslims, and we lost that."

The loss of the support of Muslims caused her defeat at the hustings.

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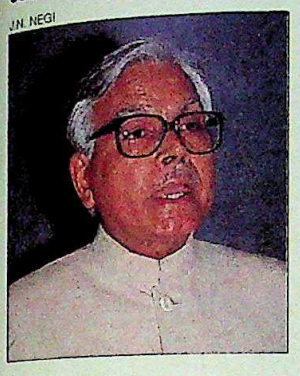
K. NATWAR SINGH, Congress(I), Mathura, Uttar Pradesh

LOST BY 37,688 VOTES

MATHURA is barely 36 km from his house in Bharatpur. But for minister of state for external affairs Natwar Singh, it might have been located in a foreign country for all the good it did. Barred from contesting from his home constituency of Bharatpur—famed for its bird sanctuary—by the high command, Natwar was forced into electoral migration to the holy city of neighbouring Mathura.

J.N. NEGI



In electoral terms, it could have been Siberia. As far as the electorate was concerned, Natwar was clearly an external affair. The sitting Janata Dal MP, Manvendra Singh, who had already established a strong local presence, was preferable to an 'outsider'.

"The communal tinge to the opposition campaign lost us the Muslims."

However, it was the city's powerful religious ambience that Natwar sees as the main reason for his defeat. "The Muslims were angry with us. And the communal tinge to the opposition campaign lost us the whole community," he says, adding rather undiplomatically that it was the "low level of campaign" that disgusted him more than the electoral veto.

RAJESH PILOT, Congress(I), Bharatpur, Rajasthan

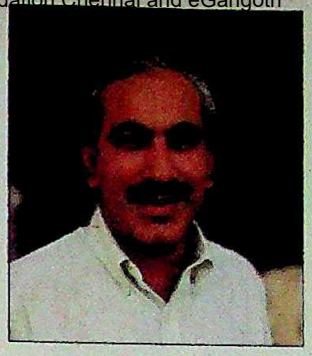
LOST BY 70,452 VOTES

THE Congress(I) high command's decision to shunt surface transport minister Rajesh Pilot to Bharatpur was clearly a travesty of electoral judgement. Pilot had been assiduously nursing his own neighbouring Dausa constituency for the last five years, but was inexplicably fielded from Bharatpur. That lost him the election even before it had begun.

In village after dusty village, Pilot lamely admitted: "We are like travellers with our bags packed. Wherever the leaders want us to go, we go." And he went. Even his constant pledge, "I promise you that what all I did for Dausa, I will do here", cut no ice. As far as the electorate was concerned, he could have told that to the birds. Admits Pilot: "We must have done something to annoy the people."

"We must have done something to annoy the people. I respect the verdict."

BHAWAN SINGH



M.J. AKBAR, Congress(I), Kishanganj, Bihar

WON BY 35,000 VOTES

THE bush telegraph in the Kishanganj constituency had given him up as a lost cause. But lost causes seem to be something that former *Telegraph* editor M.J. Akbar thrives on. Having quit journalism to contest from this dusty outpost,

"It's a privilege to represent a constituency which has thrown out communal forces."

Akbar put his neck on the electoral block—the first time he set foot in Kishanganj was a month ago. But Akbar's victory was one of the major election surprises, more so in Bihar. The triangular contest split the Muslim vote between his two opponents. Akbar's closeness to Rajiv Gandhi and his own tireless campaigning also helped. Says Akbar: "It's a privilege to represent a constituency which has consciously thrown out communal forces." And knowing Akbar's secular credentials, that must be a privilege he really cherishes.

JAGDISH TYTLER, Congress(I), Sadar, Delhi

LOST BY 32,099 VOTES

AS one of Delhi's political dons, Jagdish Tytler seemed electorally secure in the capital's Sadar constituency, which he had husbanded carefully for the last 10 years. But the minister of state for food processing found his electoral goose had been cooked this time round. Up against a formidable rival—the BJP's national secretary, Vijay Kumar Malhotra—Tytler was pipped at the post, falling behind in the last round of counting. For the Gandhi family loyalist, however, it was the long memory of the electorate that contributed to his shock defeat. His suspected involvement in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots lost him the vote of the community which has a sizeable presence in the area. As Tytler admitted: "Members of a particular community were incited to vote against me."

"A particular community was incited to vote against me."

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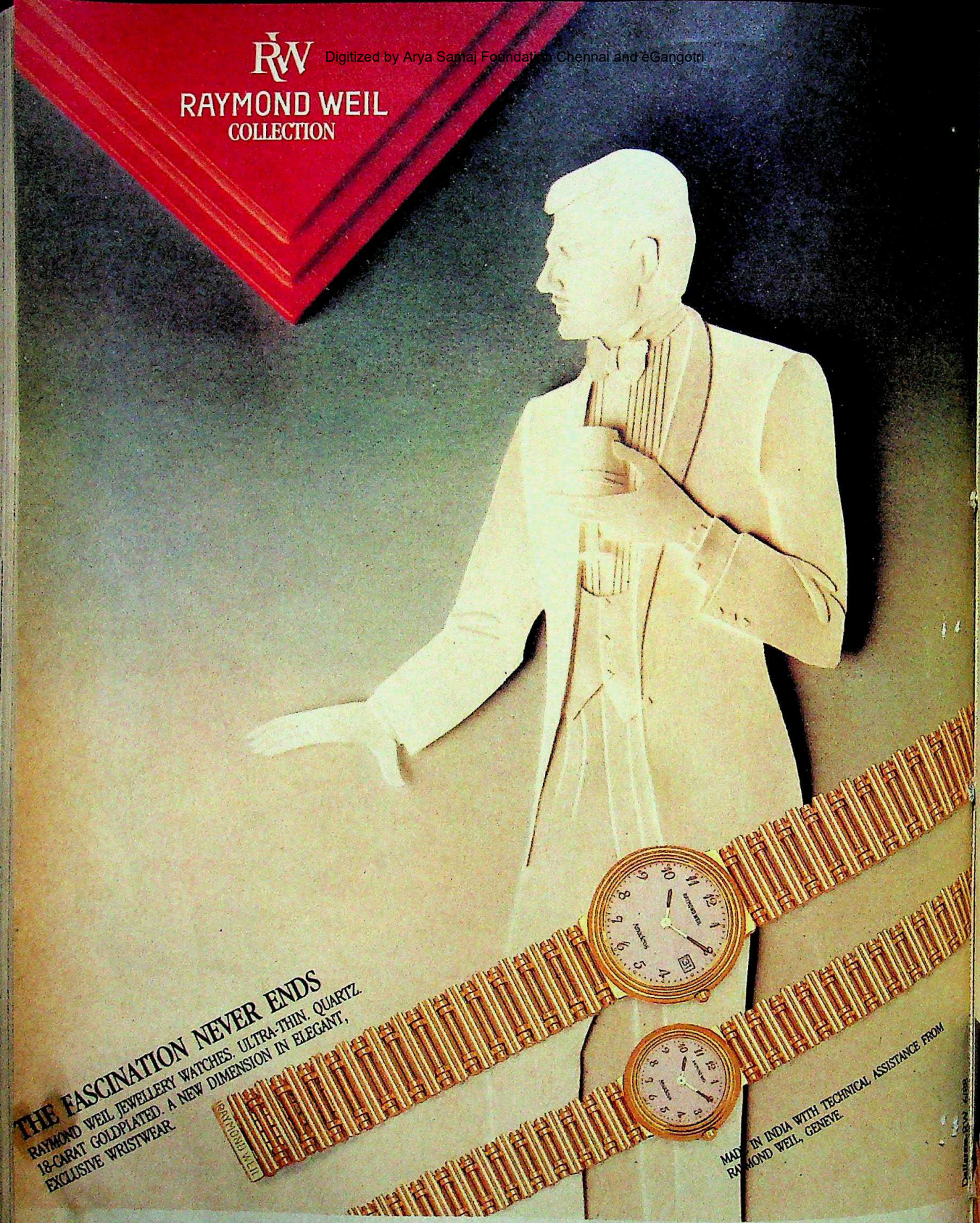

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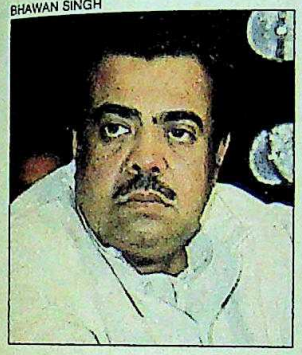
K.P. UNNIKRISHNAN, Congress(S), Badagara, Kerala

WON BY 8,209 VOTES

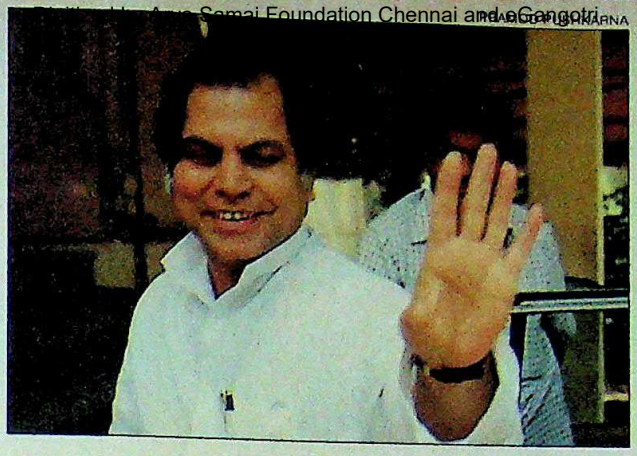
IN the Lok Sabha, K.P. Unnikrishnan is considered a heavyweight, literally and figuratively. Just how much, is now evident. By retaining his seat while a Congress(I) wave swept Kerala, the Congress(S) leader has set a record of sorts by winning the same seat (Badagara) for the fifth time. "It is a good feeling to win for the fifth time. But it was a hard-fought battle," he said modestly.

BHAWAN SINGH



"The people sent me to Delhi to be a powerful opposition leader and I am doing my best."

SHARAD SAXENA



A.R. ANTULAY, Congress(I), Kolaba, Maharashtra

WON BY 1,15,434 VOTES

FINALLY, the exile is over. Former Maharashtra chief minister A.R. Antulay emerged triumphant from a hard-fought battle in the opposition stronghold of Kolaba, winning the Lok Sabha seat for the Congress(I) by a margin of more than one lakh votes.

The ebullient Antulay sees the victory as a vindication of all his years in the political wilderness after he was forced to step down as chief minister following charges of corruption. More than just a parliamentary seat was at stake. Victory was crucial for him to gain political rehabilitation. In 1984, he had left the Congress(I) in a huff after being denied a Lok Sabha ticket. He had then contested as a rebel from Kolaba, but had lost.

In the event, the once discredited politician posted a remarkable victory. In a state where the Congress(I) suffered several setbacks, this was no mean achievement. "I was made to stand before the jail door. But I fought against heavy odds and proved myself. I take this victory as a comeback from *vanvas* (exile)," said a visibly exhausted but jubilant Antulay.

"I fought against heavy odds and proved myself. I take this victory as a comeback from *vanvas* (exile)."

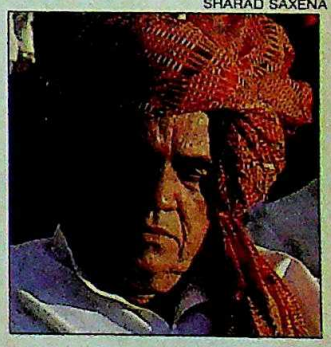
BALRAM JAKHAR, Congress(I), Sikar, Rajasthan

LOST BY 46,756 VOTES

EVEN the prime minister has to seek Sikar's permission before speaking," was the proud boast of Balram Jakhar's supporters during campaigning in Sikar constituency, a reference to his exalted status as Lok Sabha Speaker. But there was an even more potent, if cruder, slogan coined by supporters of his opponent, Devi Lal, that put Jakhar in an electoral jam. It went: *"Chara chor, commission khor, Sikar chhod, Sikar chhod."* (Fodder thief, middleman, get out of Sikar.)

That embarrassing reminder of the fodder scandal that stained Jakhar's last few months in Parliament sealed his fate. Billed as a grudge-match, the contest between Jakhar and Devi Lal degenerated into a one-sided battle. Jakhar lost by over 40,000 votes, making a mockery of his oft-repeated claim that "I will smash Devi Lal". For the electorate, the result was obvious. Says Jakhar: "Money power and muscle power were used to the hilt. If the election had been fair, Devi Lal would not have won."

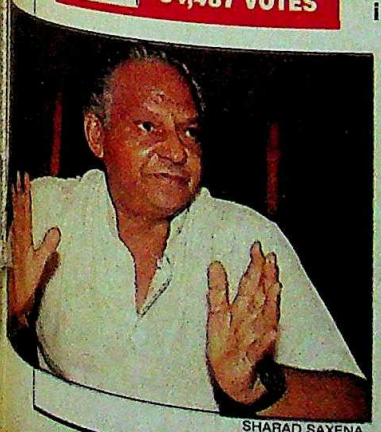
SHARAD SAXENA



"Money power and muscle power were used to the very hilt against me."

BHAWANI SINGH, Congress(I), Jaipur, Rajasthan

LOST BY 84,487 VOTES



SHARAD SAXENA

IT was the bubble that burst. When Bhawani 'Bubbles' Singh, the erstwhile prince of Jaipur state, first eased his royal frame into the electoral fray as a Congress(I) candidate, he was confident that his former subjects would ensure him a place in the Delhi durbar. Instead, Singh received a royal drubbing at the hands of a comparative commoner, the BJP's Girdhari Lal Bhargava.

"The people have refused my appeal to serve them and my constituency."

What caused the raja's downfall was his aristocratic mien and lineage. A rank outsider in politics, he was unable to relate to local Congress(I) party functionaries who clearly resented his intrusion. Singh himself was philosophical about his disastrous debut. "Unlike other politicians, politics is not my profession. I had come into it only to serve my constituency and the people. They have refused that appeal," he shrugged.

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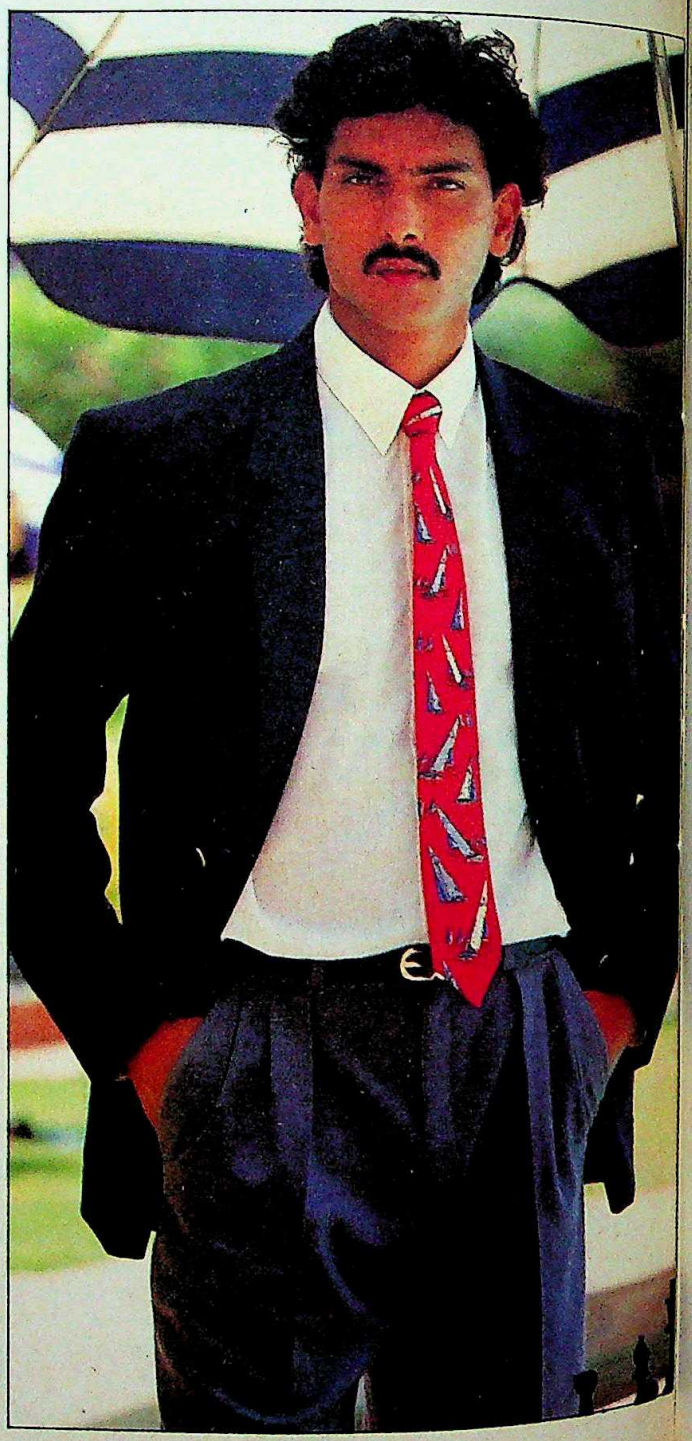

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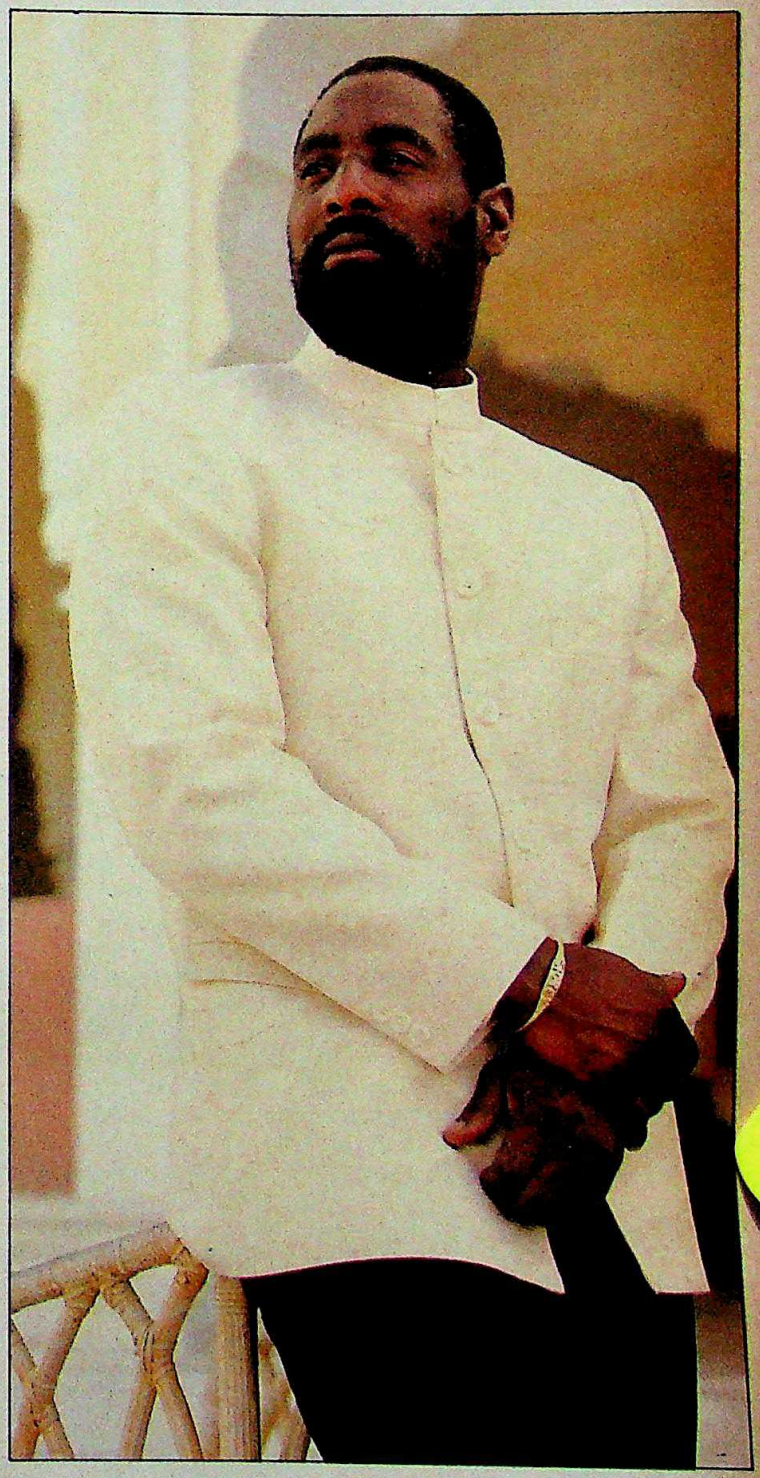

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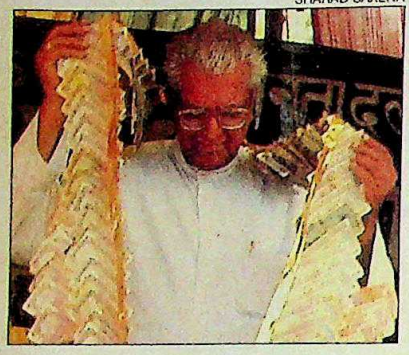
"The results have once again shown the people's faith in me."

SHARAD SAXENA



DEVI LAL, Janata Dal, Rohtak, Haryana

WON BY 1,88,000 VOTES

"As far as I am concerned the victory was not at all unexpected."

BHAWAN SINGH

BHAJAN LAL, Congress(I), Faridabad, Haryana

WON BY 1,31,227 VOTES

"This is not the first time that I have won an election."

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

BANSI LAL, Congress(I), Bhiwani, Haryana

WON BY 1,57,330 VOTES

IT was Lal vs Lal vs Lal. The triumvirate who dominated the electoral battlefield of Haryana were the three supremos—Devi Lal, Bhajan Lal and Bansi Lal. A chief minister against two former occupants of the same chair. But two against one proved too much even for the wily Devi Lal. Despite his best efforts, his arch-rivals cantered past the winning post with surprising ease. Bansi Lal's win in Bhiwani was dual revenge—he got his own back on Devi Lal and also defeated Dharamvir, the man who had bested him in Bhiwani during the assembly elections in June 1987. "This is not the first time that I've won an election," said he scornfully. Bhajan Lal, on the other hand, could not conceal his elation in winning the Faridabad seat, saying: "The victory was not unexpected." Devi Lal did manage to win the Rohtak seat by a massive margin. In the process, he humbled yet another Lal—Hardwari Lal. "This shows the people's faith in me," he rasped. The other Lals would probably disagree.

SUKH RAM, Congress(I), Mandi, Himachal Pradesh

LOST BY 28,069 VOTES

EASILY the most vulnerable ruling party candidate in this election was Sukh Ram, Union minister of state for civil supplies. Dubbed *"cheeni chor"* by his opponents, he faced an electorate incensed over sugar price rise.

The Opposition BJP candidate in Mandi in Himachal Pradesh, Kunj Lal, drummed the price rise issue at every meeting and the posters plastered across the constituency reinforced that message. Ram's ill-advised statement during the sugar crisis that "If the Congress(I) loses because of the sugar price, I will be to blame", only added to the stockpile of ammunition that blasted him.

To add to Ram's woes there were many charges of corruption in the import of sugar. Said a bitter Ram: "I had sent imported sugar but it was not distributed. The sugar issue gave the Opposition a point."

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

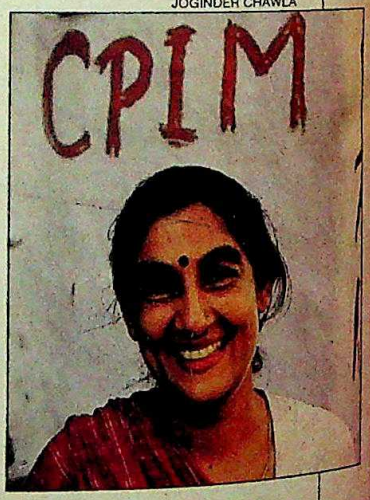
"Actually, the sugar issue did give the Opposition a point."

SUBHASHINI ALI, CPI(M), Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh

WON BY 57,014 VOTES

IN the exclusive Welhams Girls School in Dehra Dun she was better known as 'Shabby'. That was more an abbreviation of her name, Subhashini, than a reflection on her attire. But it was her married name, Subhashini Ali, that caused the most confusion among the electorate of Kanpur from where she fought and won as a CPI(M) candidate. They wanted to know whether she was a Muslim or a Hindu. Subhashini, wife of film maker Muzaffar Ali, has been an active member of the CPI(M) since 1969. Her secular platform and political background helped her defeat the Congress(I) opponent, N.C. Chaturvedi.

JOGINDER CHAWLA



Says Subhashini: "We have been struggling so long for the people of Kanpur. This win is a tribute to that."

"This win is a tribute to our struggle for the people of Kanpur."

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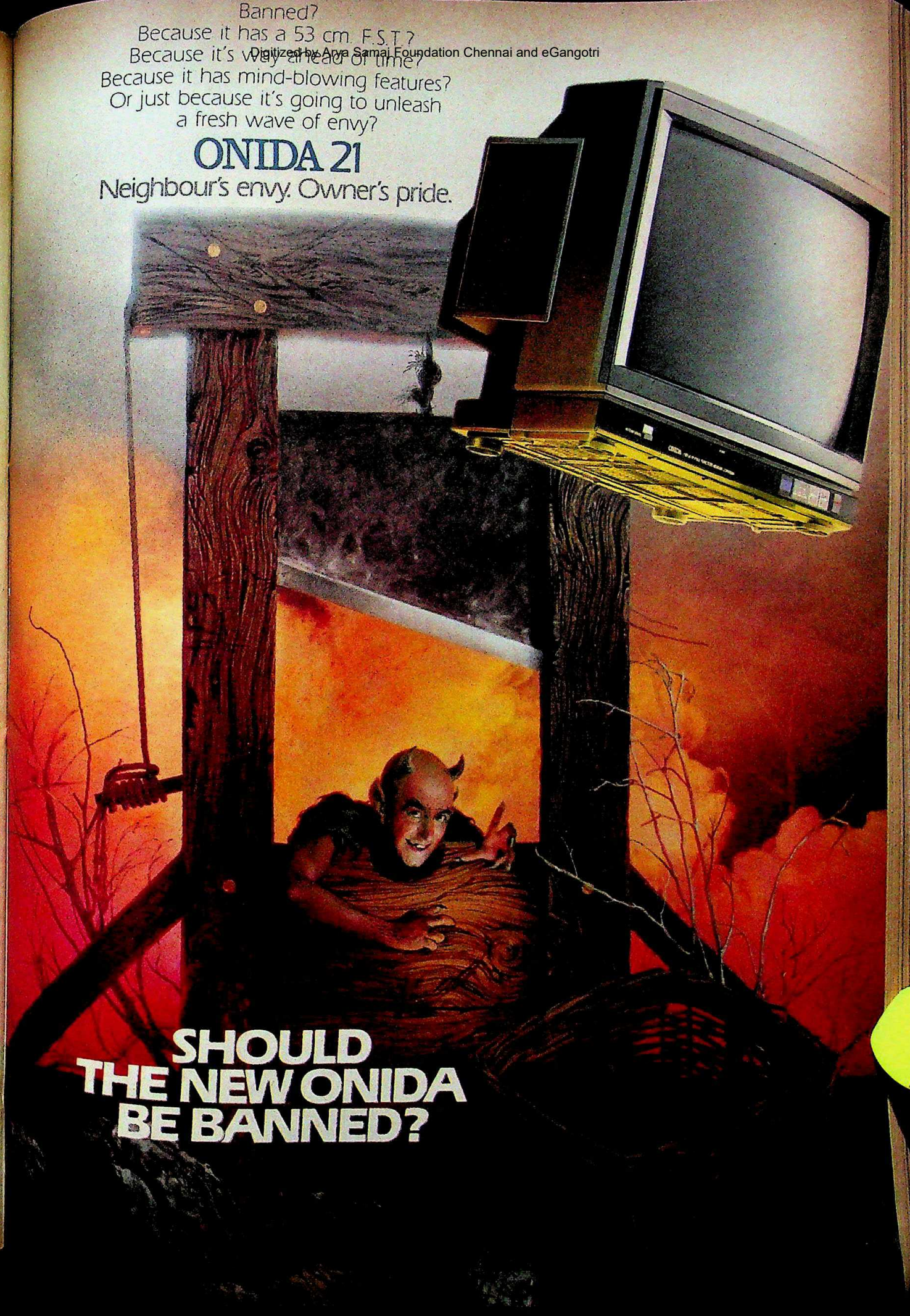

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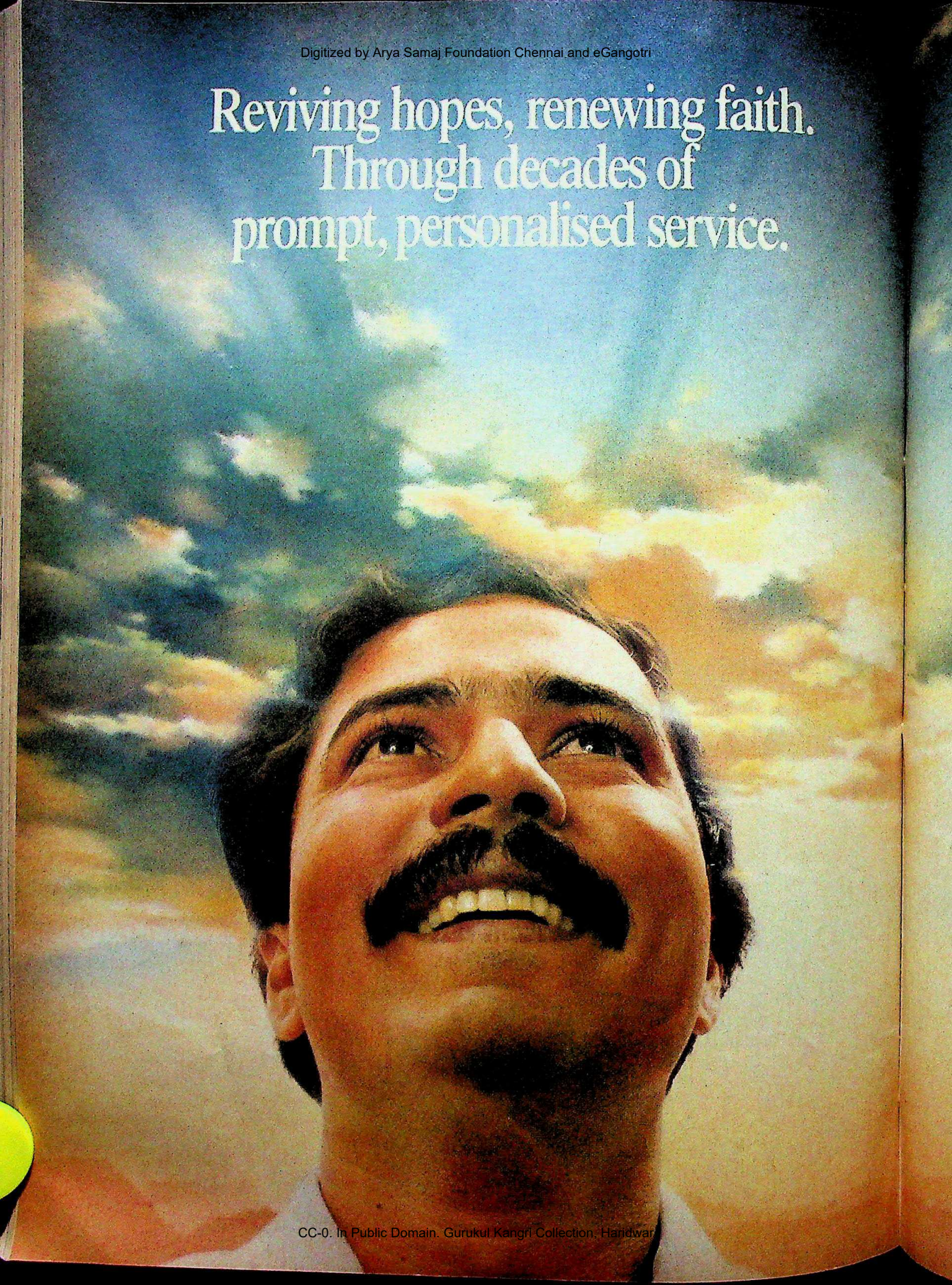

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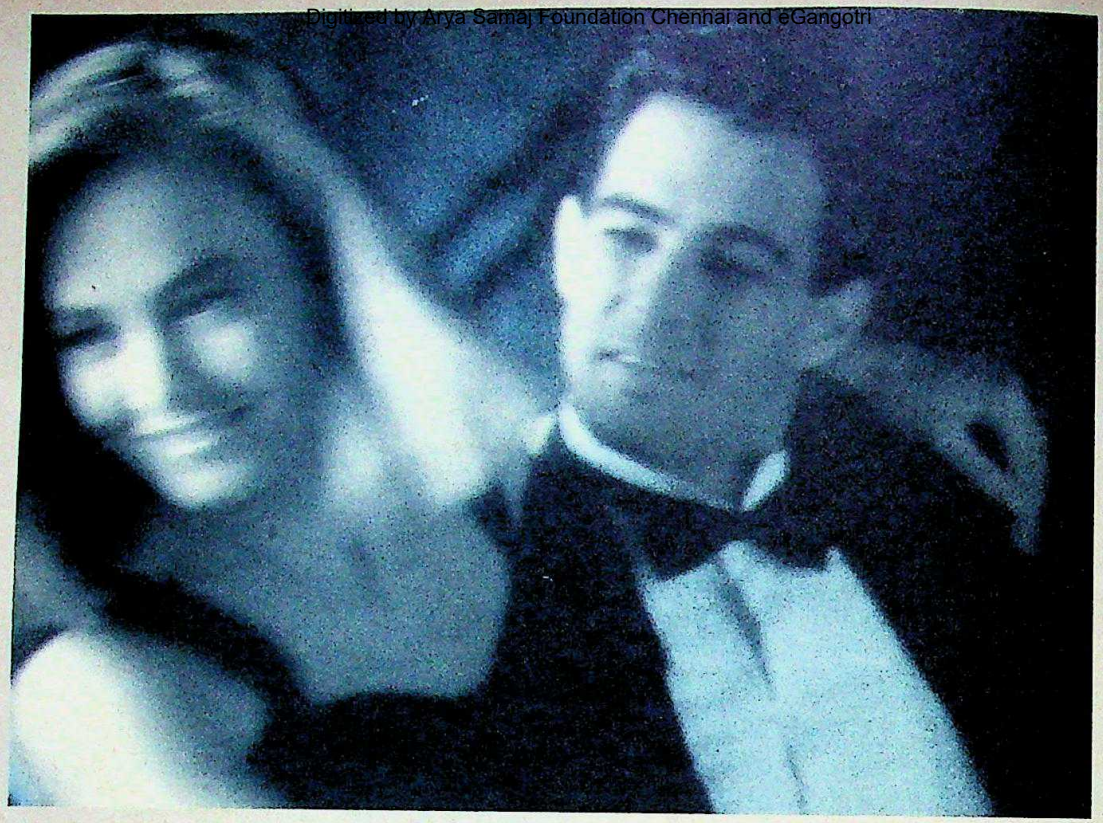

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ASHOKE SEN, Janata Dal, Calcutta North-West

LOST BY 54,732 VOTES

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

"I lost because the Congress(I) rigged the polls. I had warned my workers."

THUS are the mighty fallen. Ashoke Sen, former Union law minister boasted during his campaign: "People say this is a Congress(I) stronghold. I say this is Ashoke Sen's stronghold. Ask the people of the constituency, they will tell you we only know Sen and not the party he represents." Sen seems to have spoken a little too early. Despite the powerful backing of the CPI(M) and his own towering image, the lone Janata Dal candidate in West Bengal lost his case—and the electoral verdict. Sen claimed he had lost because "the Congress(I) rigged the election. I had warned my workers, but they didn't listen." But it was really his overconfidence based on the fact that he had won this seat every time since 1957(except in 1977) on a Congress ticket. Added irony lay in the fact that Sen was humbled by another member of the legal profession, Debi Prasad Pal, a judge of the Calcutta High Court. That's justice.

JAYAWANTIBEN MEHTA, BJP, Bombay North-East

WON BY 72,000 VOTES

THE Hindutva wave from the north swept Jayawantiben Mehta into the Lok Sabha—making her the first woman to be elected on a BJP ticket from Bombay. Jayawantiben has been the BJP's most high-profile woman leader in the city. Her 72,000 vote victory over the Congress (I) stalwart Gurudas Kamath was remarkable, considering she moved from her Bombay South stronghold to contest in alien territory of Bombay North-East which has large chunks of Muslim, Dalit and Sikh votes. Says she: "Our dream of an Akhand Bharat and Ram Rajya is much closer to fulfilment now."

"Our dream of an Akhand Bharat and Ram Rajya is much closer to fulfilment now."

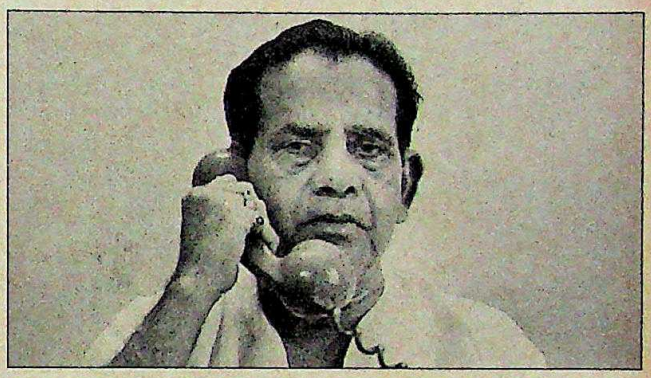
P.C. SETHI, Congress(I), Indore, Madhya Pradesh

LOST BY 1,11,697 VOTES

HIS electoral credentials were impeccable. A member of successive Congress union cabinets since 1962 and former chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, he had never lost an election. But nemesis for P.C. Sethi came in the form of a housewife, Sumitra Mahajan of the BJP, who wrested the Indore seat. Says Sethi: "In a democracy, the highest court is the verdict of the people."

When the two met during electioneering, Mahajan asked Sethi for his blessings. Sethi replied: "Be victorious." She was.

"In a democracy, the highest court is the verdict of the people. I accept that."



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Z.R. ANSARI, Congress(I), Unnao, Uttar Pradesh

LOST BY 29,364 VOTES

THERE's many a slip between the cup and the lip. In the case of Z.R. Ansari, Union minister for environment, all it took was one slip—his alleged attempt to molest social activist Mukti Dutta—to write *finis* to his electoral aspirations.

"My defeat was the result of a high-level conspiracy involving my own partymen."

The Dutta episode obviously did the most damage, considering that Ansari has won this seat since 1971. The only time he lost was in 1977. His defeat, he claimed, was "the result of a high-level conspiracy in which my own partymen were involved". That was easier to believe than his protestations that the Dutta affair was a "total fabrication". Ansari's election had become a battle of Congress(I) groups instead of a direct contest with the Janata Dal. His opponents in the party led by Sheila Dixit played up the Dutta case. Ansari lost to the Dal's Anwar Ahmed, but in reality, he was beaten by Dutta.

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UMA G. RAJU, Congress(I), Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh

WON BY 25,733 VOTES

"It is a very exciting feeling. I have to now justify the confidence Vizag's people have vested in me."

THERE is an electoral moral in here somewhere. Uma Gajapathi Raju, the glamorous socialite fielded by the Congress(I) from the prestigious seat of Visakhapatnam was given no chance of winning. Her husband Anand, a scion of the princely house of Vizianagaram, was, on the other hand, considered a sure bet. One of the original founder-members of the Telugu Desam, Anand had joined the Congress(I) party earlier this year. With the pro-Congress(I) wave in the state, Anand seemed to have his Bobbili constituency sewn up tight.

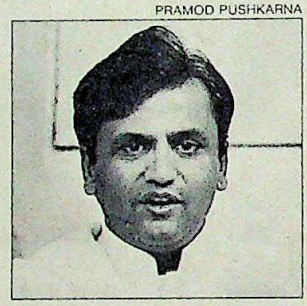
In the event, it was Uma—she got the party ticket only at the last moment—who waltzed through by over 25,000 votes over her nearest rival M.V.V.S. Murthy. Anand lost by 40,000 votes as the voters apparently felt that his chameleon-like qualities of changing political colour should not be encouraged.

Even as her husband was licking his wounds which would take some time to heal, Uma was ecstatic: "It is a very exciting feeling being elected. I have to now justify the confidence that the people of Vizag have vested in me." Especially now that she wears the electoral pants in the family.

AHMED PATEL, Congress(I), Bharuch, Gujarat

LOST BY 18,909 VOTES

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



"It was a defeat of secularism rather than mine."

HIS supporters have a favourite quote: "Only a miracle can lead to his defeat." It wasn't really a miracle, although it did have much to do with religion—swarms of saffron-clad sadhus and volunteers of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the RSS. Their highly communalised campaign, which was spread to the remotest corners of Bharuch, spelt electoral doom for Ahmed Patel, former parliamentary secretary to the prime minister and Gujarat Pradesh Congress(I) president. Patel happens to be the only Muslim Lok Sabha member from Gujarat and Bharuch has been his pocket borough since 1977. Said Patel disgustedly: "It was a defeat of secularism rather than mine."

SHYAMA SINHA, Congress(I), Aurangabad, Bihar

LOST BY 66,493 VOTES

AURANGABAD is called the Chittorgarh of Bihar. Few citadels are as durable—it has been represented virtually uninterrupted by Bihar Chief Minister S.N. Sinha. But by putting up his daughter-in-law Shyama Sinha as the Congress(I) candidate, the chief minister had clearly over-stepped electoral limits.

Shyama, an articulate Delhi socialite, was obviously a misfit in this predominantly rural and Rajput-dominated constituency. Says Shyama, whose defeat is a setback for Sinha: "The vote against the Congress(I) is unfortunately an endorsement of communal politics in the state." And perhaps family politics as well?

"The vote against the Congress(I) is an endorsement of communal politics in the state."

RAM VILAS PASWAN, Janata Dal, Hajipur, Bihar

WON BY 4,98,377 VOTES

THE love affair between the electorate and the candidate grows more amorous with each outing. Ram Vilas Paswan of the Janata Dal has bettered his own record for the largest margin of victory in the Lok Sabha polls. He won from Hajipur by an astounding 4,98,377 votes. "I wanted to make it to the Guinness Book this time and I've succeeded," he says.

"I wanted to make it to the Guinness Book this time and I have succeeded."

SHYAM TEKWANI

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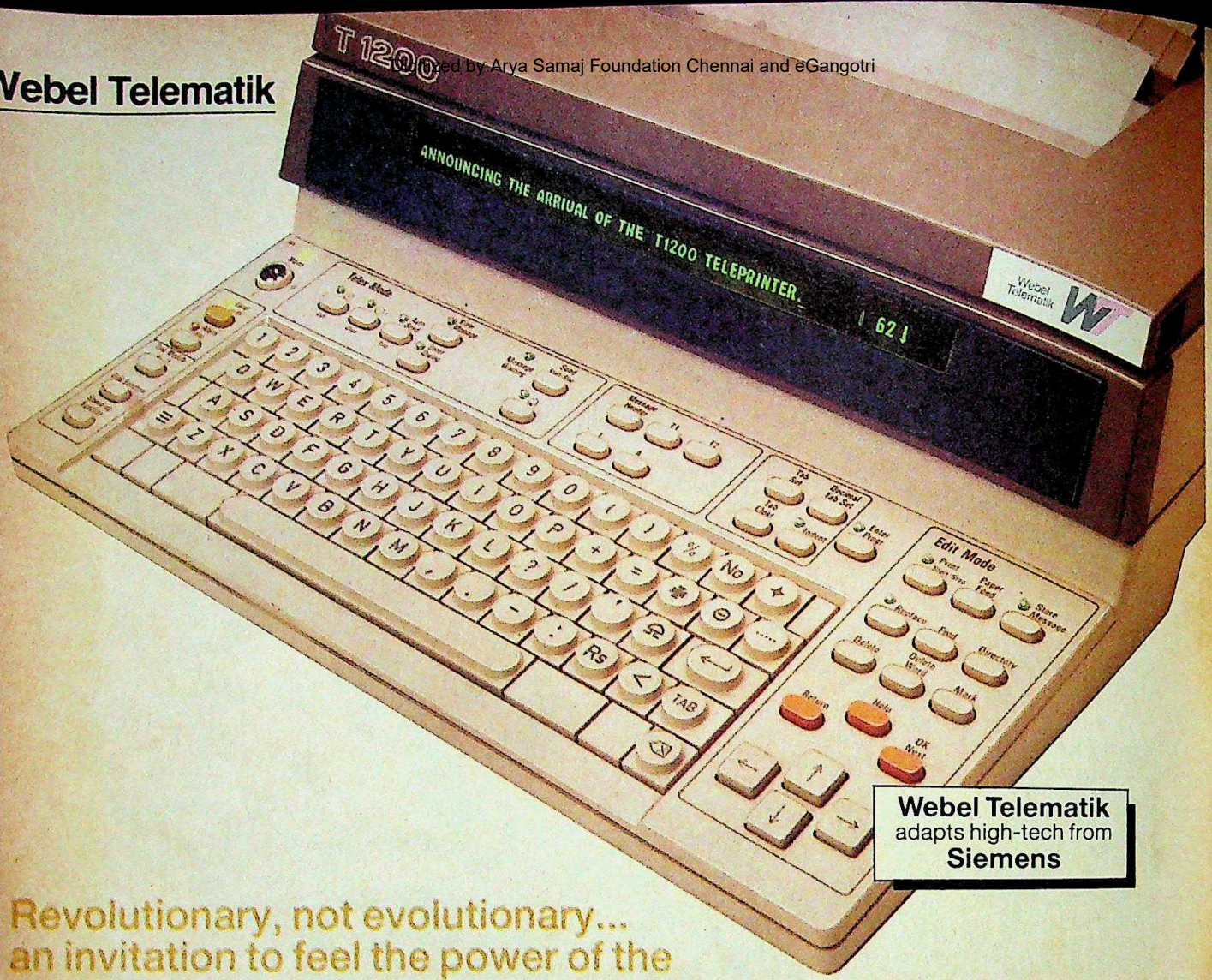

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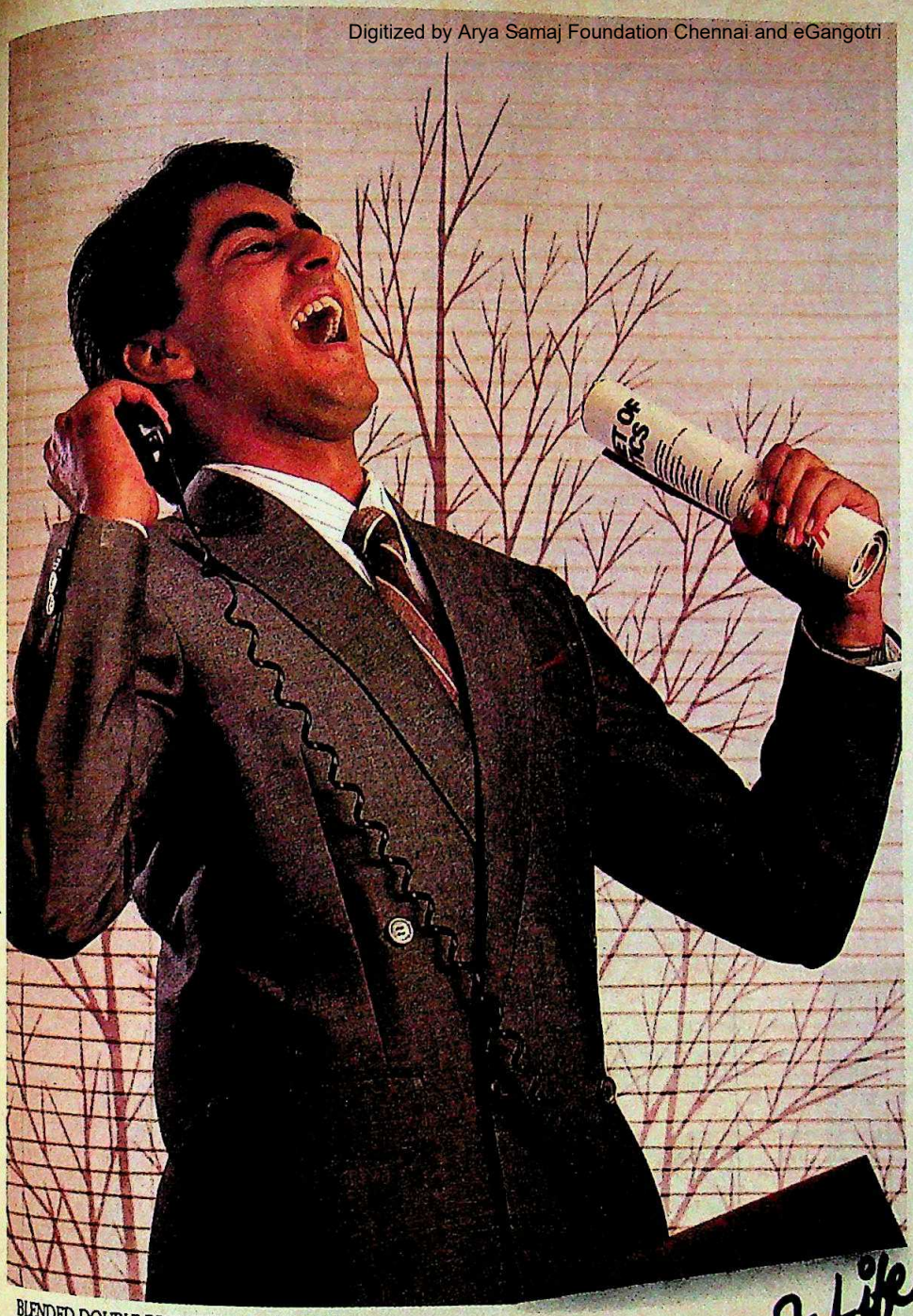

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KAMALA BAHUGUNA, Congress(I), Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh

LOST BY 39,470 VOTES

THANKS to Amitabh Bachchan and V.P. Singh, Allahabad is something of a celebrity constituency. Thus, by fielding Kamala Bahuguna, wife of the late opposition leader, H.N. Bahuguna, the Congress(I) was taking something of a gamble. It had lost the Allahabad Lok Sabha seat just twice in electoral history—in 1977 and in 1988 when V.P. Singh won and set forth on his momentous campaign to unseat the Congress(I) from power—a mission which even many in the Opposition then thought would be impossible.

Congress(I) strategists had this time figured that the Bahuguna name still carried electoral clout and that Kamala would attract a lot of sympathy votes.

But the anti-Congress(I) wave that swept the north ensured that the gamble failed. Says Kamala philosophically: "In such a situation when the people are voting against the ruling party which you represent, there is not much one can do."

"When people are voting against the ruling party, there is not much one can do."

RANI JETHMALANI, Janata Dal, Daman and Diu

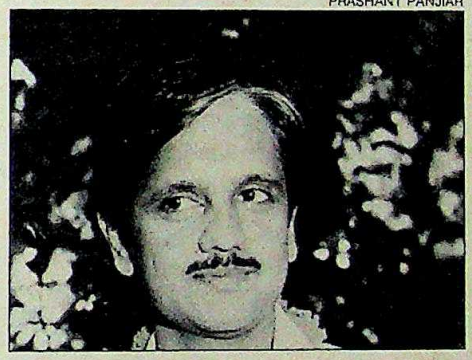
LOST BY 8,415 VOTES

IN the end, Supreme Court lawyer Rani Jethmalani, a Janata Dal candidate, remained an 'outsider' in the tourist enclaves of Daman and Diu. She lost the Lok Sabha sweepstakes from the Union territory in coastal Gujarat, dominated for long by some of India's biggest smugglers. In the tiny constituency of 57,000 voters, Rani polled less than 7,000 votes. Clearly, in an insular coastal enclave dominated by the seafaring Tandel community, the 'outsider' label prevented Rani from benefiting from the anti-Congress(I) wave. Nevertheless, she conducted a lively and aggressive campaign, proclaiming that she was "an insider in India".

"Marginalising the impact of money power among educated voters was not enough."

Admitted Rani ruefully: "I thought I had marginalised the impact of money power, at least among educated voters, but it was obviously not enough."

PRASHANT PANJIAR



ANIL SHASTRI, Janata Dal, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

WON BY 1,75,800 VOTES

IT should have been a family affair with three Shastri brothers in the fray. Except that Anil Shastri, the youngest son of the late prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, opted for the Janata Dal—he was the only one of the brothers to win a Lok Sabha seat. Besides the sweeping vote for change in the state, Anil's victory was mainly because he was a new face though carrying an old name. That helped too. Throughout his campaign, he harped heavily on his father's name and image. But, according to Anil, the major factor that worked in his favour was the support of Brahmins who were sore about the way Kamlapathi Tripathi had been treated by prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. Said Shastri: "It is the people's victory over Congress(I) policies."

"My victory is not mine alone. It is the people's victory over Congress(I) policies."

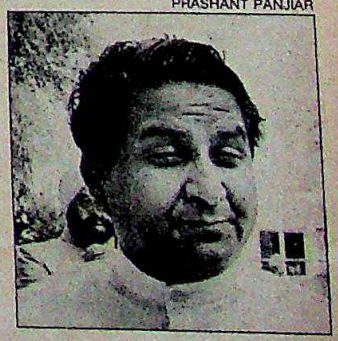
KALPNATH RAI, Congress(I), Ghosi, Uttar Pradesh

WON BY 60,000 VOTES

PERHAPS there is a reward for loyalty after all. Kalpnath Rai, Union minister of state for energy, is better known for his loud mouth and almost fanatical loyalty to the Gandhi family. But this time, the man who once said that "Rajiv Gandhi is like a diamond", seemed to have bitten off more than he could chew. The anti-Congress(I) wave in the state threatened to blow the blowhard away. But contrary to expectations, Rai romped home in Ghosi constituency in Uttar Pradesh. Advertising his proximity with Rajiv Gandhi did pay. Crowed Rai: "My victory proves that the Congress(I) party will come back very soon."

"My victory proves that the Congress(I) party will come back very soon."

PRASHANT PANJIAR



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VASUNDHARA RAJE, BJP, Jhalawar, Rajasthan

WON BY 1,46,541 VOTES

IT could only have been titled The Reluctant Princess. Vasundhara Raje, 36, received the shock of her life when she heard she had been nominated as a BJP candidate for the Lok Sabha elections in a Marathi news bulletin while in Bombay. She is already an MLA from Dholpur and the vivacious Vasundhara had been given no hint by the BJP leadership that she was a likely candidate. But politics has replaced the blue in the family blood—her mother, the erstwhile rajmata of Gwalior, is BJP vice-president while estranged brother Madhavrao is, or was, Union minister in the Rajiv Cabinet. Vasundhara contested from Jhalawar while her mother was contesting from neighbouring Guna. That may have helped. Though a virtual stranger to Jhalawar, Vasundhara won by a royal margin as did mother and brother. The Scindias are finally together again—even if only in the Lok Sabha.

She, along with her mother and brother, made a family of winners.

S.S. MANN, Akali Dal (Mann), Tarn Taran, Punjab

WON BY 4,64,000 VOTES

IT bore more resemblance to an actual battlefield than an electoral one. Heavily armed security forces patrolled the countryside and more were flown in daily by giant IL-76 aircraft from all over the country. In the end, it was a bloodless victory. Not a shot was fired in the home of the Kalashnikov, Tarn Taran, as Simranjit Singh Mann, behind bars for the last three years for the Indira Gandhi murder conspiracy case, emerged triumphant. It was, in every sense, a remarkable victory. The former IPS officer not only won the seat by a record margin of votes but also emerged as the most powerful political force in the state. The Akali Dal (Mann) group, won six seats, giving it political dominance while also giving the militants a shot in the arm. "It is a referendum against repression in Punjab and elsewhere," said his father, Joginder Singh Mann, who campaigned for his jailed son.

"It's a referendum against repression in Punjab and elsewhere," says Mann's father.

P.R. DAS MUNSHI, Congress(I), Howrah, West Bengal

LOST BY 1,432 VOTES

HE was like the boy on the burning deck. Congress(I) firebrand Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, Union minister of state for commerce, was determined to go down fighting, even though the odds were heavily stacked against him in West Bengal. He was forced to accept the Howrah seat under pressure from his opponents in the Congress(I) state unit headed by PCC(I) chief Ghani Khan Choudhary. The ruling CPI(M) had made the Howrah seat an election issue, portraying its neglect and closed industrial units as a symbol of the "Centre's deliberate apathy towards the woes of West Bengal". Determined to prove his "bravery", Das Munshi launched a massive campaign to counter the hostility. It almost worked. He lost by a mere 1,432 votes. Das Munshi, typically, claims he would have won had "the CPI(M) not shamelessly rigged the election". For Das, it is no Kapital.

"I would have won if the CPI(M) hadn't shamelessly rigged the election."

JAYANTI PATNAIK, Congress(I), Cuttack, Orissa

LOST BY 2,04,000 VOTES

FOR nearly a decade, she has been the power behind the throne of Orissa. This was to be the election which would finally put her directly on the throne—as successor to her poet husband, Chief Minister Janaki Ballabh Patnaik. But even the best laid plans of mice and women can go awry. Jayanti Patnaik's defeat from the politically sensitive coastal constituency of Cuttack was a stunning blow not only to the Congress(I) but also to Patnaik, the longest serving chief minister in the ruling party. Her nemesis was the youthful Janata Dal General Secretary, Srikant Jena. Despite Jayanti having turned Cuttack into an island of prosperity, added humiliation lay in the fact that Jena's winning margin was the highest in the state. Jayanti attributes her defeat to jealousy in the party: "I not only had to fight the Opposition but this time party colleagues and party bigwigs were also opposing me."

"I had to fight the Opposition plus party colleagues and bigwigs opposing me."

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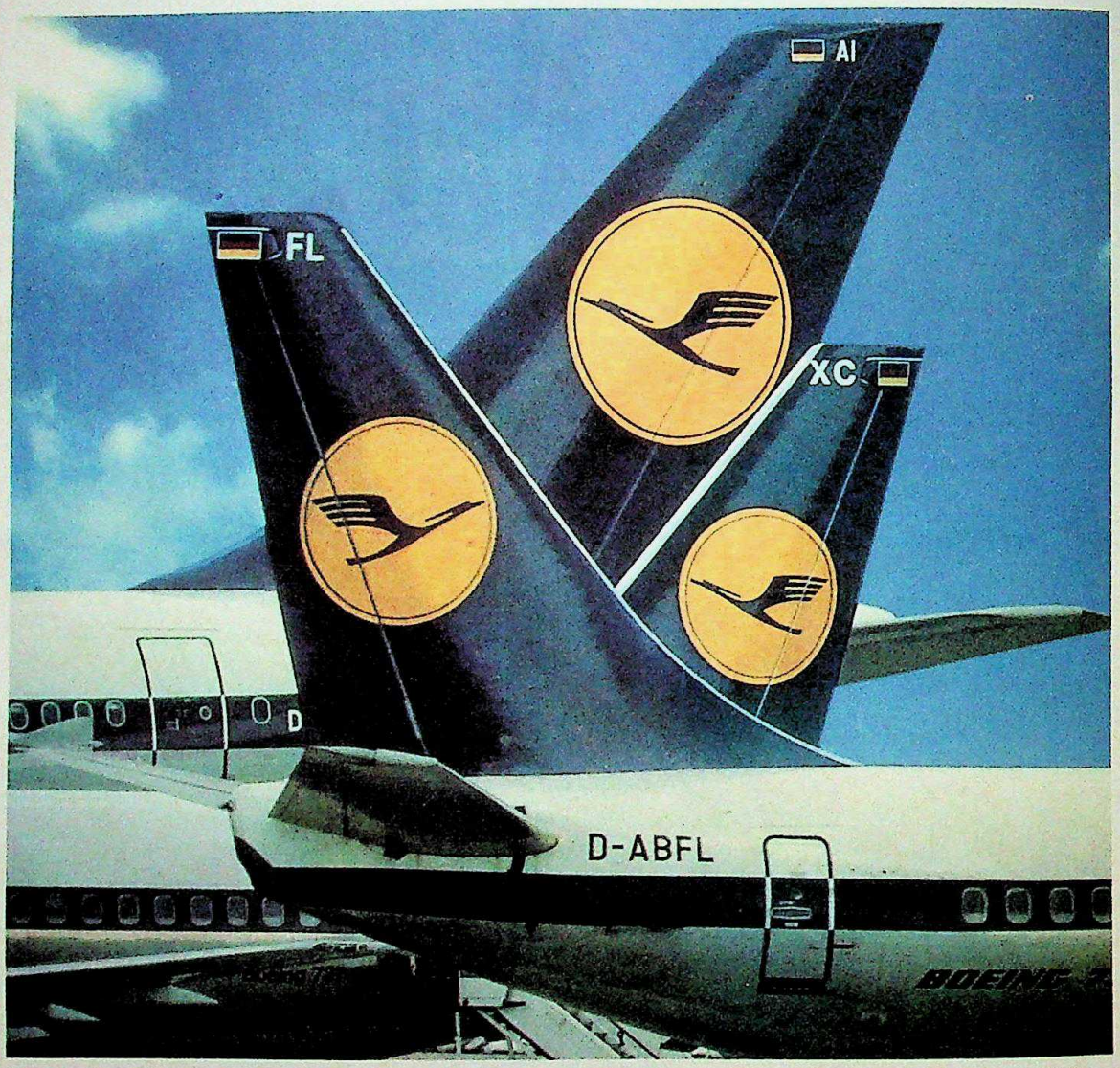

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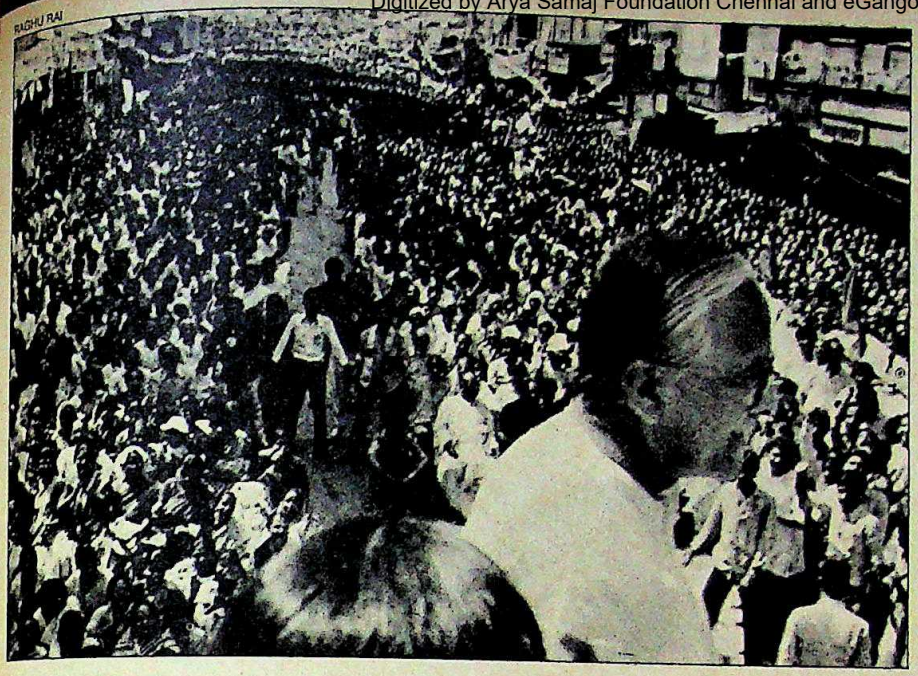
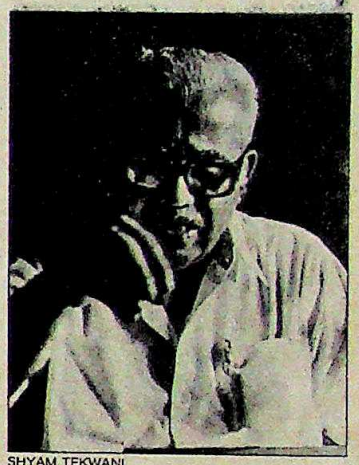
RAGHU RAI



The Left now has to join the rightist BJP in backing the National Front government.



SHYAM TEKWANI

Basu at rally; and Nayanar: joy and gloom

LEFT PARTIES

A Mixed Bag of Fortunes

A sweep in one state, a rout in another, and a chance to play kingmaker but along with the BJP

IT has virtually made a clean sweep of West Bengal. And if it's been routed in Kerala, it has compensated by establishing pockets of influence in little red islands all over the country. All in all, a mixed bag. Yet, the mood in the Left is one of unmixed gloom. Shattered forever is its hope of playing sole kingmakers to the nation by supporting a National Front government from outside, while at the same time isolating the BJP.

The reason for the gloom is not far to seek. The little islands of red have been swamped by a flood of saffron, with the BJP winning far more seats than all the left parties put together. In Kerala, in fact, there were indications that the BJP, with its undeclared support to the Congress(I)-led United Democratic Front, had contributed significantly to the humiliating rout of the Left Democratic Front. Kerala Chief Minister E.K. Nayanar will find it difficult to justify continuing in office any longer.

Quite obviously, the Left's electoral calculations went largely awry. With the DMK and the Telugu Desam routed, the National Front was reduced in effect to a single party—the Janata Dal. And since there was simply no possibility of it forming a government with the help of the Left alone, on the morrow of the elections, the Left found itself in a situation of supreme irony. It could still play kingmaker. But it would have to share that role with the BJP. The alternative was unpalatable—to help the Congress(I) form a government.

Soon after the election, the Left, or at least the CPI(M), seems to have made its choice. Senior party leader Harkishen Singh Surjeet indicated that the CPI(M) would support a National Front government, even one backed by the BJP, so long as that party did not participate in it.

Still, that decision can't have been easy to make. Within the CPI(M), there is a deep schism. One wing, led by E.M.S. Namboodiripad, has consistently held that the Congress(I) and communalism (a euphemism for the BJP) were equally dangerous. CPI General Secretary C. Rajeshwar Rao seemed to go along with that viewpoint, stating unambiguously that all leftists in the country were united on the question of not allowing the BJP to join a government at the Centre.

The other—more pragmatic—wing of the CPI(M), whose most vociferous proponent is West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, has equally consistently argued that the Congress(I) was enemy number one and that all other considerations were secondary.

Immediately after the election, it seemed that Basu had triumphed though he himself disclaimed all knowledge of a decision. Before rushing to New Delhi, he said: "I don't know at the moment what the party will do. We will take a decision after discussing it at the party level." Still, barring a sudden change of tack, it was clear that the Left would support a National Front government. Pragmatism, it appeared, had won over ideology.

On another plane too, the elections were a triumph for Basu. He led the victorious campaign in West Bengal. On the other hand, Namboodiripad's policy of not having anything to do with communal parties in Kerala failed miserably. And far from having isolated the communalists in the state, the policy seems to have given them a new lease of life.

At the national level too, the spectre of a rejuvenated communalism confronts the Left—in the form of a BJP more powerful than it has ever been. Ironically, the Left, by forcing the Janata Dal not to ally with the BJP, may have helped the BJP carve out a separate niche for itself. The spectre that haunts the Left now is one it has itself invoked.

—FARZAND AHMED

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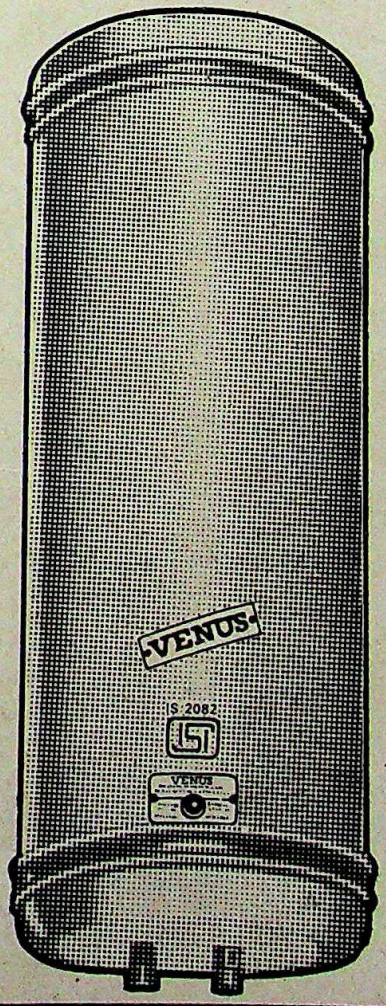

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SHARAD SAXENA

Advani in victory procession

BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

Riding in Triumph

Party takes centre-stage with an impressive showing

"For our ideological school of thought, the eighth general election of 1984 marked the lowest point in our progress graph. Let the deliberations and decisions of this Bombay session of ours fire us with a determination to make the ninth general election the peak point in our onward journey."
—Lal Krishna Advani at the 11th National Council session of the BJP at Bombay on September 25.

JUST two months after that quiet exhortation, it's time to celebrate for the BJP—and for L.K. Advani, the party's tall balding president. The BJP, making a comeback with a vengeance, has turned in its most outstanding performance in its recent incarnation. The party which touched its nadir five years ago—with just two seats in the Lok Sabha—has hit its acme. And though it is in no position to form a government at the Centre on its own, it can dictate terms to whoever does. Says Advani quietly: "The results have slightly surpassed our expectation."

That is of course a gross understatement. Not even the wildest optimists could have anticipated the superb showing that the party has put up—netting the third highest number of seats in the ninth Lok Sabha. But it was not merely a question of winning seats. The matter was one of survival. One more humiliating rout as in 1984, and the party would have been heading for liquidation—its ideology at a discount, its raison d'etre gone. But weeks before the election, as the party rode the wave of a Hindu upsurge, it was clear that the party was headed for electoral success.

The seeds of that success were sown three years earlier, when Advani took over as party president in May 1986, and carefully nurtured in the following years. Immediately after assuming office, Advani had emphasised that instead of indulging in pointless 'summit politics' the party should work hard at the grassroots level to build a base. That policy has paid rich dividends.

But it was not simply a matter of quiet work. Under Advani the BJP has consciously sought to regain the hardline image it had in its previous incarnation as the Jana Sangh, an image the party had, for a while, sought to jettison under Atal Behari Vajpayee.

After it broke away from the Janata Party to form the BJP the erstwhile Jana Sangh group, ostracised for its links with the RSS, had consciously sought to live down its communal image. The new party under Vajpayee adopted 'Gandhian socialism' as its philosophy at its first convention at Bombay in December, 1980. But the decision caused a lot of heartburn among hardliners. Vijayaraje Scindia brought out a pamphlet at the convention, arguing that the new philosophy was incompatible with the party's ideology. For a time, Vajpayee succeeded in quietening the fears. But the debacle in the 1984 elections was viewed as a rejection of the party's attempt to acquire a a centrist image.

After a period of confusion and drifting, Advani took over and gave the call for a return to the roots. The party reestablished a close relationship with the RSS. And Advani outlined a five-year action plan, directing the party's cadre to prepare to contest about 375 seats on its own in the next Lok Sabha elections.

For the next two-and-a-half years, it went about putting that plan into action. Even as major scandals rocked the Congress(I) and the opposition parties busied themselves in endless parleys and mudslinging, the BJP, away from the

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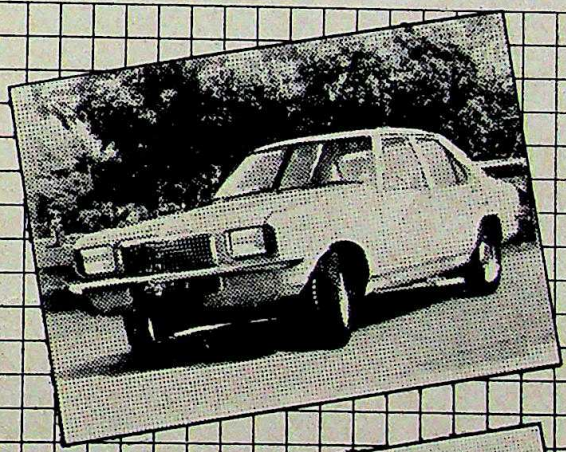

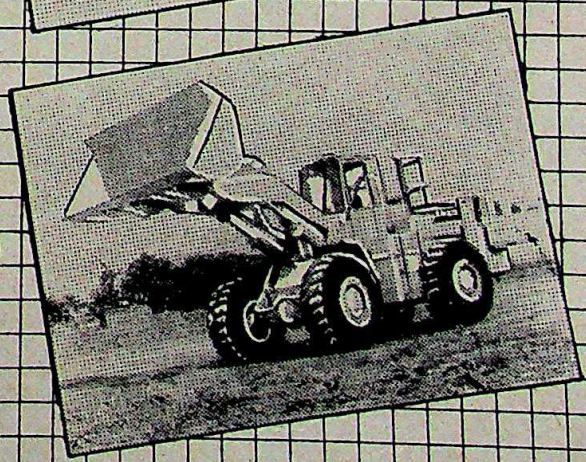

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PRESSMAN

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glare of publicity, was working on different fronts with rugged determination.

In keeping with the party's renewed effort to refurbish its image as the champion of the Hindu cause, it sought a rapprochement with the RSS. Last October, BJP leaders attended the meeting of the 'karyakari mandal' (working committee) of the RSS at its Nagpur headquarters. In a significant step, several RSS men were appointed to key posts in the BJP. Govindacharya, as a nominee of the RSS leadership, became a special assistant to the party president and started participating in its decision-making process. Another youthful RSS activist, Narendra Modi, took over as the de facto leader of the Gujarat BJP unit. The party's impressive showing in the state has been attributed, in part, to Modi's leadership.

THESE appointments coincided with the increasingly hard line the party was taking on issues like the Minorities Commission, Article 370 and Ram Janmabhoomi. Earlier this year, leaders of all the front organisations of the RSS met at Ahmedabad to take stock of the political situation. Bhairao, brother of RSS supremo Balasaheb Deoras and a key RSS strategist, held regular talks with the BJP leadership. After the Bombay convention, he held a meeting with BJP leaders where he suggested that Advani be projected as a mass leader by contesting the elections and that others concentrate on campaigning and organisational work.

This does not mean that the BJP reinforced its call for Hindutva just to oblige the RSS bosses. The decision was an answer to its search for an issue with popular appeal across the country. And in the Ram Janmabhoomi issue, it found an answer.

Party leaders had realised that despite its being a pro-Hindu party, it was the Congress(I) that had cashed in electorally on Hindu sentiments. Said Vajpayee: "This time we were determined not to allow the Congress(I) to play the Hindu card."

However, BJP leaders maintain that it was the well-oiled party organisation that made the crucial difference. Says J.P. Mathur, party general secretary: "The Hindu Mahasabha, which also endorsed the Ram Janmabhoomi demand, fielded a lot of candidates. Have they been able to do anything?"

Now there is jubilation in the BJP camp. But it's tempered with caution. Party leaders regard the party's good electoral performance as just a stage on the road to the ultimate goal. The decision not to join the Government has been guided by a clear long-term perspective. The memories of the Janata fiasco are still fresh. Nor have party members forgotten the way the question of dual membership in the RSS was raised while they were in the Janata Party. The party is wary of a repetition of that scenario if it joins the coalition.

Besides, the party feels that even if the National Front forms a government, sooner rather than later, controversies will surround it since most of its leaders have their roots in Congress culture. Joining such a government that is unlikely to complete its full term, it reasons, would only sully its own image. At the same time, not supporting the National Front in its bid to form a government would amount to letting down the electorate since it too fought the elections essentially on an anti-Congress(I) plank. The party would rather prefer to form governments in at least four of the states scheduled to go to the polls shortly. At the same time it plans to expand its base, especially in the east and south where it is comparatively weak.

Party strategists reckon that it will be some time before the Congress(I) recovers from the shock of its current defeat. At the same time, the bickering and infighting within the Janata Dal, they reason, will create a political vacuum in the country in which the BJP can expand rapidly. The time for the next big move, they believe, would be during the next general election by when the party would be in a position to make a serious bid for power at the Centre.

However, that situation may arise far sooner than BJP strategists make allowances for. The National Front government is likely to be pulled in diametrically opposite directions under pressure from the Left and the BJP. On crucial policy matters, the Left and the BJP have well defined and sharply conflicting stands. It is difficult to visualise a compromise. Some party ideologues, however, do not foresee any such problem. "We are as much opposed to the Pepsi-Cola project as the Marxists are. Only Namboodiripad will have to be more realistic," said noted journalist and party think-tank K.R. Malkani.

Whether the Opposition can provide a stable government or not is a matter of speculation. What's certain is that the BJP has arrived on the national scene as a key player.

—BHASKAR ROY

THE KEY PLAYERS

NANAJI DESHMUKH

Low-profile, he was responsible for logistics management. He also sorted out recurrent RSS-BJP ego hassles.

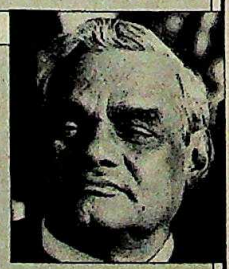
ARUN JAITLY

The former student leader ensured the flow of funds, and masterminded the BJP's publicity campaign.

GOVINDACHARYA

Sent by the RSS to the BJP last year, the former ABVP leader reorganised party units in the north.

ATAL BEHARI VAJPAYEE



With Advani tied down in New Delhi, Vajpayee spearheaded the campaign, drawing massive crowds.

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The Winds o

What do we know about things like Bofors and corruption? We simply vote for the hand that feeds us.

PALIANIAMMA, ***voter, in East Delhi***

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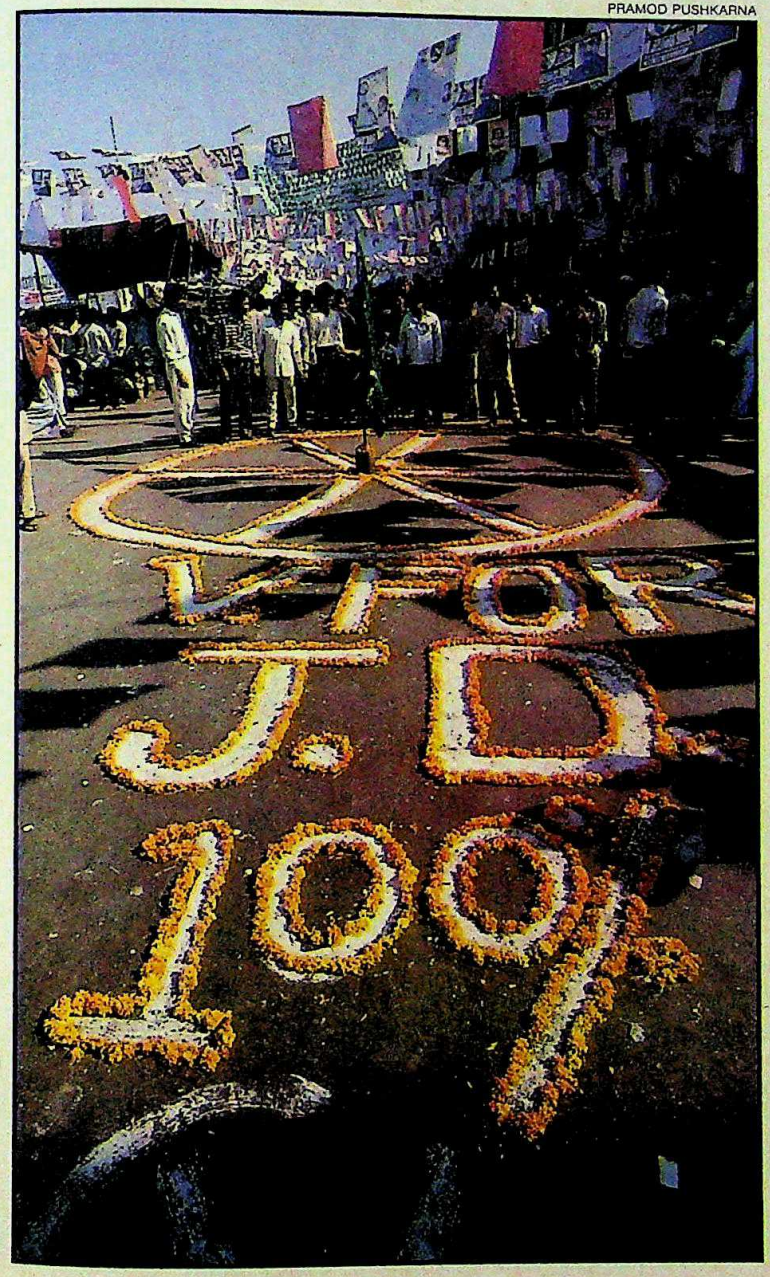
ls of Change

SAIBAL DAS

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Like *paan* leaves must be periodically thrown away as they begin to rot, so should be our rulers.
BIJAYA, *voter, in Bihar*

There was an air of surrealism about last fortnight's general election, a dream-like quality that appeared to project each electoral frame in slow motion. The sudden announcement ensured that the campaign got off to a painfully slow start before it exploded into frenetic life. No less surprising was the rapidity with which the opposition parties forged the face of unity with electoral adjustments.

There may have been irony in the fact that the man who foiled Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's chances of a triumphant second coming was V.P.Singh, his finance minister barely two years ago. But ironies were inevitable in an election that promises to rewrite Indian political history.

Outwardly, it may

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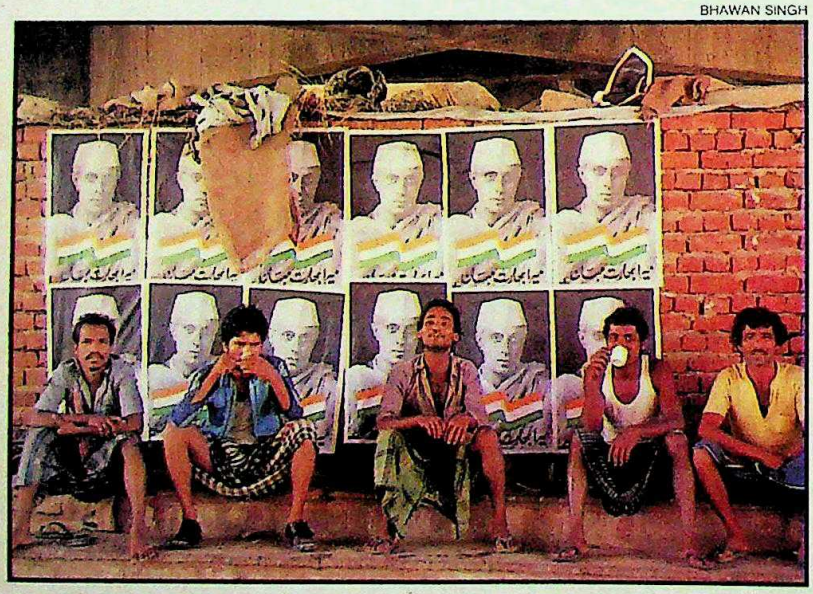
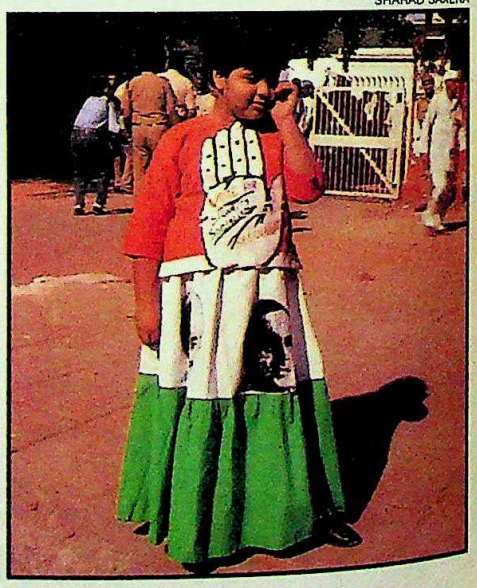
PRASHANT PANJIAR

BHAWAN SINGH



SHARAD SAXENA



I hope that everyone will take up the responsibility and not look up to any one leader. Leaders come and go.

PUPUL JAYAKAR, ***quoting Mrs Gandhi***

The campaign was aimed at the Opposition. You describe venom with scorpions not bees.

ANAND SHARMA, ***Congress(I)***

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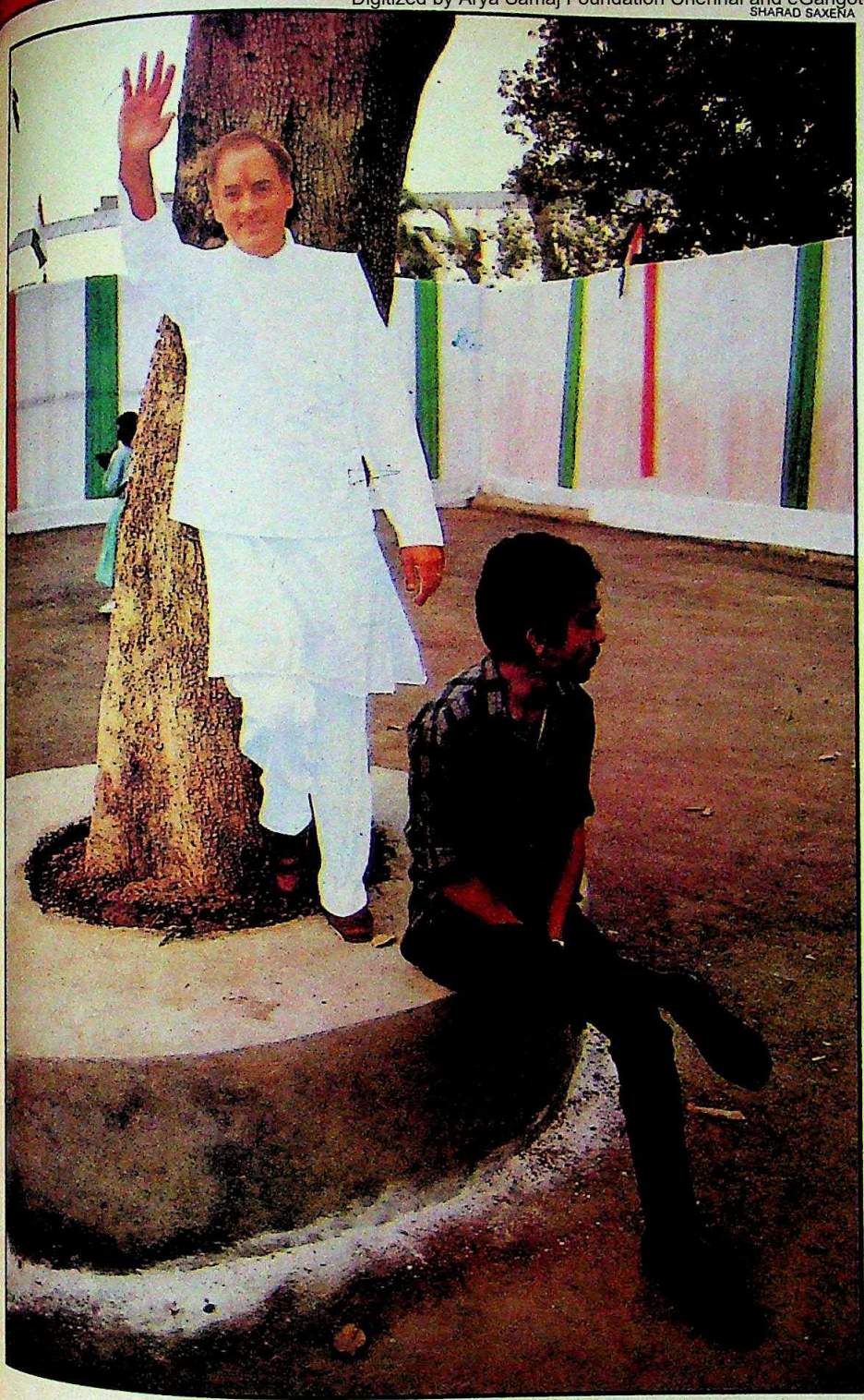

This may be the most open election. If the Congress loses, we'll see the end of dynastic rule and of a party which has lost its democratic character.

KHUSHWANT SINGH, ***Journalist***

have seemed like business as usual. The posters and propaganda; the hysteria and hype; the chaos and the colour that turn the elections into a continental carnival. For one month, the symbols that have dominated the Indian psyche are the hand, the wheel, the lotus or the sickle.

But this time there is a discernible difference; this election is, in some ways, a catharsis. The mood of change that is evident all across the land is not for a mere change of government or an end to dynastic rule. It is a mood that has one strong, if subliminal, message: that politicians will now be accountable for their deeds—and their promises.

It may not endure. There is too much cynicism in the air to allow it to endure. But its portents are powerful enough to eventually overcome that. Since 1971, every election has been tied to a

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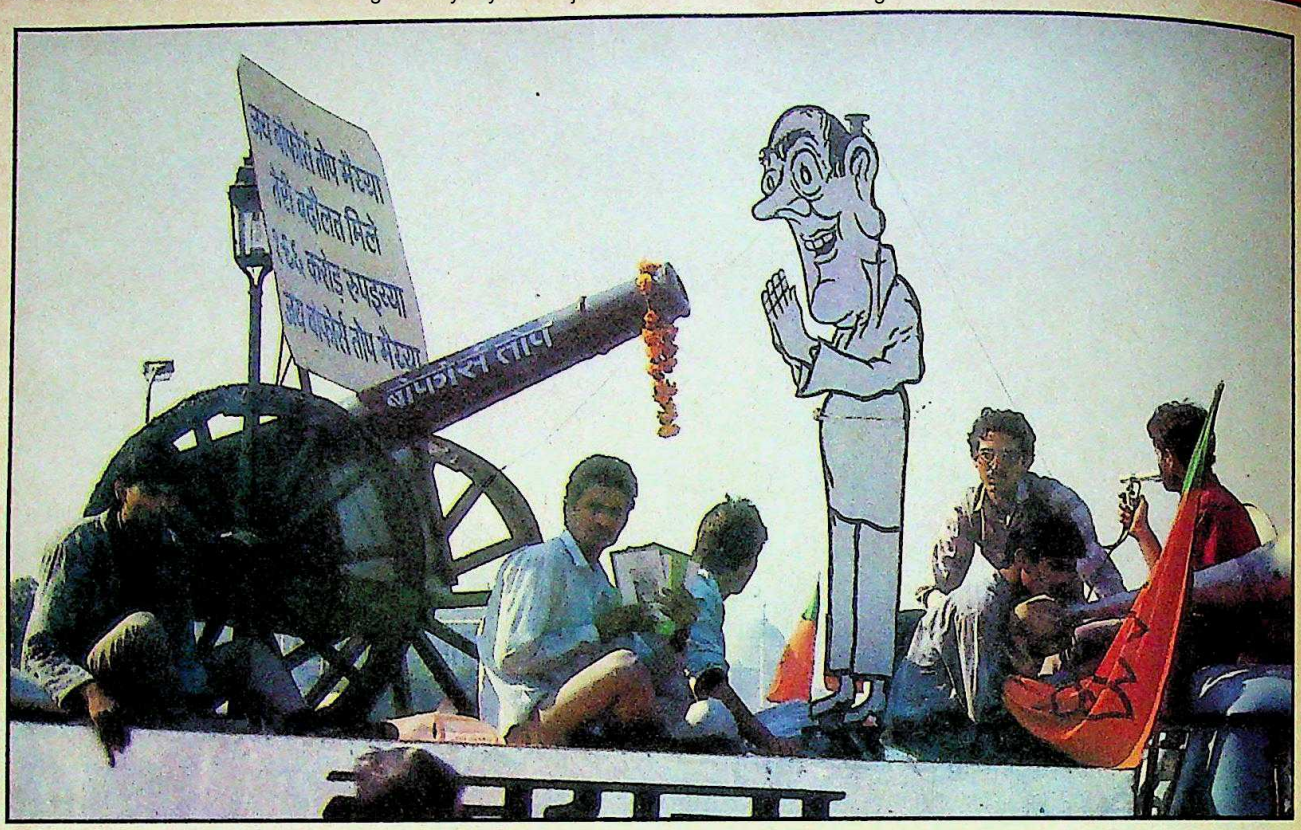

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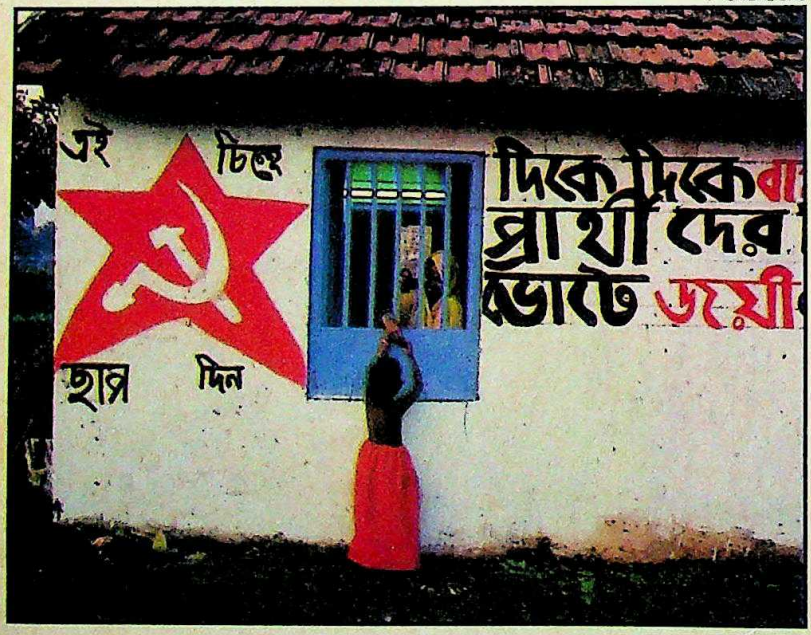

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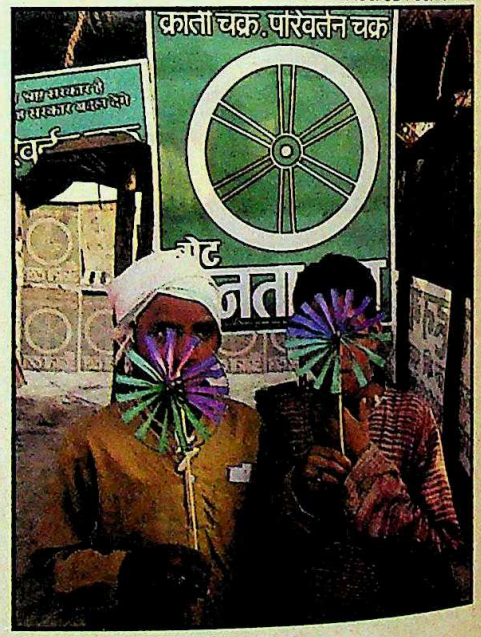

Bofors and corruption in high places have filtered down to villages and are ingrained in the people's conscience.
MADHU LIMAYE, ***opposition politician***

Corruption has elbowed out all other issues to become central to the battle.
PRITISH NANDY, ***editor***

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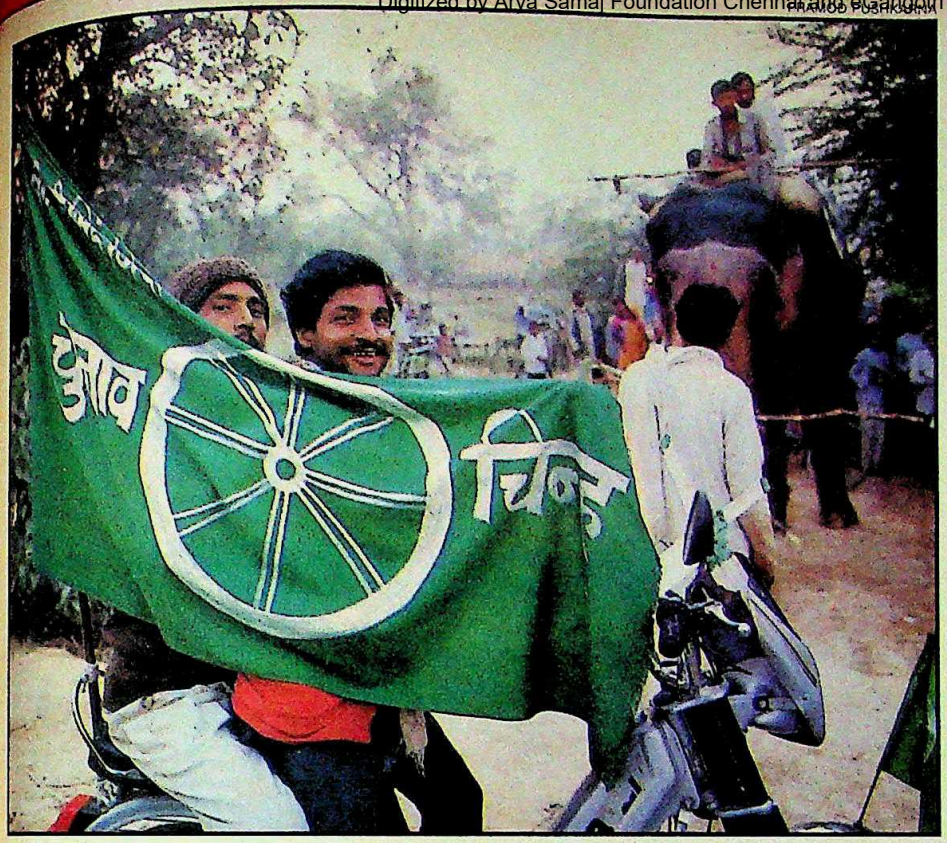
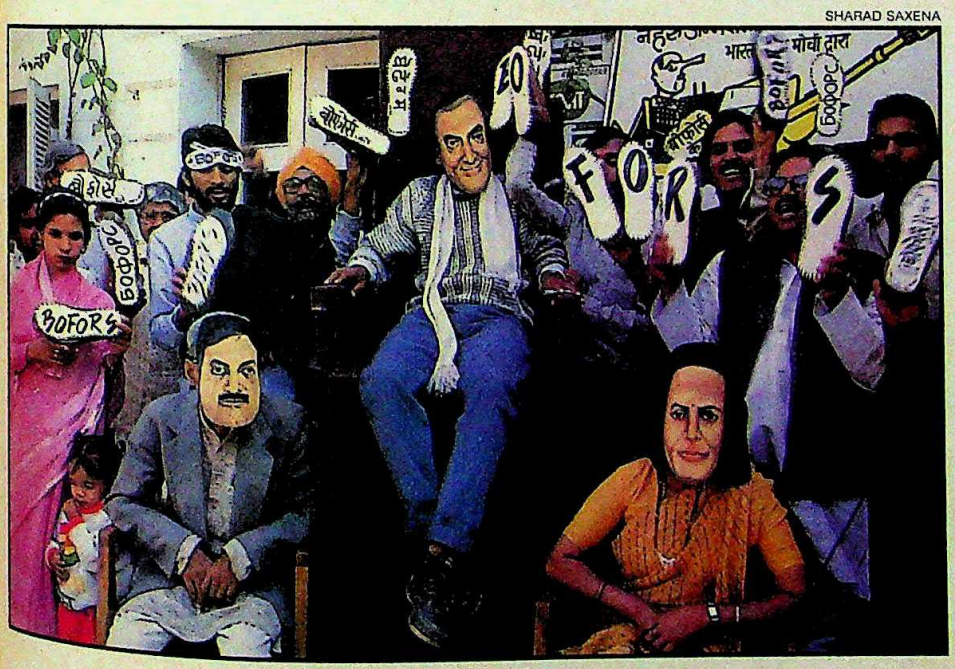


PARVEEN PUSHKARNA



SHARAD SAXENA

If now the Opposition can enact such dramas, then if voted to power in Delhi they would do nothing but show 'nautanki' to the people.
RAJIV GANDHI, ***Congress(I) President***

cataclysmic event—the Indo-Pakistan war, the Emergency, the Janata debacle and Mrs Gandhi's assassination. This time, there was no such crisis to influence the vote.

Now, for the first time, the Indian polity has the chance of witnessing a two-party system. More important, the Indian electorate has issued an unmistakable message: that the future leadership of this country will have to be more responsive to the public mood and that corruption in public life has now become a major electoral issue. Even more significant, for the first time, India's Parliament will be truly representative, spanning the entire ideological spectrum.

These are no insignificant changes. Taken together, they could finally herald the coming of age of Indian democracy. The blood that has stained the campaign trail to make this the most violent election in Indian history may

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not be entirely in vain. Indian politics has, in the last few years, overstepped the limits. The bile and the bitterness, the rigging and the rioting, the arrogance and the indifference, are what this country is voting against. That, eventually, is the true meaning—and worth—of this election.

—DILIP BOBB

PRASHANT PANJIAR

This time it has been a mirror election. You can see your true face in it.

BHABANI SENGUPTA, *columnist*

We have no illusions about the Opposition, but want a change. The Gandhi Government must go.

JAGDISH KUMAR, *factory worker*

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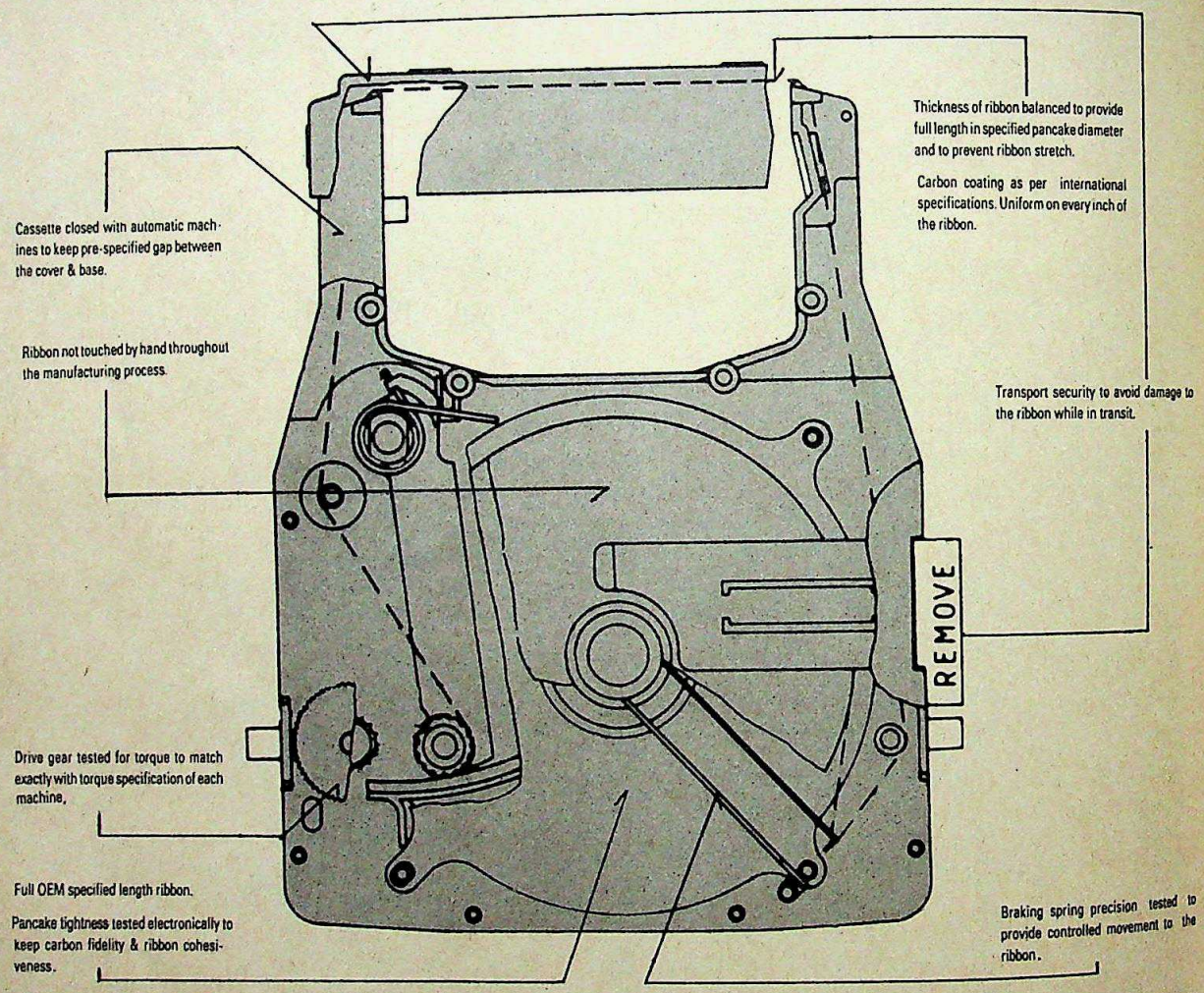

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PARTING OF WAYS

THE Shriram family feud is over. The Delhi High Court has called an emergency meeting of DCM shareholders on December 18 to ratify a partition agreement. DCM's units are being divided among the three branches of the family, with a further split in DCM Chairman Bansi Dhar's branch between Bansi Dhar and brother Shri Dhar. Three DCM subsidiaries have been formed, to be run by Bansi Dhar, Shri Dhar and DCM Managing Director Siddharth Sriram. The Bharat Rams will get what's left of DCM, plus the companies they now run. The Shriram family's other assets and liabilities will be split three ways. Shares in holding company Madan Mohan Lal Shri Ram—which has stakes in companies like DCM (around 8 per cent), Jay Engineering (about 30 per cent) and Usha International (roughly 40 per cent)—are to be partitioned. A deal has been struck on the Bharat Ram-controlled Shri Ram Fibres' 18 per cent stake in DCM. This entitled it to shares in the three DCM subsidiaries. The deal changes this because the right to the shares will pass to other branches of the family. Finally, Siddharth Sriram is to take over the losing, Calcutta-based India Hard Metals, which till now was under Shri Dhar.

FINANCING BUSINESS

THE Tatas, the Birlas, the Ambanis, the Goenkas and the Mafatlals already have or will soon launch financial service companies. The latest to join their ranks are the Jains who run Bennett, Coleman and Co Ltd, publishers of *The Times of India*. They are readying to float Times Guarantee Financials Ltd early next year with a capital of Rs 5 crore. Its business will include hire purchase, leasing and merchant banking. There's also speculation that a tie-up with an American securities firm is on the cards. Among the many reasons for the rush into financial services are the business opportunities India's growing middle class offers.

PEPPY PRODUCTS

COME March, there'll be plenty of fizz in the soft drinks market. But that is only a part of the splash the recently-incorporated Pepsi Foods will be making. In the works are chips, carbonated drinks and juices. Some could even have regional flavours (for instance, coconut drinks for Kerala, tea-based ones up north). Backing it will be a zany advertising campaign. To meet its 50 per cent export commitment, Pepsi is looking at products like shoes, marine products, mushrooms and tea—it has already test marketed an instant tea called Tea Breeze in the US—apart from tomato paste.

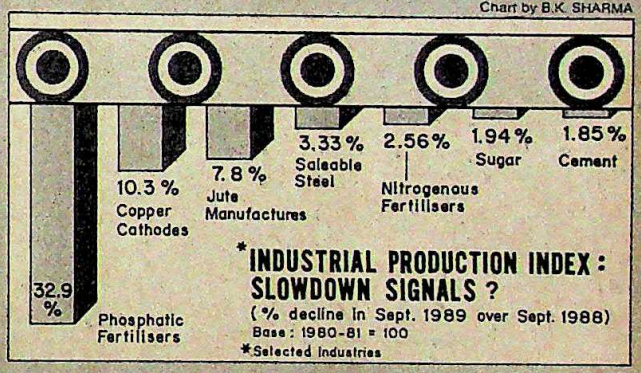
SMOKE SIGNALS

WITH production in the cigarette industry steadily dropping, tobacco giant ITC continues its efforts to kick the cigarette habit. The industry's monthly cigarette output has fallen by around a billion cigarettes from the 1986 peak of roughly 84 billion cigarettes, thanks partly to high cigarette taxes and prices. Three months ago, ITC shut its Bombay factory. More ITC factories could be closed. The company has also applied to the Government for clearances for a Rs 48.30-crore edible oils and processed foods project (ITC has already made a foray into oilseeds and edible oils). Using by-products such as fatty acids and glycerine as raw materials, it can well leap into the soaps, cosmetics and perfumes industries. While ITC has applied to the Government to do so, company sources say that this option is merely being considered, and that ITC could settle for hawking the by-products.

INDUSTRIAL SLOWDOWN

THERE are stray signs that the slowdown in the industrial production growth rate last May and June is no flash in the pan. Preliminary figures for July show that the index of industrial production is up by 5.3 per cent, compared with

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



July 1988-89. But confidential government statistics on output in September in 18 industries—with a weightage of 48.15 per cent in the index—reveal that fertiliser, saleable steel, and sugar production is down *(see chart)*. Most economists are puzzled by the phenomenon. Still, a recession may not be in the offing: production in powerlooms, handlooms, coal and electricity is up. All the same, many economists are scaling down this year's industrial growth estimates from 8 to 9 per cent, to about 6 per cent.

WRONG NUMBER

IF CIT Alcatel officials are to be believed, Rajiv Gandhi's government proposed that the Hindujas partner the French telecommunications giant in a large electronic switching systems venture in India. Alcatel officials made a presentation on the project to the prime minister's office (PMO) last year. Alcatel, they told the PMO, was willing to tie up with any Indian partner who had the technical expertise and financial muscle. The Government then suggested the Hindujas (who, however, deny they were involved in any way). Still, some private sector groups like the Hindujas and the Tatas have expressed interest in producing switching systems. And more than two business groups approached Alcatel on floating a joint venture, though the French multinational declined to commit itself.

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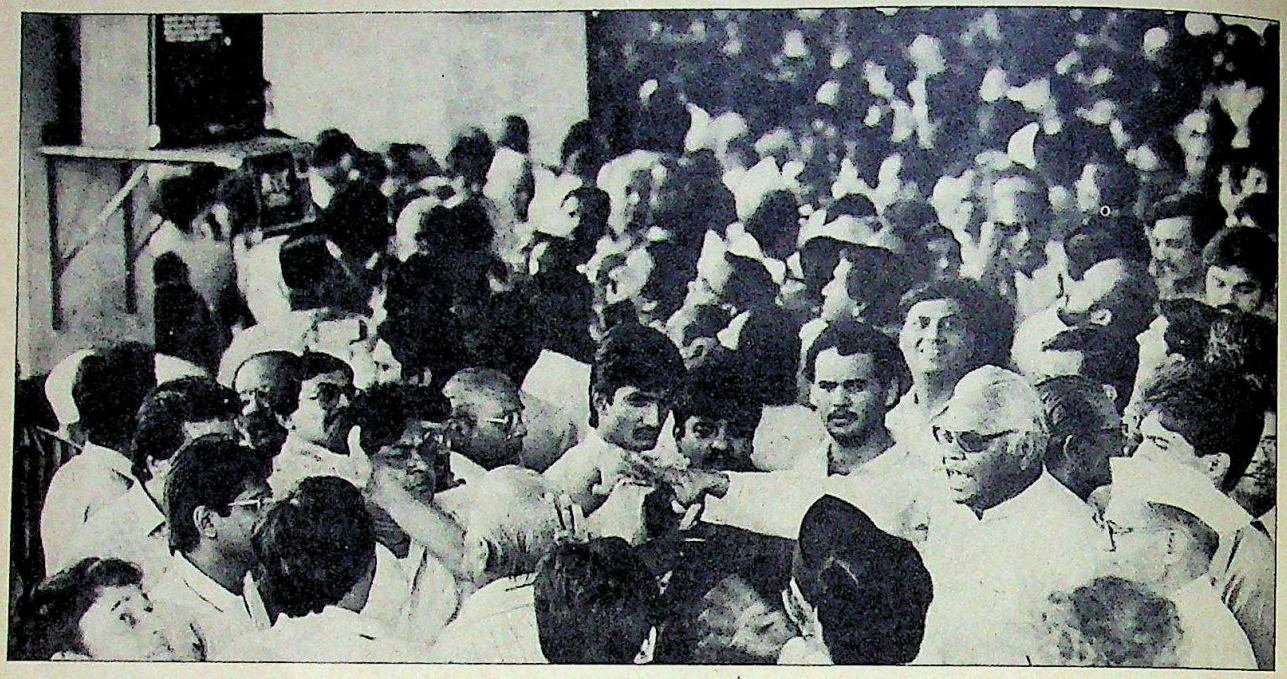


Bombay Exchange: uncertain times

STOCK-MARKETS

Swaying to the Ballot

Share prices react to election news

AT noon on Monday, November 27, the trading ring of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), the country's largest stock-market, was chock-a-block with stock brokers. Hundreds of them prepared for another day of hectic trading. It seemed business as usual.

But Monday was no run-of-the-mill day. The results of the ninth general elections had started trickling in from Sunday. And as the prospect of a hung Parliament loomed large, some pundits thought the markets would plunge.

They did—later. At first, however, leading share price indices rose marginally. *The Economic Times* index of share prices in Bombay, for instance, climbed from 474.6 to 475.6. Crowed Manohar Pherwani, chairman of the Unit Trust of India (UTI): "The election results have not had an adverse impact on the stock-market. They are rock steady and it's a good time to buy shares." Pherwani's optimism was premature. Amidst the uncertainty of government formation in New Delhi, the index plunged the next day from 475.6 to 467.1 before levelling off. Some of the see-sawing was also due to brokers selling shares to meet their fortnightly obligation to pay for stock they had bought earlier.

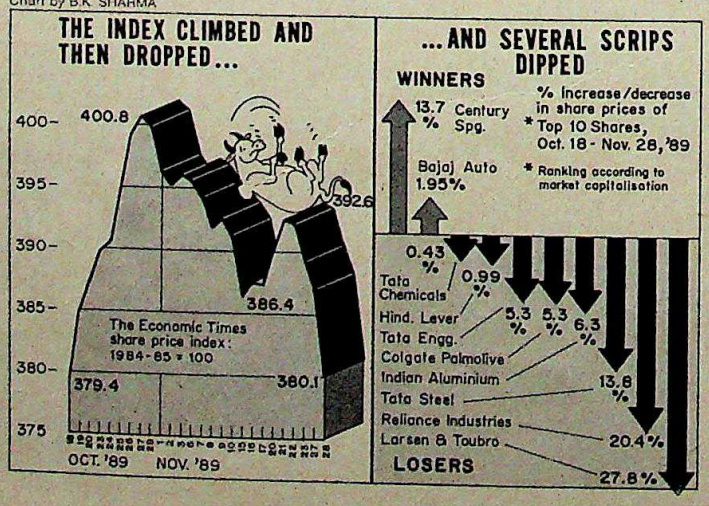
Some share prices too reacted sharply: those of 274 scrips went up, while those of 365 stocks dropped. Bombay Dyeing, which has just turned in a good financial showing and whose chairman, Nusli Wadia, is commonly perceived as being close to the Opposition, moved up on November 27 from Rs 146 to Rs 151, but subsequently dropped to Rs 144. Reliance Industries scrips too inched up from Rs 78.50 to Rs 79.50—after taking a beating earlier—and then plummeted to Rs 74.

Yet there's little doubt that the markets have remained fairly stable during the past month. One reason: the financial institutions, the UTI and the mutual funds managed by the State Bank and Canara Bank, extended what is referred to as "support," a euphemism for heavy buying. Says Bhupen Dalal, chief of Champaklal Investments and Financial Consultancy Services: "Institutional buying was a major factor contributing to the steady market." No estimates are yet available on the quantum of shares the institutions bought. Pherwani merely says the institutions "were around the market."

Mahendra Kampani, head of stock broking firm Jamnadass Morarjee, offers another explanation: "The election trend was clear a fortnight ago. And the markets had already discounted the possibility of a hung Parliament."

The "discounting" process took its toll. *The Economic Times* share index for Bombay was at 479.10 when the elections were announced in mid-October. The BSE sensitive index, a basket of leading share prices, was then quoted at 738. *The Economic Times* index then scaled a 1989 high of 495,

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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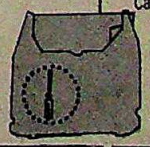

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underlining the market's bullishness.

Come November, both share prices and trading volumes plunged steeply (*see chart*). The pre-election gross daily turnover of around Rs 60 crore nose-dived to Rs 38 crore in early November. Says a leading stock broker: "There were reports that the Congress(I) was heading for a major defeat. Individual investors either sold shares or simply stayed out. Large market operators did the same." With the market value of stocks down, shareholders lost an estimated Rs 347 crore between mid-October and mid-November.

Expectedly, Reliance group shares were an early casualty. Between October 17, when the elections were announced, and November 27, the Reliance Industries scrip fell from Rs 93 to Rs 79.50. Quite simply, brokers and punters felt that V.P. Singh would become the next prime minister and Reliance would be in the dog-house.

But the price tumble was arrested by two factors—the closure of the BSE for a week in mid-November due to a fire (an event marketmen described as "divine intervention") and the marginal selling pressure. Companies have flourished this year and punters were not keen on selling shares. Also, leading speculators steered clear of the markets during the crucial election period. Ram Piparaiya, managing director of Aridhi Investments, is not surprised: "The financial institutions are the dominant players in the stock-market today. So the dominance of the large operators is progressively declining."

Still, some uncertainty ruled outside the trading ring. Merchant bankers say several companies postponed share and debenture issues. Says one: "Let the new government announce its economic blueprint. Only then will companies go out and raise money." Some worry also persists about the new government's economic policy. Warns BSE President G.B. Desai: "No government can afford to distort the economy."

Later in the fortnight, however, most market analysts remained bullish and were advising clients not to sell stocks. Explains Kampani, a former BSE president: "Five years ago, political uncertainty of the 1989 variety would have led to a sharp decline. For the next 10 days I don't see any bearish tendency."

The stock-markets are resilient today and their growth over the past five years will be an enduring legacy of the Rajiv Gandhi government. For many Rajiv's talent is better reflected in economic scoreboards—rather than political ones.

—S.N. VASUKI

ELECTION EXPENSES

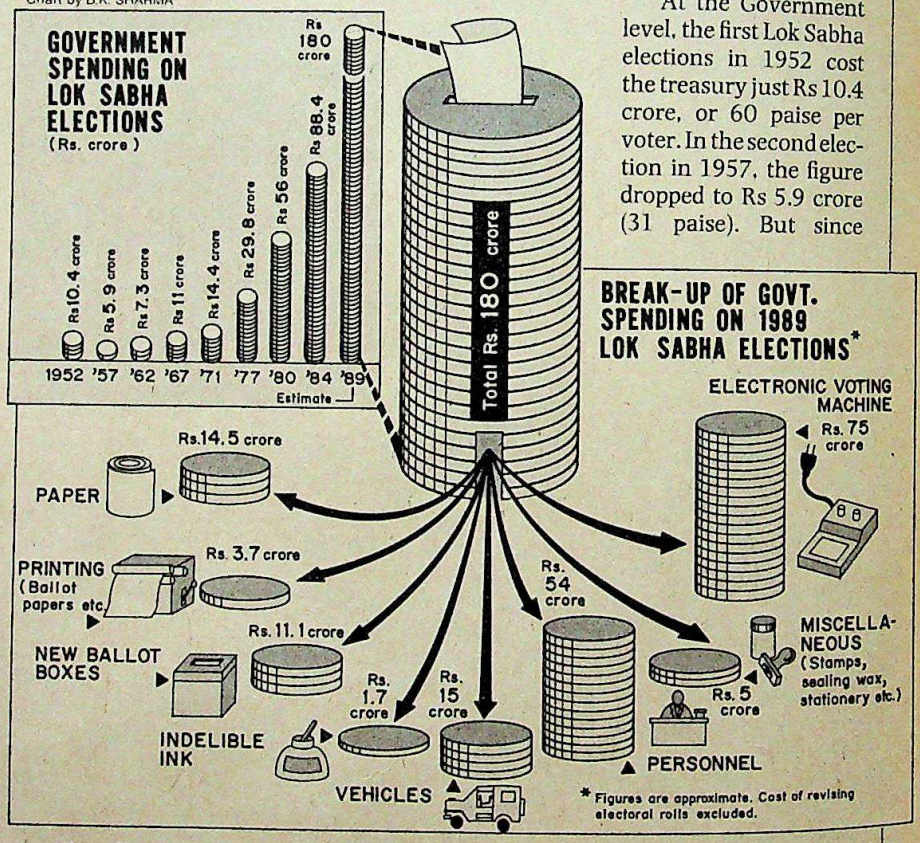
Expensive Exercise

Crores spent on campaigning and poll preparations

THERE was hoopla. There was din. And there was much dipping into pockets. The choreography for the biggest show on earth came expensive. As political parties in the country wooed the world's largest electorate of 500 million, an astounding sum—perhaps exceeding Rs 1,000 crore—was spent on electioneering.

If you think that number is outlandish, consider the following:

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



► The official estimate of government spending on the elections is Rs 166 crore. But Election Commission sources say the actual figure must have been upwards of Rs 180 crore—excluding around Rs 100 crore spent on revising the electoral rolls and an estimated Rs 50 crore spent on the assembly elections. The total: around Rs 330 crore.

► Political parties spent a huge sum, possibly running into several hundred crores. Estimates of the AICC(I)'s publicity budget alone run to more than Rs 75 crore, including a Rs 20-crore advertising campaign and expenditure of Rs 10 crore on videos. Over Rs 200 crore was possibly spent on "volunteers", the men who man the polling booths and paste posters on walls. The 6,084 Lok Sabha candidates who contested the ninth Lok Sabha elections may also have splurged roughly Rs 6 crore on petrol bills—to name just one item.

Quite simply, inflation, a burgeoning electorate and the need to use electronic media have forced the Government, parties and candidates to foot fatter bills.

At the Government level, the first Lok Sabha elections in 1952 cost the treasury just Rs 10.4 crore, or 60 paise per voter. In the second election in 1957, the figure dropped to Rs 5.9 crore (31 paise). But since then, expenditure has risen exponentially. This year's election was more than twice as costly to the exchequer (around Rs 180 crore or Rs 3.50 per voter) as the previous one (Rs 88.4 crore or Rs 2.20) (*see chart*).

What's true of the Government is true of parties. "Ten years ago, we could get people to work for very little. Now, we are not only expected to pay cash but also provide food and liquor," lamented a veteran Congress(I) minister.

It's impossible to determine the overall expenditure by political parties, because few know how many vehicles parties bought (one guesstimate: 2,000

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CAREERS WITH ITC

Managers, Legal Department

COMPANY

ITC is among the largest companies in India with diversified business interests in tobacco products, hotels and tourism, printing and packaging, paper and board, agribusinesses, exports and information technology.

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Candidates should be articulate and have a strong conceptual and theoretical base. They should be intelligent, confident and co-operative, with a capacity for effective inter-personal relations and a practical approach to legal problems. The preferred age group is between 25-35 years.

Experience as a legal practitioner or as a member in the legal function of a reputable organisation could be an advantage, but is not essential.

The post calls for the ability to give legal advice to various Divisions in the Company; instruct and work with both Senior and Junior Counsel; conduct cases as well as make appearances before Tribunals and other Courts throughout India when required; draft various types of agreements based on a thorough knowledge of all aspects of law including tax and industrial law as well as petitions, plaints, written statements, legal notes, etc.

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Prospects of growth are excellent for the right person as the job offers opportunities to reach a senior management position within a reasonable period.

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Salary will be commensurate with qualifications and experience. An attractive remuneration package of not less than Rs 7000 (and upwards depending on age and experience) will include Housing or generous House Rent Allowance, Leave Travel Allowance, Medical Assistance, a three-tier retiral scheme and other benefits.

Interviews will be held at the Company's Headquarters in Calcutta. For outstation candidates, airfares and reasonable incidental expenses for board and lodging will be reimbursed.

Please apply within 14 days of the date of this advertisement, giving name, address, date of birth, qualifications, experience, present employment, current emoluments, and extra-curricular activities along with a passport-sized (non-returnable) photograph.

Applications will be treated in confidence and should be addressed to the Corporate Personnel Manager, I.T.C. Limited, Virginia House, 37 Chowringhee, Calcutta-700071, with the envelope marked 'LEGAL'.

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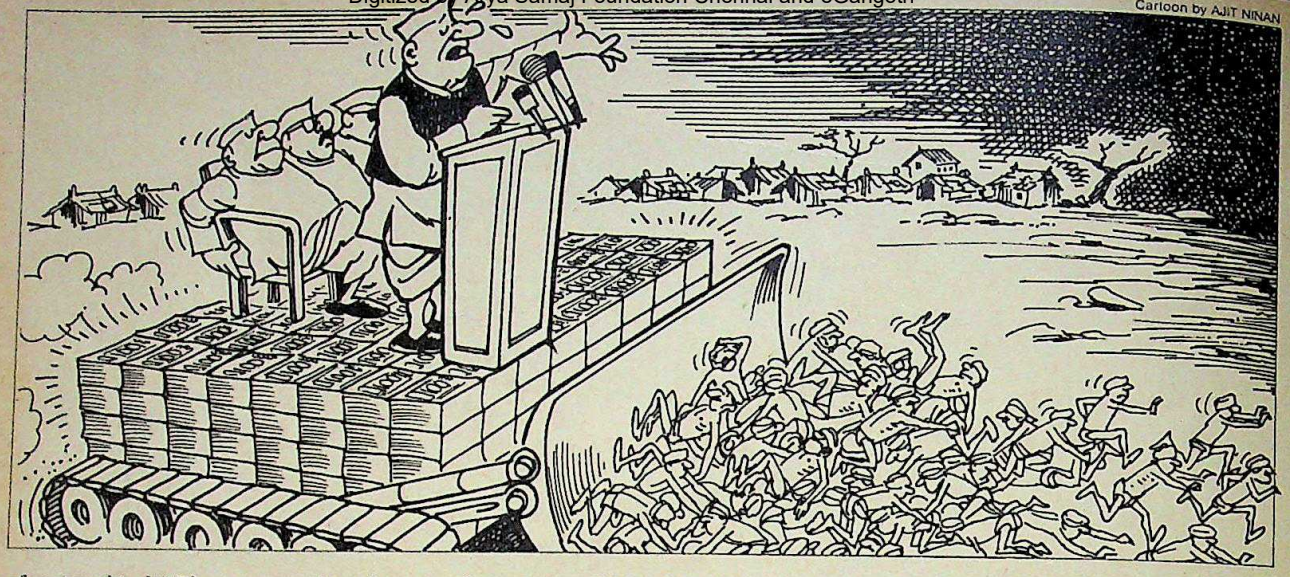
Cartoon by AJIT NINAN

of various kinds). There are sundry other expenses that can't be pinned down.

Legally, each candidate is not permitted to spend more than Rs 20,000 to Rs 1.5 lakh, the ceiling depending on the constituency. But there's a loophole: there is no ceiling on spending by parties or by supporters and well wishers. So parties tend to chip in by footing much of the bill for transport and people, which account for 60 to 70 per cent of the campaign expenditure.

Easily the greatest expense was on people—for organising rallies and mobilising crowds. And the Congress(I) had to shell out the most to 'volunteers' because it has no cadre base.

An inkling of the kind of money spent on people can be obtained by a rough and ready reckoning of how much the Congress(I) spent on one of its candidates in Delhi on polling day alone. In one of the bigger Delhi constituencies, it had around 2,000 polling booths. Assuming that there were at least 10 volunteers per booth and that Rs 80 was spent on each in cash and kind, the total works out to Rs 16 lakh. Even if this was an exceptional case and assuming that Rs 16 lakh was spent by all parties put together in each constituency, nearly Rs 84 crore would have been spent on volunteers on polling day in the 525 constituencies which went to the polls. Even if they'd been employed for just two or three days, the sum would come to Rs 168 crore to Rs 252 crore.

Cut to the normally busy Indian Institute of Technology gate intersection in south Delhi late last month. Some time past midnight, 20 young men got off a van. Within 15 minutes the wall of a nearby building was plastered with a hundred posters. Said Rakesh, 18, a college student: "It's good pocket money we're getting—Rs 50 for six hours of work, two meals and a ride back home."

But posters are passe. This has been a video election—with heavyweights spending lakhs to sell themselves. At least 30 video raths—let out by New Delhi's Jain Studio—were on the road. The video industry recorded an estimated billing of around Rs 10 crore during this election. At least 20,000 audio cassettes were in circulation.

THE logistics of electioneering are truly staggering. Hoardings, cutouts, leaflets, badges, *pandals* and public address systems, in tens of thousands. At least 100 million posters valued at about Rs 10 crore, consuming over 2,000 tonnes of paper.

With a deeper war chest, the ruling party tends to spend more than the Opposition on its candidates. Vishwajeet Prithvijit Singh, the Congress (I)'s election coordinator, provided a list of items (including, for the first time, 1.5 lakh stick-on *bindis* per candidate) distributed by the Congress(I). The value of the material, for each Lok Sabha candidate, works out to just under Rs 1 lakh. Clearly, this was an underestimate. Admitted a Congressman: "Most of us are getting material worth twice as much, but the party can't disclose it." If that's true, the Congress(I) must have provided more than Rs 10-crore worth of material alone to its candidates since it contested 509 seats.

The Opposition was no laggard either. Take, for example, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. In Andhra Pradesh, every Telugu Desam Party (TDP) candidate got 10,000 posters, 7,000 flags, 500 banners, 15,000 badges, 50,000 buntings, 250 tin plates, 50 audio cassettes and a couple of video cassettes and film prints. Before the election, a TDP politburo member said the party would be spending Rs 2.5 crore on all this, with candidates forking out extra sums. In Karnataka, Janata Dal sources said the party spent over Rs 10 crore on providing its candidates with just cash and material. If the Opposition met a Rs 12.5 crore bill for two states, what would it have spent all over the country?

On another plane, many of the 6,084 candidates for the ninth Lok Sabha elections—not to speak of those who campaigned for assembly polls—would have met some of their petrol bills, opened their purse strings to provide tea and perhaps food to their supporters. True, many of these were low-budget independents. Even so, several others were backed by parties. In Andhra Pradesh, said the TDP politburo member, each assembly candidate would spend a minimum of Rs 3 lakh; a parliamentary candidate, Rs 8 lakh. In Karnataka, according to Janata Dal sources, the average expense of an assembly candidate must have been around Rs 5 lakh and that of a Lok Sabha candidate Rs 25 lakh. So candidates of just these parties in these two states would have spent some Rs 47 crore in electioneering expenses—apart from the expenditure incurred on them by their parties.

What is more, there are some election expenses that are difficult to estimate—for example, paint, postage, telephone calls, hotel bills and, of course, travel. In other words, Rs 1,000 crore is not such a high figure for the total expenses incurred on the ninth Lok Sabha elections. It costs a lot to win over that poor Indian voter.

—PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA
with bureau reports

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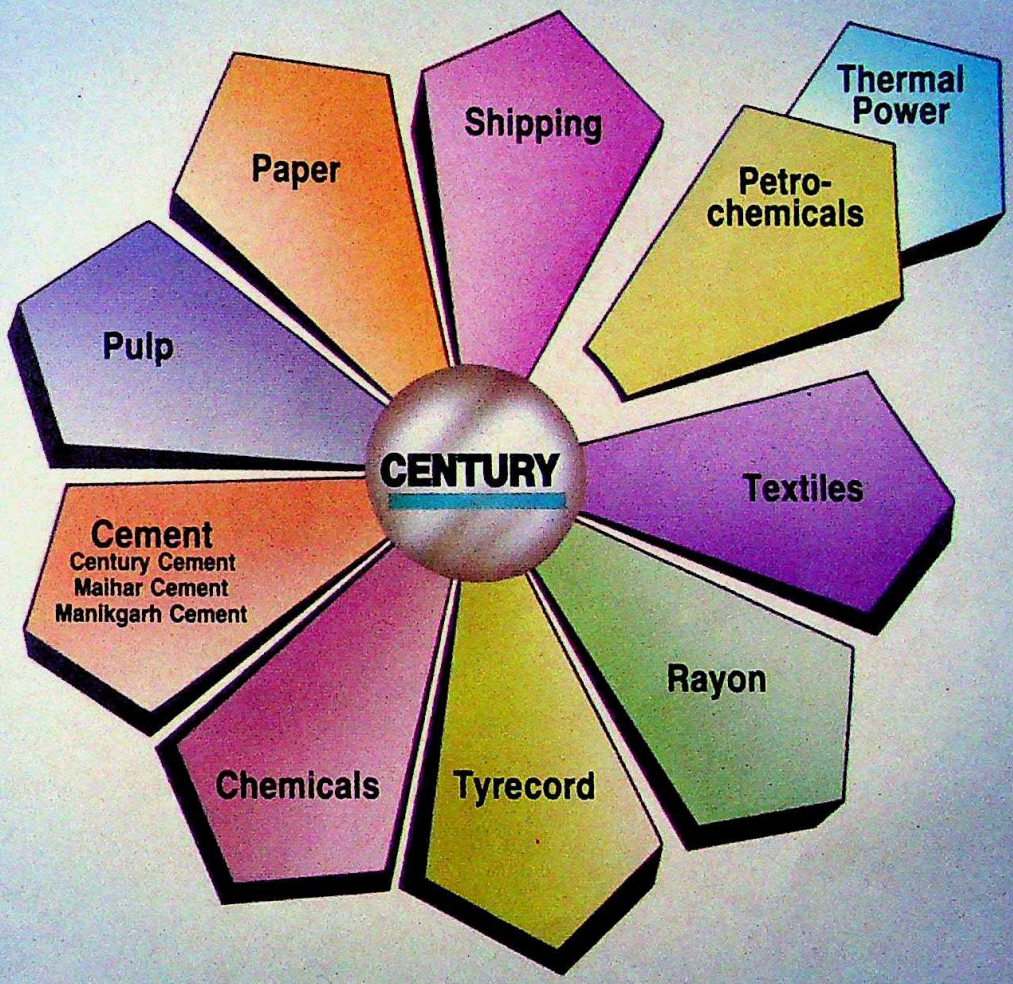
One of India's most progressive companies is also the most diversified



In 1951, Century was just a textile mill. Today, it ranks among the most diversified companies in India. Internationally, it has become synonymous with the very best in Indian cotton textiles, emerging as the largest and most dependable supplier of superior cotton textiles.

To meet the country's vital needs, over the years Century has diversified into rayon yarn, tyrecord, minerals & chemicals, cement, pulp & paper, and shipping... In all these, the Company has achieved commendable success.

Besides, it has designed and fabricated complete chemical and tyrecord plants.

In the highly competitive global market, the Company made a big breakthrough by achieving an export of almost Rs. 100 crores in 1988.

Confident of the unique combination of its vast experience, resources, and professional skills, Century is branching out into new areas to create more productive assets for the country and more opportunities for our people to better the quality of their lives.

CENTURY

— the dawn of a new era.

Century Textiles and Industries Ltd.

Century Bhavan, Dr. Annie Besant Road, Worli, Bombay 400 025.

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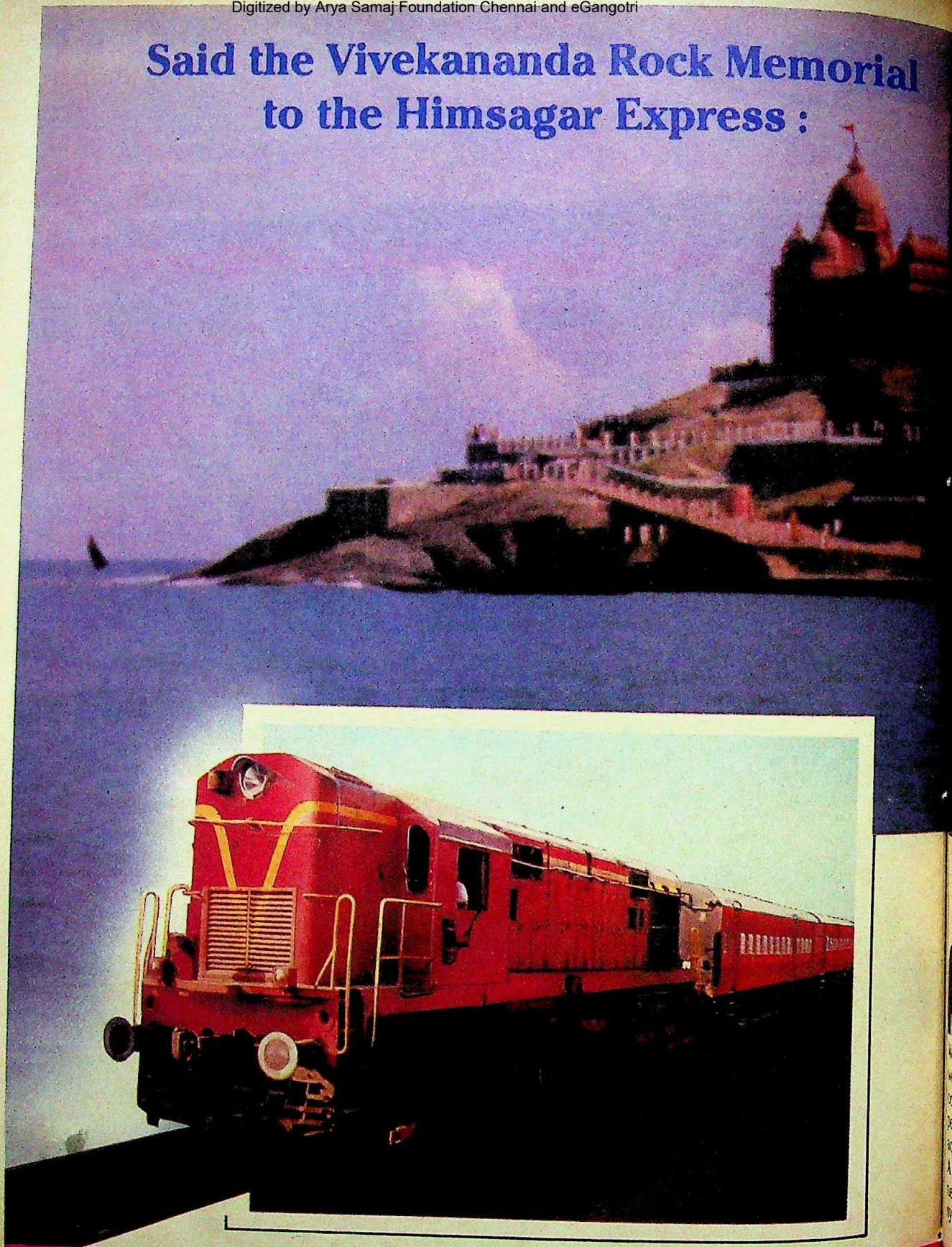
Said the Vivekananda Rock Memorial to the Himsagar Express :



Indian Railways

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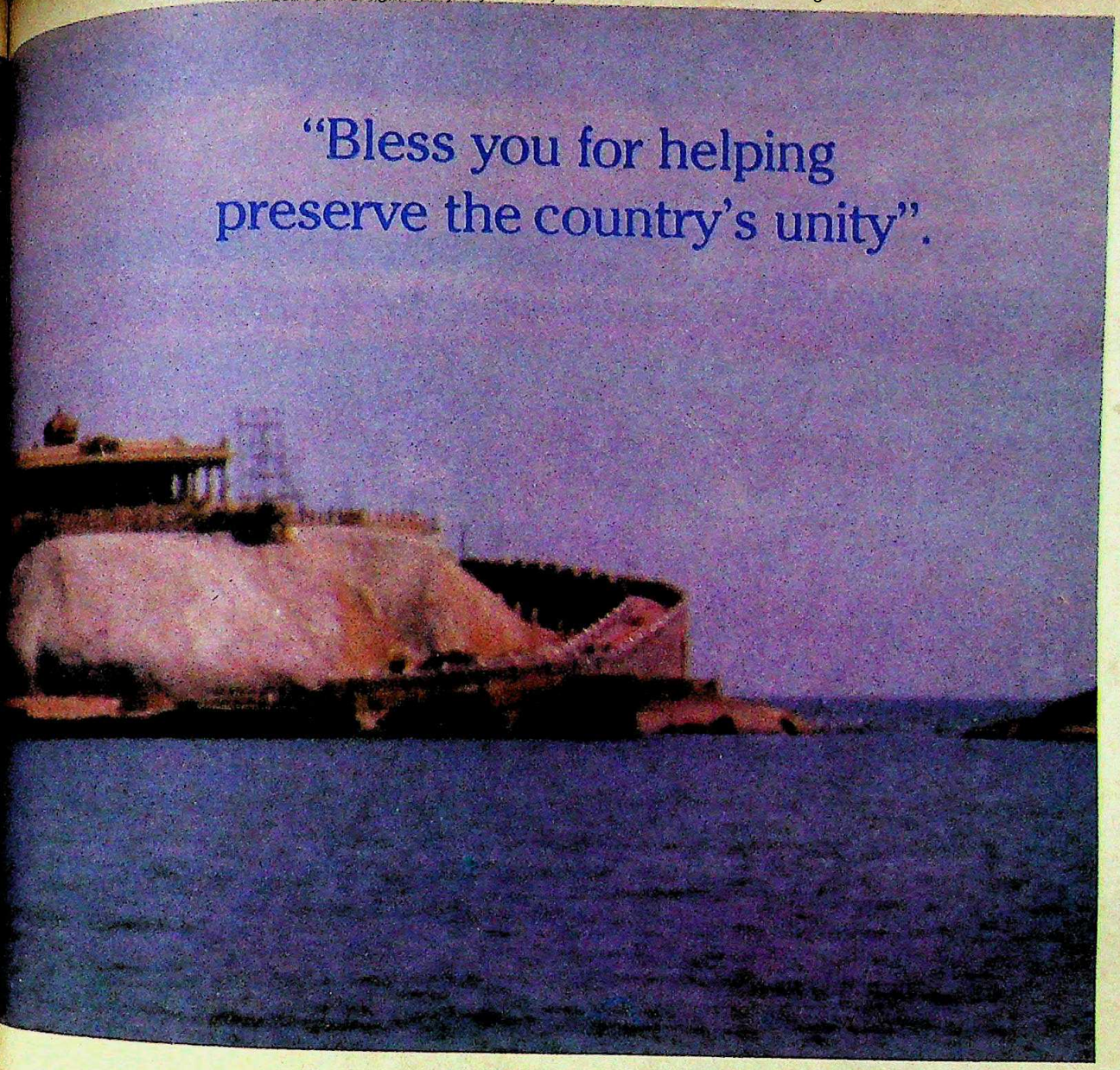

The unique Rock Memorial at Kanyakumari is a testimonial to the vision of a great sage of our times, Swamy Vivekananda — the vision of a new and vibrant Indian nation.

With rock-like steadfastness, 1.8 million railwaymen work round the clock, round the year... binding the country together... transporting every day 11 million people and 9 lac tonnes of freight in 12,000 trains across the vast expanses of our great land. A dedicated team operating Asia's largest rail network and the world's second largest railway system.

Passing through 8000 stations... across 62,000 route kilometres... bringing together people from every community, creed, caste and conviction.

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Sobhagya/443/89

The nation's fast track for progress.

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One of CMC's most rewarding insights has been to reduce the gap between the possible and

Can't be done. Forget it. You'll fall flat on your face. Get an experienced multinational technical associate. Good, sound, well-meaning advice. Given every time we start on another complex and challenging job. Where would we be if we had taken it.

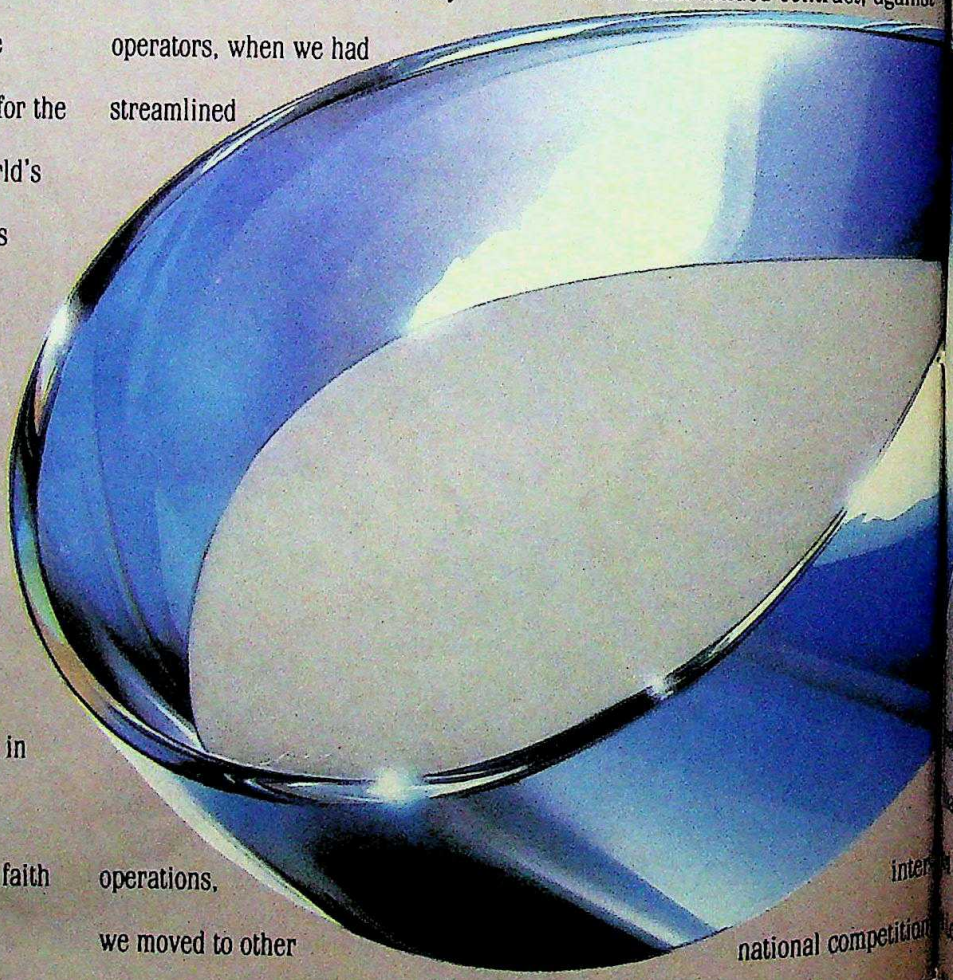
Almost every major job we have done has been a trail-blazer, undertaken for the first time in India.

It started with IMPRESS, the Passenger Reservation System for the Indian Railways, one of the world's largest railways. Indian Airlines carry 10 million passengers a year. Indian Railways carry as many every day. Yes, every day. Indian Airlines got a foreign information technology giant to supply their reservation system. Naturally, everybody's advice to the Railways was to go in for an imported system.

But Indian Railways put their faith in CMC. Could the job be done? Frankly, we never think about these things. We just get down to work.

50,000 passengers a day in Delhi alone. 72 different categories of coaches. 7 classes of accommodation. And 32 different types of quotas. One step at a time. We began by designing an on-line, real-time passenger reservation system for the Delhi area. When that was done, when we had trained hundreds of railway operators, when we had streamlined operations, we moved to other cities. Today, IMPRESS systems are operational in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Bangalore and Hyderabad. We're now setting them up in other cities. And plans to create an all-India network are well underway.

Flash in the pan? Fluke? Hardly. That was just the beginning. In 1988, we made a pitch for a prestigious World Bank-funded contract, against inter-national competition. It was for a real-time Container



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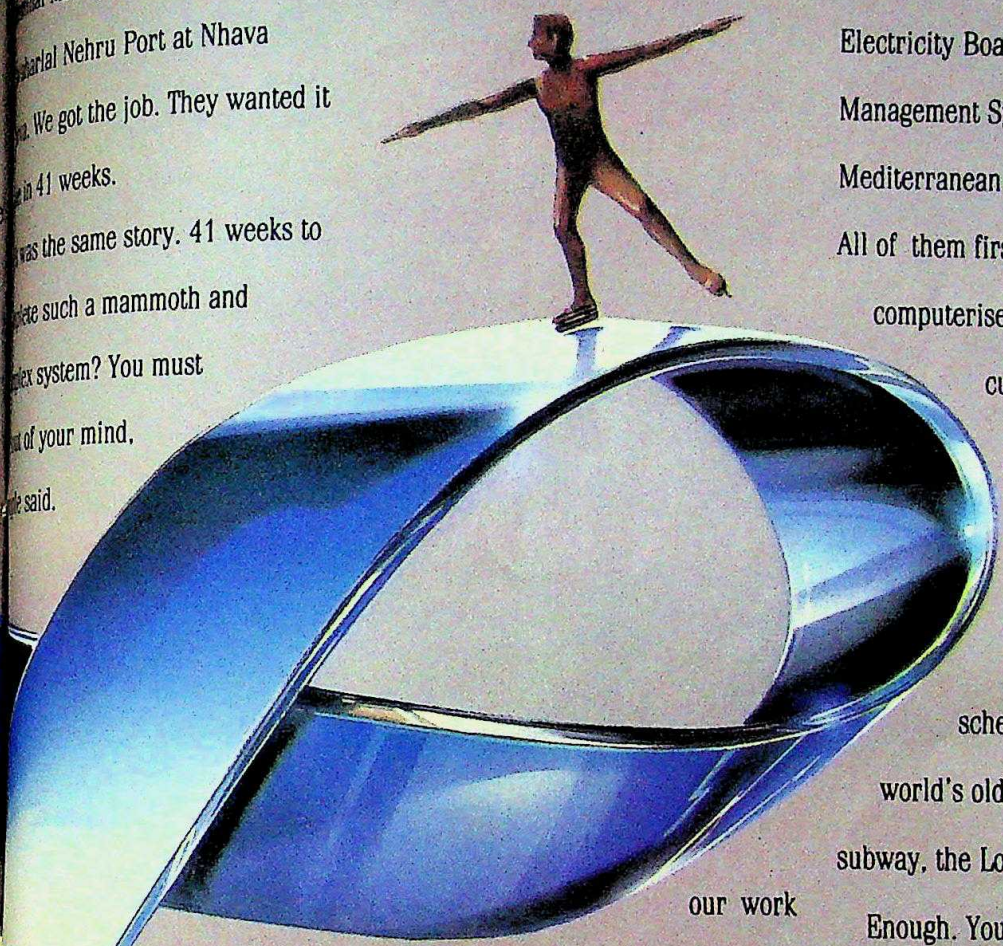
...at leadership is nothing but the infinite patience ...e impossible. Bit by bit. Every single day.

...minal Management System for the ...harlal Nehru Port at Nhava ...a. We got the job. They wanted it ...e in 41 weeks.

...was the same story. 41 weeks to ...plete such a mammoth and ...plex system? You must ...t of your mind.

...e said.



At least our work get some foreign help. We designed it. Entirely by ourselves. In 41 weeks.

The people at the Port of ...ouve in England saw our work ...eva Sheva, and immediately ...d us to design a Ship Discharge ...oded Planning System for them. ...e better proof of the quality of than to get orders from the advanced countries? But for CMC that's no big deal. What we never forget is that our mission is to continually venture into the unknown, into new and unexplored fields.

Take the critical Message Switching Systems we've designed for the Directorate of Civil Aviation. The Load Despatch Systems for the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation and the Tamil Nadu State Electricity Board. The Games Management System for the 10th Mediterranean Games in Syria. All of them firsts. Just like the computerised system we're currently designing for the country's biggest and busiest stock exchange in Bombay. Or the train scheduling system for the world's oldest and most complex subway, the London Underground.

Enough. You've got the picture. Anytime, anybody, whether in India or abroad wants the latest information technology in frontier or traditional areas, we're ready.

Because at CMC we have to prove ourselves every day.

CMC Limited

(A Government of India Enterprise)
1, Ring Road, New Delhi 110 014.

Pratibha/CMC-3/89

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WHAT DO YOU SAY TO YOUR FRIEND ARRIVES

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TO YOUR WIFE WHEN YES A JEEP?

Be prepared: She might just throw up her hands. But then, this man cannot but elicit sharp reactions. He conforms to no known stereotypes: He's at once elegant and energetic, at once urbane and primitive.

Will she be impressed if you tell her how many "Entrepreneur of the Year" awards he's won? Or why he's considered one of the best software designers in the business?

Maybe, may be not. Your job will certainly be easier, though, when he starts talking lovingly about his Jeep. He will confess to be driven by a passion for civilised power. Or his need for a friend whom he can trust through thick and thin. "The Jeep demands so little", he will say, "and gives so much." He might even mention in passing how as a software designer he loves the hard facts of the Jeep's economy (25 paise per kilometer)*.

Soon your wife will realise the obvious: This man has been able to reach for and grab a handful of stars precisely because he's so down to earth.

And be forewarned, she might even demand that both of you go with him for a casual 'chakkar' around town. "After all", she will say ," what are friends for?"

Mahindra
Jeep MM 540
DIESEL

DRIVEN BY A PASSION...FOR COMMON SENSE

*At current diesel prices. Fuel consumption: 15 km/lit. at 40 km/hr under test conditions.

LINTAS MM P7 2537

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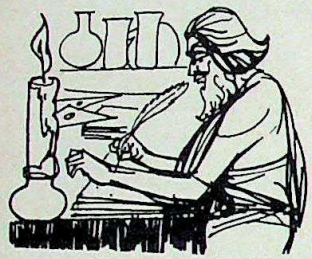
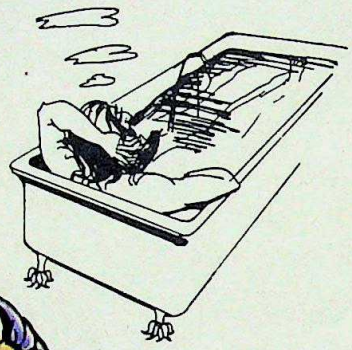
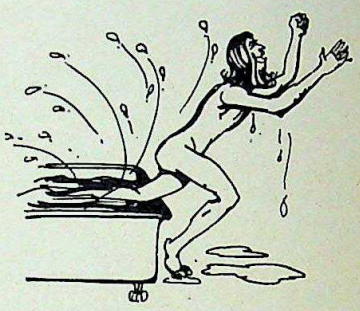
No jumbled words. No rasping. Never ever the phone went dead during last so many months.

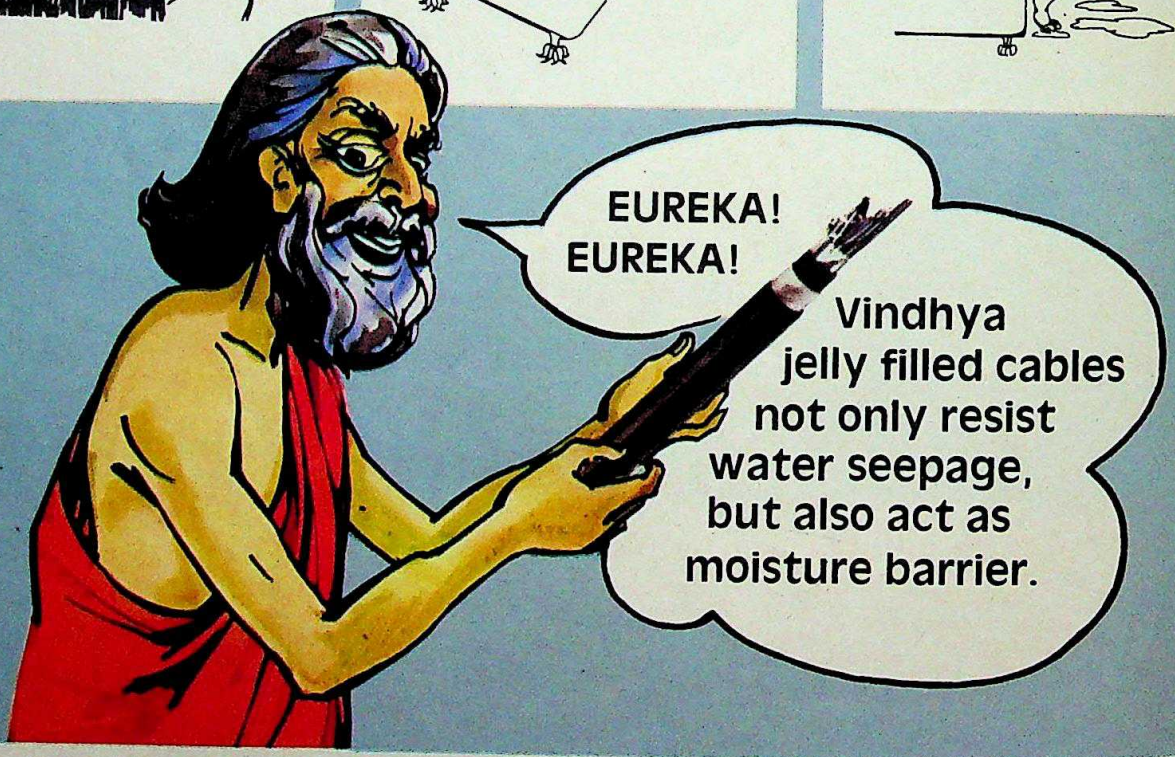


No wrong numbers. No trace of water seepage.



Crystal-Clear communication at all times ... EUREKA EUREKA





AMA-VT-40 X

Manufactured in collaboration with Ericsson Cables AB, Sweden.

Invariably the monsoons upset the telecommunication network in India. For, rainwater seepage has always proved a menace to telephone cables that are laid underground. Now, Vindhya jelly filled telephone cables are here to change the picture.

The jelly filled cables by Vindhya can not only resist the water seepage but also act as moisture barrier. Often the telephone cables are laid alongside the power cables. Here again, Vindhya telephone cables perform an important task of preventing electrical interference from outside.

And therefore, Vindhya jelly filled telephone cables is an obvious choice of the telecommunication industry.

Vindhya Telelinks

JELLY FILLED TELEPHONE CABLES

VINDHYA TELELINKS LIMITED

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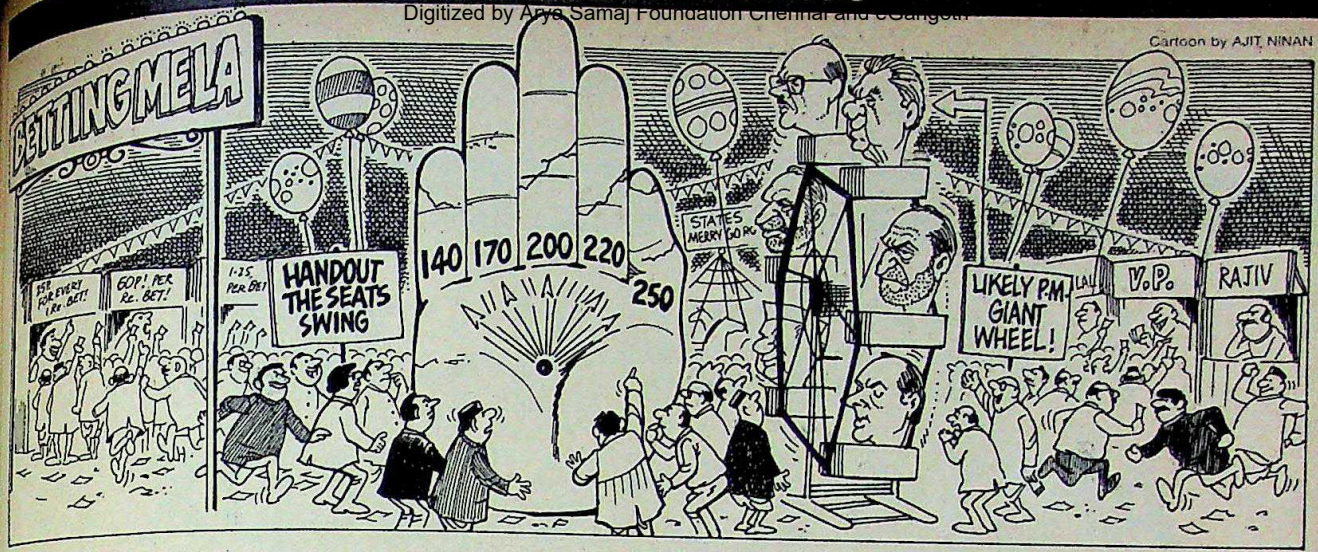

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN

Poll Punting

Elections set off a betting wave

IN Bombay, Sumedh Shah, director of the Professional Management Group (PMG)—the sports feature syndicate—decided to set up a wager. He contacted 40 friends and business associates who agreed to contribute Rs 50 each. The bet: how many seats the Congress(I) would win in the Lok Sabha elections, the winner getting Rs 2,000. Far away, in New Delhi's Sadar Bazar too, some hard betting was on. Wholesale trader Ashok Talwar and 20 other traders wagered Rs 10,000 each, on the number of seats the Congress(I) would win, the winner raking in a cool Rs 2.10 lakh. And in Calcutta's central business district, five leading Marwari industrialists bet Rs 5,000 each on who the country's next prime minister would be.

Suddenly, last month, amid the fever of the elections, the country found itself afflicted by a different sort of disease—wager fever. In backrooms and boardrooms, in media and government offices, businessmen, public sector executives, journalists, civil servants and organised betting industry men furiously placed or accepted bets, ranging from just a few rupees to lakhs, on the outcome of the Lok Sabha polls. And like any stock-market scrip, the wagers reacted to news outside. As newsmen speculated in print and pollsters penned their forecasts, the wagers took note and the odds moved up and down.

Nowhere was this more in evidence than in Bombay, where betting is a major business controlled by a handful of principal operators. No reliable figures exist on the money that changed hands, but punters stood to win or lose lakhs of rupees. With betters widely dispersed, operators made every attempt to be close to the customer. Friendly neighbourhood bookies set up shop in important betting centres. Example: a suburb like Bandra had 14 of them. Each was part of a larger, superbly organised operation. At the bottom of the ladder, the small locality bookie accepted bets and placed them on the bookie who controls the entire area. To cite one instance, Mukesh Malad, who operates from Malad in north Bombay, accepted bets in that region, then placed them with the city's big daddy, Mamma Kamathia. Kamathia is not a mere city bookie; his reach extends far outside Bombay. Punters from Gujarat, Rajasthan and New Delhi phone in with wagers.

The betting began soon after November 2, the last date for withdrawal of nominations. Bets were mostly accepted only for the number of seats the Congress(I) would win. None of the opposition parties merited a bet, according to Inder Kumar Bagadi, a keen observer of the business.

In the first week of November, bookies in Bombay were offering stakes of 20 paise on every rupee bet on the Congress(I) winning 200 seats. Put another way, this meant that bookies would fork out 20 paise on every rupee bet if the punter won. By mid-November, the rates fluctuated wildly. As reports hit the front pages of newspapers that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's meetings were attracting thin crowds, the Congress(I) was hardly a hot favourite. Bookies pay less for favourites and more for the underdog because the underdog's prospects of winning are bleaker. So the odds went up to 60 paise for the Congress(I), and then to as much as Rs 1.25. Clearly, the Congress(I)'s fate had by then been sealed among the punting class. If the betting industry were regarded as a sort of stock exchange, then the ruling party scrip was going pretty cheaply—and its value falling by the day.

At the local level, Murli Deora, the Congress(I) candidate for the prestigious South Bombay seat, was in the spotlight. On election day, punters were wagering 30 paise on every rupee on Deora. He won the elections by a comfortable margin. In contrast, the odds on Congress (I) candidate Gurudas Kamat bagging a seat in Bombay were initially 20 paise. By election day, when his prospects looked none too bright, the odds went up to 90 paise per rupee. Kamat lost the election.

Yet, winning a big pot of gold wasn't always the main consideration. PMG's Shah, for one, said last fortnight that BBC's New Delhi correspondent Mark Tully, *The Times of India* Editor Dileep Padgaonkar, cricketer Sunil Gavaskar, and *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* Editor Behram "Busybee" Contractor had joined a "friendly bet".

Punters' forecasts ranged from Talwar's 180 seats for the Congress(I) to a few Commerce Ministry officials' 190 seats, to a Rediffusion—the agency that handled the Congress(I)'s controversial election advertising campaign—team's more optimistic 250. One Rediffusion executive even predicted 300 seats, according to Shah.

As the poll results started trickling in, bookies began the process of settlement, or *valan* as it is known in local parlance. And immediately after, they started accepting bets on who the next prime minister would be. The candidates in the betting fray: Devi Lal, Chandra Shekhar, V.P. Singh and Rajiv Gandhi. Betting closed on Wednesday, November 29. By then, there were few takers.

—S.N. VASUKI with bureau reports

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REVISED PRE-QUALIFICATION CONDITIONS

LAND FOR 5-STAR AND 5-STAR DELUX HOTELS IN DELHI

DDA is planning to dispose of hotel sites in Delhi/New Delhi for construction, setting and running of 5-Star Hotels/5-Star Delux Hotels with all related facilities conforming to standards laid down by the Ministry of Tourism & Civil Aviation, Govt. of India.

Land will be made available by the DDA with defined terms of tendering/auction/collaboration.

Pre-qualification Notice for Disposal of Hotel Sites

For this purpose it is proposed to draw a select list of renowned professional Hotel Groups with specific background and experience and from parties having collaboration (a tie up) with reputed Indian/international hotel chains possessing adequate expertise in the setting up and running of 5-Star/5-Star Delux Hotels. The parties fulfilling any one or more of the following qualifications will be considered for enlistment :

(1) The Indian 5-Star Hoteliers having atleast one well-known established 5-Star Hotel/5-Star Delux Hotel.
The condition of minimum annual turnover of Rs. 25 crores since deleted.

(2) 5-Star Hoteliers who are foreign based should have at least 5 established 5-Star Hotels/5-Star Delux Hotels in different parts of the world.

(3) Indian entrepreneurs who are having arrangement/ collaboration with the Hoteliers satisfying conditions stipulated above in (1) or (2) or both.

(4) Non-resident Indians who are willing to make investment in the country by arrangement/ collaboration with the Hoteliers satisfying conditions stipulated above in (1) or (2) or both. They would be required to remit foreign exchange for financing the project as required/permissible under the Rules.

The applicants are required to give necessary data in support of their financial soundness, proven track record in any organised industry and trade, standing in the hotel industry, collaboration with the reputed world chains of the hotels and arrangement of financing the project including foreign exchange etc.

The selection will be made from the offers received in response to this advertisement and only those who are found eligible would be allowed to participate in the final tenders/auction/collaboration for disposal of the hotel sites.

DDA reserves its right to exclude any or all the applications without assigning any reasons whatsoever for the purpose of drawing up the select list of eligible hoteliers.

The Bio-data complete in all respects may be sent to the undersigned (by name) by or before 15th December, 1989 either personally or through registered post so as to reach by the due date.

(M.G. GUPTA)
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AYODHYA

Communal Time-Bomb

Dealing with the ominous communal stances that Ayodhya's Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid imbroglio has thrown up will be the most urgent task of the new government. An in-depth account of the subterfuges and bungling that marked the Government's past handling of the potential powder-keg.

A mere hole in the ground, 7-ft long, 7-ft wide and 7-ft deep, may become the graveyard of communal harmony. And the 15,800 sq m plot of land, number 586, in Ayodhya where the hole has been dug has the potential to become a perpetual powder keg setting off communal fires across the country. It has already taken a bloody toll, rekindling Hindu-Muslim tensions in Bhagalpur, Badaun, Kota, Meerut, Varanasi....

The November 9 shilanyas ceremony at Ayodhya only ended Act one of the sordid drama. To the fundamentalists, the communal bloodbath of the last few months matters little. Ashok Singhal, general secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), makes it clear that no amount of blood-letting will stop his cadres from constructing the Ram temple at the controversial site which includes a 16th century mosque. According to the VHP, the shilanyas has taken place at the *singhdwar* (main entrance) and the sanctum sanctorum of the temple will be inside the mosque's building *(see diagram)*. Says Singhal: "If the Government thinks it has been bulldozed into allowing the foundation-stone laying ceremony, we can bulldoze them further. The awakened Hindus will not stop now."

Act two will unfold after the January 26 Allahabad meeting of sadhus, who will decide the future course of action. But Singhal says he already knows their decision: "They are going to demand that the building of the mosque be shifted or a *satyagraha* (agitation) will be launched."

The aggressiveness of the Hindu fundamentalists is understandable. They have tasted blood. On the shilanyas issue, they succeeded in forcing the Government to capitulate. With elections hovering close, the confused Congress(I) leadership let the tension mount to a dangerous point. With Bajrang Dal activists threatening to storm the shrine, the Government did not take any chances. The town of Ayodhya was full of khaki-clad paramilitary forces. The shrine was secured with two barbed wire fences, and sandbags. Expecting trouble, more than 200 Indian and foreign mediamen descended on the spot and recorded the Government's capitulation firsthand resulting in protests throughout the Islamic world, significantly in Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan.

What had heightened the fears of large-scale violence was the VHP's determination to go ahead with the shilanyas and Home Minister Buta Singh's assurance in Parliament a month ago that the Government will not allow any illegal activity in Ayodhya. In a resolution, the Congress(I) had announced that it will go by the orders of the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court on the matter.

On August 14, the five cases dealing with the mandir-masjid legal battle were clubbed together and the high court gave an interim order to maintain the status quo. It said: "The parties to suits...shall not change the nature of property in question." The main parties to the suit were the Sunni Waqf Board, the state Government, Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas represented by Ashok Singhal, former judge and VHP leader Deoki Nandan Agrawal and various Hindu and Muslim priests.

But the VHP declared it would not abide by any court order since it believed the issue went beyond the judicial process. Buta Singh tried to dissuade them from laying the foundation-stone of the temple. The state Government took the view that the proposed site of the VHP

R.K. GUPTA

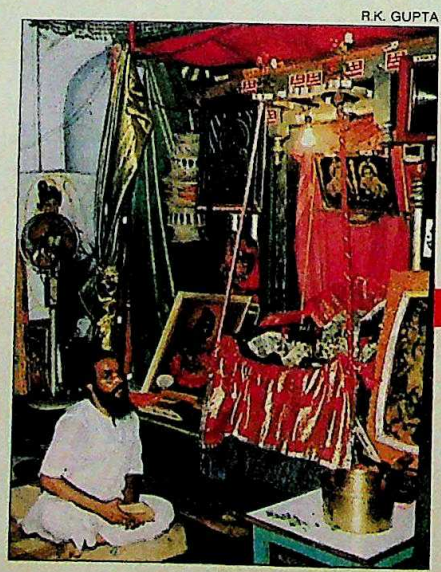
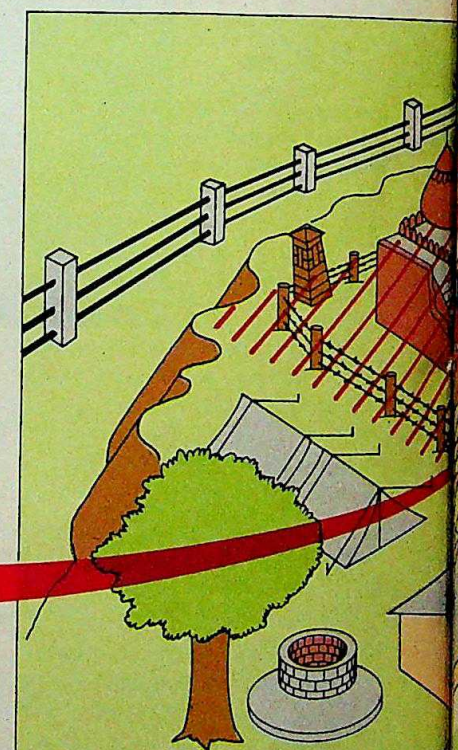


Diagram by B.K. SHARMA



1. Idols inside the shrine.
2. Shilanyas spot.
3. Ram Chabootra.
4. Police post.
5. VHP exhibition.
6. Ram bhajan group.
7. Hanuman temple.
8. Main gate opened in 1986.

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ceremony fell under plot number 586 which was claimed as a graveyard by the Sunni Waqf Board in its 1961 suit and was therefore disputed land. At this point, Buta Singh embarked on a dangerous game of political brinkmanship. But he was up against a wily VHP leadership.

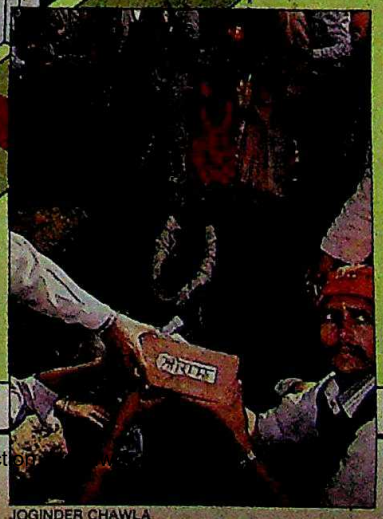
On September 27, Buta Singh, along with the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, N.D. Tiwari, met the VHP leaders to forge an accord. The Government offered the first concession to the VHP by laying down in writing the conditions for the *shilanyas yatra* (procession of consecrated bricks), proposed by the religious leaders. Says Faizabad District Magistrate R.S. Srivastava: "At every meeting with state officials, we had warned that once the bricks were here, the shilanyas could not be averted." But the Government ignored these fears.

Clearly, the Centre and the state governments were bulldozed by the VHP in finding a face-saving explanation by misinterpreting and twisting the high court's order.

Instead, Buta Singh pinned his hopes on an accord with the VHP which gave an undertaking that it would "abide by the directive of the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court given on 14.8.89 to the effect that the parties to the suit shall...not change the nature of the property in question and ensure that the peace and communal harmony are maintained". This document was signed by VHP leaders Singhal, Mahant Avaidyanath, Nritya Gopal Dass and Dau Dayal Khanna in Buta Singh and Tiwari's presence. But once the VHP got the go ahead for the *shila yatra*, the accord for them was a mere piece of paper. About 1.5 lakh bricks landed in Ayodhya in the first week of

THE AYODHYA DEADLOCK

Area demanded by VHP for temple



JOGINDER CHAWLA

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November, increasing the VHP's bargaining power.

The Government now tried to wriggle out by finding legal lacunae in the writ petitions. The Sunni Waqf Board's suit which claimed 23 plots in the vicinity of the mosque did not mention plot number 578 which is in the same area *(see chart)*. So the Government requested the VHP to lay the foundation-stone on this plot. Thus it hoped to placate both communities: the Hindus, by allowing the shilanyas, and the Muslims, by not allowing it on the disputed land.

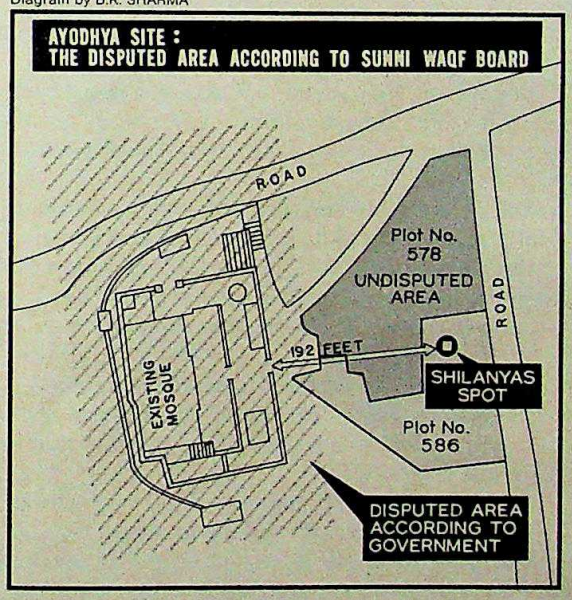
Ram Gopal Dass, who is in possession of this piece of land, was even persuaded by the administration to give the VHP a written invitation to conduct the shilanyas ceremony on the undisputed plot number 578. The VHP initially agreed. But having been given a yard, it now saw the possibility of snatching a mile. It went back on its word. On November 2, Bajrang Dal activists hoisted a saffron flag on plot number 586. Clearly, they intended to conduct the shilanyas there.

JOGINDER CHAWLA

A militant Hindu procession: putting pressure

Wary of antagonising the Hindus on election eve, Buta Singh and other Congress(I) bosses decided not to question VHP leaders for not keeping their word.

Diagram by B.K. SHARMA



THE state Government was taken aback. It again approached the high court and demanded a clarification on whether the spot was technically under dispute. The state counsel pleaded that according to the Sunni Waqf Board's suit, the disputed areas were described by two annexures—a list of 23 plots which included number 586 and a notional sketch map of the site which described the built space as ABCD surrounded by EFGH denoting a graveyard. In its application the Government also said that it considered the spot where the flag had been hoisted to be a disputed one. It stated: "The district authorities have advised the VHP that their actions in hoisting the flags and barricading the land are in clear violation of this court's interim order dated August 14, 1989."

The three-judge bench which comprised acting Chief Justice, K.C. Agrawal, U.C. Shrivastava and S.H.A. Raza, gave a four-page order. On the third page they clearly said that the Sunni Waqf Board suit included 23 plots. They elucidated: "Our injunction should be read to be operating to these plots, more specifically described by letters ABCD, which is included in the larger boundary described by letters EFGH in the site plan attached to the plaint." The order ended by stating: "We clarify that the order dated August 14, 1989, was in respect of the entire property mentioned in the suit, including plot number 586, in so far included within the boundary described by letters EFGH in the site plan." In effect, the order termed contents of both the annexures listing 23 plots and the structure of the mosque as disputed property.

The order again put the Government in a fix. The VHP had already identified the site of the shilanyas and district officials admitted that it was impossible to shift it without bloodshed. Buta Singh asked state officials to carefully examine the order. Chief Secretary Shiromani Sharma in turn asked the State's Advocate General S.S. Bhatnagar to give his opinion and explain the concluding paragraph of the court order more clearly.

Instead of interpreting the entire order, Bhatnagar concentrated on the concluding paragraph, ignoring specific mentions on page three which clearly listed each plot under dispute. He thus introduced a new element: since the notional sketch map was rectangular, the property in dispute too was rectangular—something never mentioned in court. By superimposing the notional sketch map on the disputed area, he formulated an interpretation to bail out the Government. His argument was that, going by the scale of the map, the spot of the shilanyas fell outside the disputed land. Another explanation was that because the adjacent plot 578 was not disputed, the outer boundary of plot 586 too must be beyond the disputed area. So, according to the new interpretation, plot 586 was bifurcated into two parts: one disputed, another undisputed.

Thus, the Government managed to declare as "undisputed" a spot which it had argued was under dispute only a day before in the high court. The Government had given the list of 23 plots which the Sunni Waqf Board laid claim on; the

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district administration's letter had informed the home secretary that the saffron flag was hoisted on "disputed land"; and the Government had itself admitted that the district authorities had told the VHP that hoisting the flag and barricading the area were clear violations of the court's order on which it had sought a clarification. Clearly, the state administration was bulldozed by the VHP into finding a face saving explanation by stretching the court's order.

Predictably, Muslim leaders were outraged. Says Zafaryab Jilani, convenor of the All India Babri Masjid Action Committee (AIBMAC): "It is a mockery of the judiciary. The same Government calls it disputed land on November 6 and undisputed the next day. We will prove that the Government committed contempt of court." According to Jilani, who is also the Sunni Waqf Board lawyer, the Government's tactics of dividing plot 586 into two sections—one under disputed and the other undisputed—was faulty as the plot had not been so decimated in any of the documents earlier submitted to the court. Says he: "There is only one plot 586 which is a graveyard."

Faizabad lawyer, Mohinuddin Ahmed Siddiqui, accuses the district magistrate of not giving Muslims an opportunity to explain their point of view before giving the VHP the go-ahead for the shilanyas. Adds Azam Khan, of the AIBMC: "The courts can only give judgements. It is the executive's work to implement them fairly. The Muslims have been cheated by the Congress(I) Government."

Clearly, the controversy has not died yet. The VHP leadership says that it had put the matter on the backburner only for the duration of electioneering. With the BJP—the only political party openly supporting the hand over of the mosque—getting stronger in the Parliament, it is likely that pressure will be put on the new government too. Says VHP leader and former IPS officer S.C. Dixit: "If the Nehru cabinet could take a decision to rebuild Somnath temple, why can't the present government take a similar decision."

THE further fear is that much of about Rs 30 crore raised by the VHP for the Ayodhya temple can now be diverted to their communal campaign aimed at dividing the two communities. Commented a senior Home Department official in Lucknow: "On this issue, everyone—the lawyers, bureaucrats, teachers, policemen and politicians—is as divided as the Hindus and Muslims. During the judicial proceedings, you can see Muslim and Hindu lawyers sitting on different sides of the courtroom."

Even the three-judge bench saw fit to mention in its order that "it is doubtful that some of the questions involved in the suit are soluble by judicial process". A sign, surely, of how the judiciary is trying to avoid committing itself on the issue. In the process, it is strengthening the VHP's contention that the matter is beyond judicial purview.

The new government is now faced with a tricky situation. It is pitted against the neo-theocrats of the RSS led VHP who are not deterred even by the revolting prospect of digging up a graveyard. Says Singhal: "If there is a graveyard, it should be removed with the mosque."

As the BJP—the only party openly supporting the handing over of the mosque—has emerged much stronger, the issue is likely to simmer and strain the party's relationship with its allies.

Such extreme views of the VHP prove that the problem is beyond solution by negotiation, which V.P. Singh and Janata Dal had been propagating. The Opposition has reaped the electoral fall-out of the controversy with the Janata Dal getting the Muslim votes and the BJP strengthening its position. But more vacillation on the issue will prove dangerous.

The present crisis over Ayodhya is similar to what the country has seen in Punjab. Once again the Government has actively encouraged marginal fundamentalist groups with the intent of embarrassing religiously-oriented political opponents only to end up creating a Frankenstein. The problem is, once fundamentalists get this kind of credibility they acquire larger than life proportions that slowly marginalise the religious parties and threaten their very mentors.

That the last government burnt its fingers by playing ball with religious fundamentalists is abundantly clear. Hopefully, the new government will not make the same blunder. It's first priority must be to put out the fire at Ayodhya so that the heat waves of communal frenzy it radiates does not take the entire nation, and even the new government in its sweep.

—PANKAJ PACHAURI

Countdown to the Shilanyas

January 1885: A Hindu priest asks a Faizabad sub-judge permission to build a temple outside the mosque.

February: Sub-judge disallows construction of temple "since it is so close to existing masjid".

March 1886: The district judge too declines permission.

November: The judicial commissioner dismisses the appeal, saying: "There is nothing on record to show that the plaintiff (the priest) is in any sense the proprietor of the land."

March 1946: A civil judge decrees the mosque is a Waqf property shared by both Sunnis and Shias.

December 1949: Hindus forcibly put Ram's idols inside the mosque. The main gate is locked.

January 1950: The Government takes over the disputed property, but allows prayers by Hindus in a restricted area. The matter is declared sub-judice.

December 1961: The Sunni Waqf Board moves court demanding possession of the mosque and the graveyard around it.

June 1984: The VHP launches Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti with sadhus to liberate the site.

February 1986: The district judge orders the opening of locks, allowing unhindered access to Hindus.

March: The Babri Masjid Action Committee is launched.

February 1989: The VHP and sadhus call for building the temple.

August: The high court issues a directive to maintain status quo.

September: The VHP signs an accord with the Government to abide by the directive.

November 2: The VHP puts up a flag at site termed disputed by the Government.

November 7: The high court clarifies that the site is disputed.

November 9: The Government allows shilanyas at the same site and now calls it undisputed.

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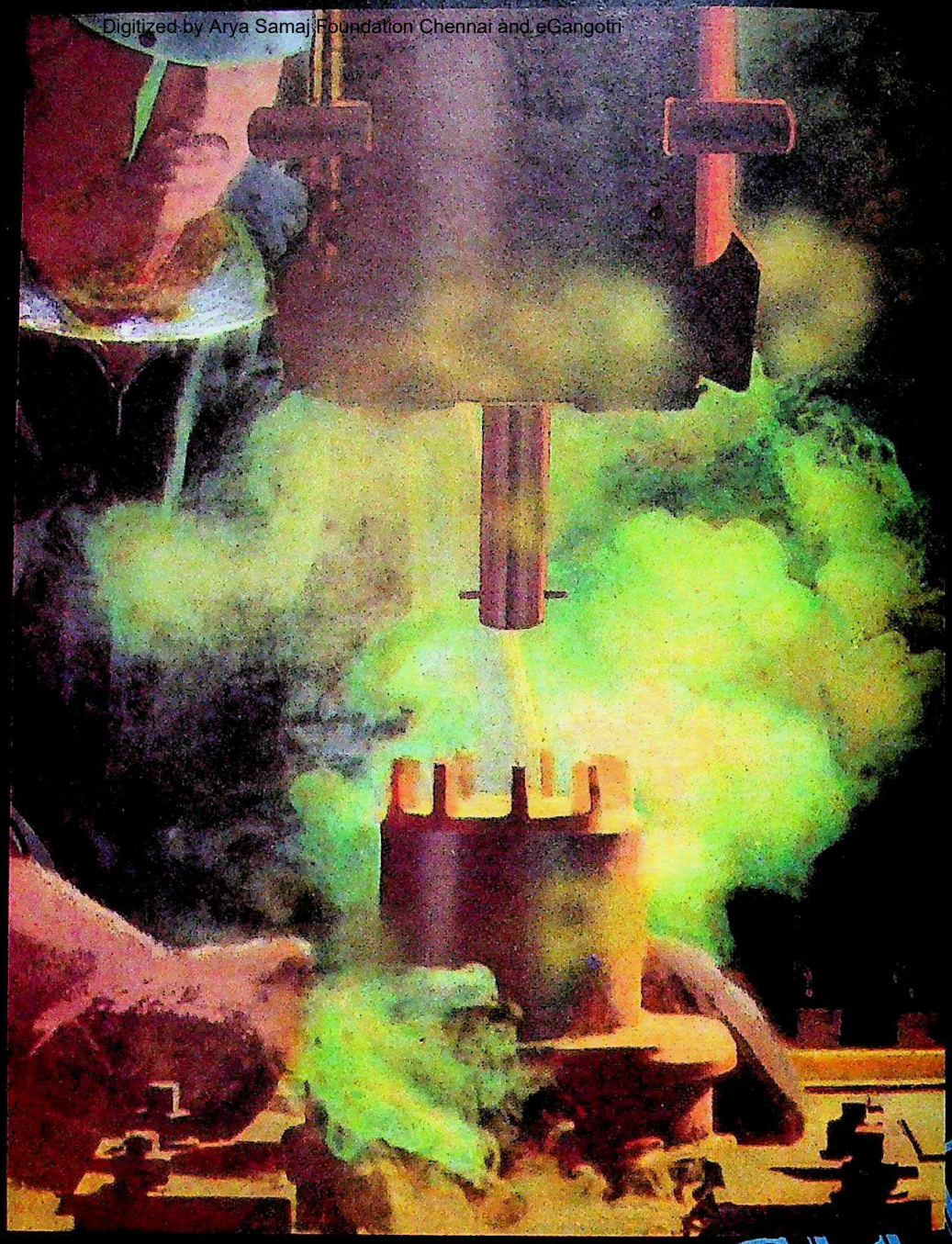

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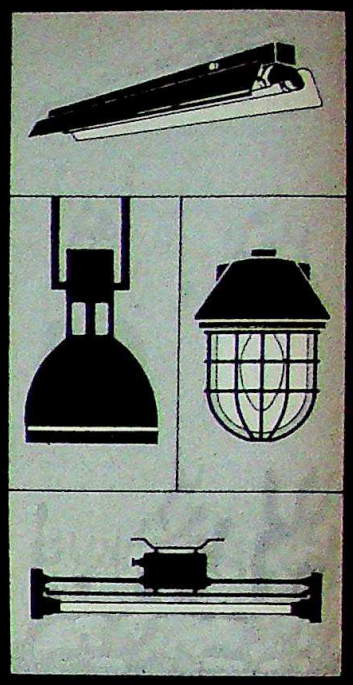

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SRI LANKA

Big Breakthrough

Wijeweera eliminated, but JVP attacks continue

THIS is the kind of breakthrough counter-insurgency forces often dream of but rarely achieve. Last month, the Sri Lankan security forces accomplished the near-impossible: the elimination of the top leadership of the Sinhalese extremist group, Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP). In the most successful offensive since the security forces launched "Operation Liberation" against the Tamil militants in the Vadamarachchi area of the northern Jaffna peninsula in 1987, the JVP has been left nearly leaderless and anchorless.

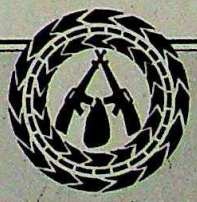
The charismatic founder-chairman of the rebel group, Rohana Wijeweera, 46, was shaving in the morning when commandos of the crack Rapid Deployment Force burst into his new bungalow at Ulapane in central Kandy district. A nervous colonel leading the troops placed a revolver on his head and asked: *"Oyaa Rohana Wijeweeradha?* (Are you Rohana Wijeweera?)" The JVP leader, who went underground in 1983, admitted his identity before he was bundled into a vehicle and rushed to army headquarters in Colombo.

More than 24 hours later, Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Defence Ranjan Wijeratne announced the 'arrest and subsequent death' of the JVP leader. With the possible exception of Wijeratne, none in the Government, including President R. Premadasa, was aware of Wijeweera's arrest until long after his cremation. According to insiders, the President was "furious" when he was informed that Wijeweera had been killed, and ordered a high-level inquiry into his death. At a public function, he later said that the JVP leaders had dug their graves with their own hands by not heeding his repeated appeals to surrender. Incidentally, information extracted from Wijeweera led the army to his deputy, Upatissa Gamanayeke, who too was killed.

While the two killings in less than 24 hours were received with relief by the general public—some even bursting fire-crackers to celebrate—many refused to believe the Government's story.

Yet, it seems that the team assigned to carry out the operation was a highly professional one—they made sure that the JVP leader's pregnant wife and five children remained unharmed. In fact, when the raiding officers were leaving with their prize catch, they advised Wijeweera's wife Chitrani to leave the bungalow since the house was no longer safe. Fortunately, she left hurriedly—for as soon as the news of Wijeweera's arrest spread, anti-JVP killer squads reached the bungalow looking for his family. Later, she made a highly-publicised surrender to the army commander. The President promised her and the children full protection.

Wijeweera: dangerous legacy



Though few believed the official version of Wijeweera's death, most received the news with relief.

According to army officials, Wijeweera 'sang like a canary' after his arrest. Besides betraying the whereabouts of Gamanayeke, he also issued an appeal to the country's youth to give up violence. The video recording of the appeal was shown by the state-controlled television, Rupavahini. Whether it was issued voluntarily or under duress, the appeal was perhaps the last act of the rebel who had led thousands of Sinhalese youth to their death since he launched his abortive insurrection.

Meanwhile, the state media fully exploited the fact that the rebel leader was living in style in his newly acquired bungalow under a false name. For example, it said that Wijeweera who had asked the people to boycott Indian goods and medicines had a stock of Indian drugs and a Sumeet mixer in his kitchen.

Soon, there was concern about the JVP's future. With the death of Wijeweera and Gamanayeke, seven of its nine politburo members had either been captured or killed. One member, Somanwangsa Amarasekara, was still at large. The mantle has reportedly fallen on Saman Piyasiri Fernando, alias Keerthi Wijebahu, till now commander of the Deshapremi Janat Viyapraya—the military wing of the JVP.

It was to display his control over the military wing that he ensured that killings continued despite the set-backs to the JVP leadership. The key question, however, is if he can keep the momentum and reorganise his demoralised cadres. As Food and Agriculture Minister Lalith Athulathmudali said: "As far as the JVP goes, the worst is over."

But for the hapless nation, if there was some relief on the JVP front, bad news came in from elsewhere. Ampara district in the east, recently vacated by the IPKF, was rocked by disturbances. Bloody clashes broke out between the Sri Lankan Army and the Tamil paramilitary forces, raised and trained with Indian help but paid for by the Sri Lankan Government. And as the Sri Lankan Government accused India of interference, and India retaliated with strident denials, it was evident that things were far from getting normal in the north-east despite the IPKF's gradual withdrawal.

In Colombo, however, the attention is now focused on New Delhi. It is widely believed that the new government in India will follow a much softer policy on Sri Lanka and help bail out Premadasa from his continuing discomfiture.

—P. JAYARAM in Colombo

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BHAGALPUR

A Haunted City

In the aftermath of the fierce Hindu-Muslim bloodletting, fearful images of death, destruction and horror continue to haunt the town.

Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR

A scarred eight-year-old Agni Kumari with her mother; and a relief camp

THE town of Bhagalpur, wrote English administrator Francis Buchanan in the first decade of the last century, meant the abode of refugees and was "a very sorry place". Almost 200 years later, the town, with 30,000 refugees of communal mayhem in relief camps, was an even sorrier place—a virtual ghost town.

While the madness appeared to be spent, fearful images of death, destruction and horror continued to haunt the city. Typifying the nightmare was Mallika Begum, one of the few survivors of the massacre at Chanderi where scores of Muslims were killed after being assured of safety. She said with eyes glazed with shock: *"Mera to vishwas uth gaya"* (I have lost my faith). And there was eight-year-old Agni Kumari who lay stunned on her mother's lap in hospital, her face grotesquely swollen after a splinter of a bomb hurled by miscreants in Gaurachakki sliced her cheek.

For days after the 24-day-old curfew imposed by the administration was withdrawn, panic-stricken residents continued with a self-imposed curfew after dusk. And even those who began to creep out of their forced captivity, found themselves emerging into a town split in two parts. But ruled by the same emotions: fear and distrust.

Symbolic of this were rickshaw-puller Mohammed Jahangir of Habibpur, who would not venture into Hindu mohallas of the town, and rickshaw-puller Lallan Sah of Naya Bazaar, who would not go to the Muslim areas. The reason was the same: *"Dar lagta hai"* (I am frightened).

The tragic theme replayed itself when the district administration organised a peace march on November 21. Not only did it fail to draw more than a few hundred people, but it had to be escorted by armed policemen and followed by army jawans in battle fatigue. The processionists refrained from visit-

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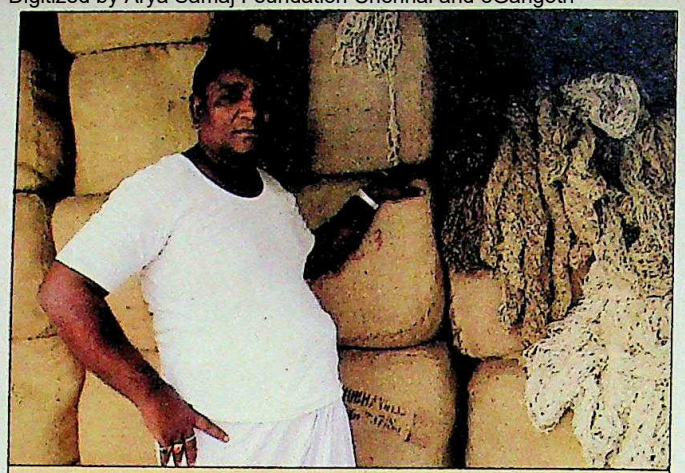
ing Muslim-populated areas. Says businessman Aziz Nasiruddin Khan Mani: "In my relief camp there are scores of widows and at least a hundred children who have lost their fathers in the rioting. It will take a long time to heal the wounds."

And the scars, it is obvious, will remain. Today the victims of the mob fury, who belong to both communities, helplessly survey the ruins of their carefully nurtured lives. Says Mohammad Shameem of Parbatti, whose house and loom were burnt by rioting mobs, in disbelief: "I am the ninth generation of my family living here. In my wildest dreams, I never imagined this could happen to me."

Barely 50 yards away, an agitated B.N. Mazumdar explodes: "Look at what they have done. The Red Cross is sacred even in war, but they did not spare my clinic." Heera Devi and Raju Sah of Maskan-Bararipur search futilely through the debris of their two stalls that were looted by frenzied mobs. Says Heera Devi through her tears: "My husband is blind. This shop was my only means of livelihood."



Mohammed Bahram, a wealthy silk trader, has decided to move to West Bengal.

The 'silk town' of Bihar has been paralysed on yet another score. The weaving industry, which sustained at least a lakh families in Bhagalpur district, is in a shambles. Most of the looms have been burnt while some lie idle as workers have left their homes for safer places.

According to Mohammed Bahram, a prosperous silk trader of Hussainabad, silk worth Rs 15 crore is exported from Bhagalpur. Bahram himself was in New York scouting for export orders when the riots broke out. Says he: "I rushed back home after turning down an order worth a crore of rupees."

Pointing to the bundles of yarn lying in his house, Bahram says: "For one month, no weaver has turned up to take the yarn for weaving. It will take us months to recover." And Bahram has taken a decision. He has decided to migrate to West Bengal for he "cannot live in this lawless state".

Fear continues to prevent Hindu weavers from going to work in Muslim

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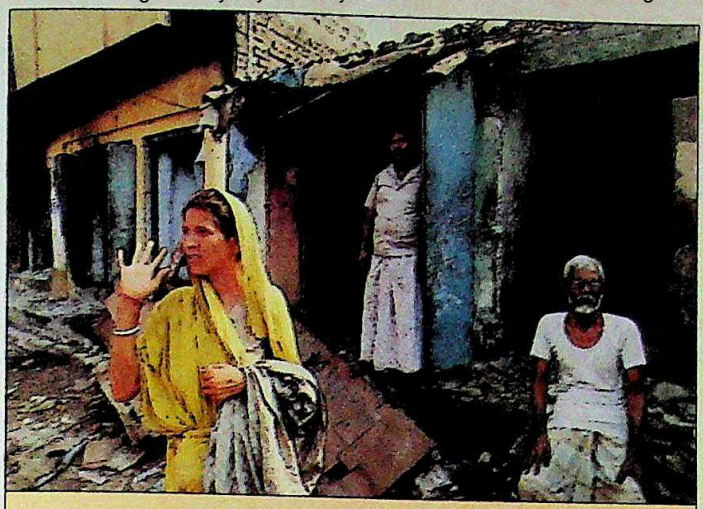
areas. Suresh, who worked for Moeen Ansari of Nathanagar, has not reported for work since October 24, the day the rioting broke out. Similarly, Mohammad Shababuddin at Nathanagar does not know how to start work on his five power looms. Says he: "My workers have disappeared and I have no raw material left. I cannot even go out of the area to collect my dues from traders, mostly Hindus, to whom I sold my stock."

The mutual distrust has got the better of reason. Nearly everyone in the town predicts another round of rioting when colleges reopen. While colleges are not likely to reopen this year, the fear persists—stemming from rumours in circulation that marauders in police uniform had killed hundreds of Hindu students.

The SP of Bhagalpur, K.S. Dwivedi, describes the stories as baseless. Says he: "The rumour that gangsters were caught in police or army uniforms is totally false. What may have happened is that we had given police escorts to many Muslims. This may have sparked off the rumours. I have personally talked to at least a dozen students who were said to have been hacked to pieces. However, I do not rule out a few students having fallen victims." But the administrators admit that even legitimate absence of students from college could lead to suspicion and unwarranted tension.



After rioters looted her shop, Heera Devi has lost her sole means of livelihood.

Questions have also been thrown up about the SP's indirect complicity in the violence that ravaged the town. According to residents, the police's eye remained shut to the orgy of arson and rioting triggered off by the October 24 bomb attack on the Ram Shila procession. Dwivedi, who was deserted by his bodyguards when the crude home-made bombs were thrown, gave instructions to the police to open fire on the crowd. Later, sceptical of the Muslims' claim to innocence, the SP arrested professionals such as Naseemul Haque, a professor of physics, and Kaleemur Rahman, a medical practitioner, on the ground that bombs had been recovered from their houses.

BRING HOME THE LEADER VIDEOCON

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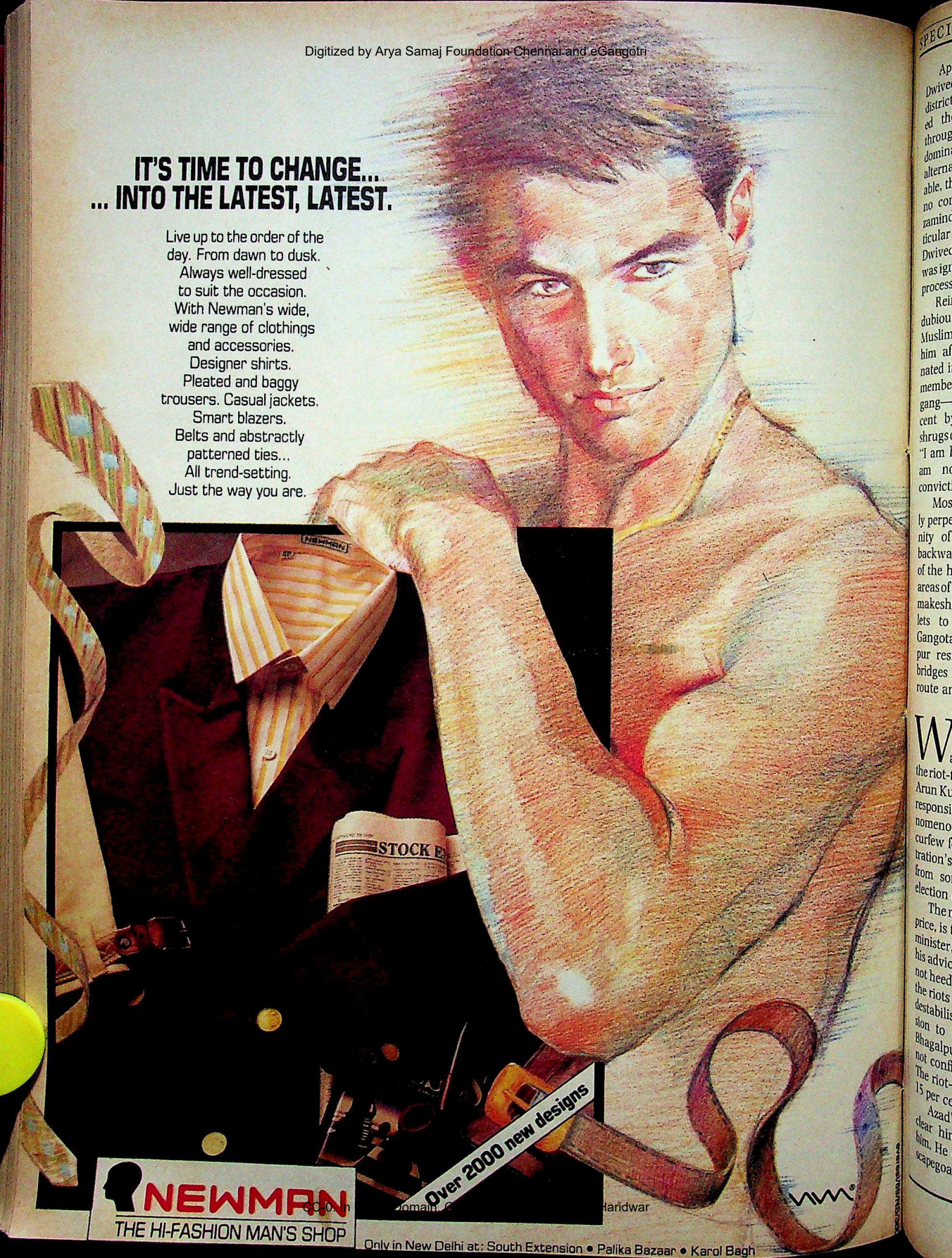

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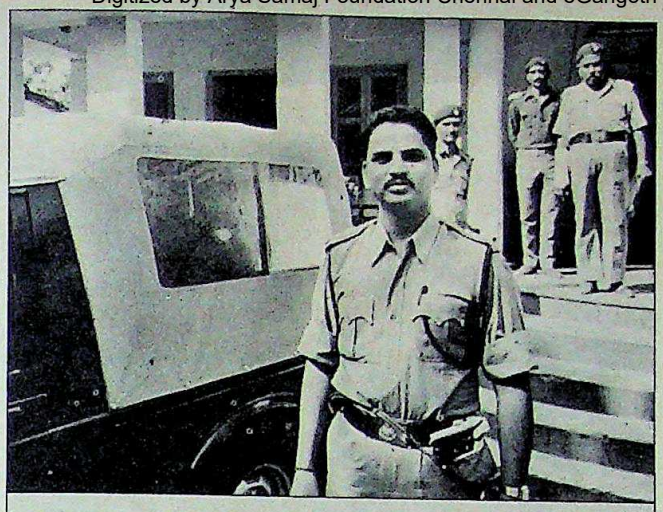
Apparently, it was on Dwivedi's insistence that the district administration allowed the procession to go through sensitive Muslim-dominated areas. Though an alternative route was available, the administration said no community could have zamindari rights over a particular stretch of road. Dwivedi, of course, claims he was ignorant of the route the procession was to take.

Reinforcing Dwivedi's dubious role was the anti-Muslim label tagged on to him after the police eliminated in July eight so-called members of the Samua gang—believed to be innocent by Muslims. Dwivedi shrugs off this charge, saying: "I am here for policing and am not bothered about religious convictions."



Police chief Dwivedi's role in the riots has been dubious, raising several questions.

Most of the violence was apparently perpetrated by the criminal community of Gangotas—belonging to the backward caste—who live on the banks of the holy river Ganga. And in many areas of Bhagalpur, the people have built makeshift bridges over canals and rivulets to facilitate the movement of Gangotas into the town. Says a Bhagalpur resident, Aloknath Ghosh: "The bridges have become both an escape route and an offensive mechanism."

WITH tension palpable, the decision to hold elections predictably confounded the people of the riot-torn district. Says schoolteacher Arun Kumar Mishra: "The election was responsible for the unprecedented phenomenon of the town being put under curfew for 24 days." And the administration's decision to withdraw forces from some areas for deployment on election duty further sparked off panic.

The man who is likely to pay a heavy price, is the sitting MP and former chief minister, Bhagwat Jha Azad, who claims his advice to the state Government was not heeded. Says he: "I am certain that the riots were part of a grand design at destabilisation." But he justifies the decision to hold the polls, saying: "The Bhagalpur Lok Sabha constituency is not confined to only Bhagalpur town. The riot-affected areas comprise about 15 per cent of the electorate."

Azad's anxiety stems from a need to clear himself of the charges against him. He claims he has been made the scapegoat for the rioting. Cartoons and graffiti reviling him have come up all over the town. Ironically, the wrath of both communities has been unleashed on him. The Hindus feel Azad interceded on behalf of Muslim gangsters. Says a nurse scathingly: "*Woh to Jha ke naam par kalank hai*" (He is a blot on the image of Maithil Brahmins).

The Muslims, on the other hand, are convinced that men close to Azad—Kameshwar Yadav and Mahadev Singh—fomented the violence. Neither Yadav nor Singh, they point out, has been arrested, despite their open encouragement to the rioters. While Yadav was said to have organised the violence,

Both communities are angry with sitting MP and former chief minister Bhagwat Jha Azad.

Singh, a businessman, is said to have financed it. Says M. Aneesur Rahman Quasmi: "Tension in the town had been brewing. Slogans like '*Gau hamari mata hai/ mian usko khata hai*' (The cow is our mother, but the Muslims eat it) were being raised. And the final straw came when the administration could not even prevent the release of Yadav who had been arrested in August for inciting communal violence."

The district officials' claim that both Yadav and Singh are 'absconding' does not cut ice with the people. Pressured by the mounting criticism, the administration has instead arrested businessman Puranmal Bajoria for making inflammatory speeches.

Amid all the bloodletting, there were scenes of Hindu-Muslim amity. Says Parvez Ahmed, the town Youth Congress(I) president who lost his mother, aunt and a servant in the carnage: "Many Hindus helped us. Families of Munna Singh, Pratibha Sinha and Sanjeev Jha went out of their way to shelter many of us. And Munna Singh himself met the police and told them we were hiding in his house. But no help was forthcoming from the police. And when the mob came there was little that our Hindu friends could do."

Clearly, the anguished town needs the healing touch. But none is in sight and politicians have shied away from relief measures. Rajiv Gandhi's announcement at a poll meeting in Patna that Bhagalpur would be placed under the army seemed to instil some confidence among the people. The officials, however, had no clue how the process could take place. Said an official: "Unless martial law is declared, the army cannot take over the powers of the civilian authorities."

Meanwhile, the Yadavs, who fled Jamaalpur when a mob burnt the village, are returning to harvest the standing crop. Others are also leaving the relief camps. But life in the town remains paralysed, with buses continuing to avoid the town and Muslims scared to use the few public transport available. The memory of the communal fire that took a toll of over 200 lives is an agony etched in their minds. And Bhagalpur seems destined to burn with suffering in the days to come.

—UTTAM SENGUPTA

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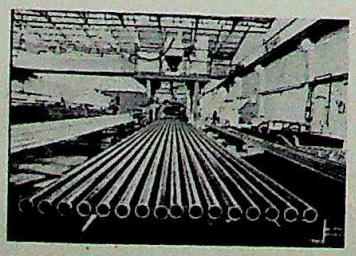

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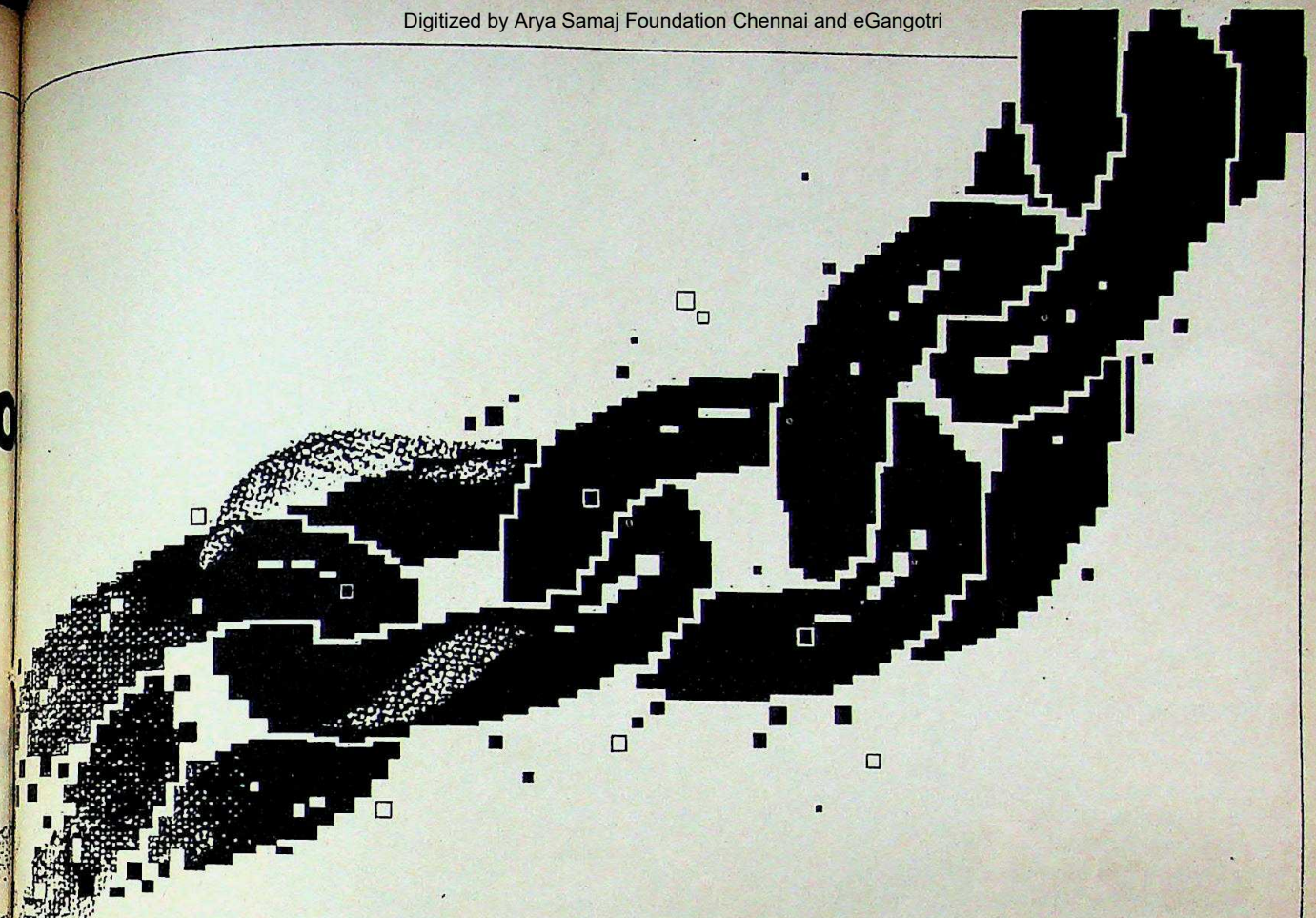

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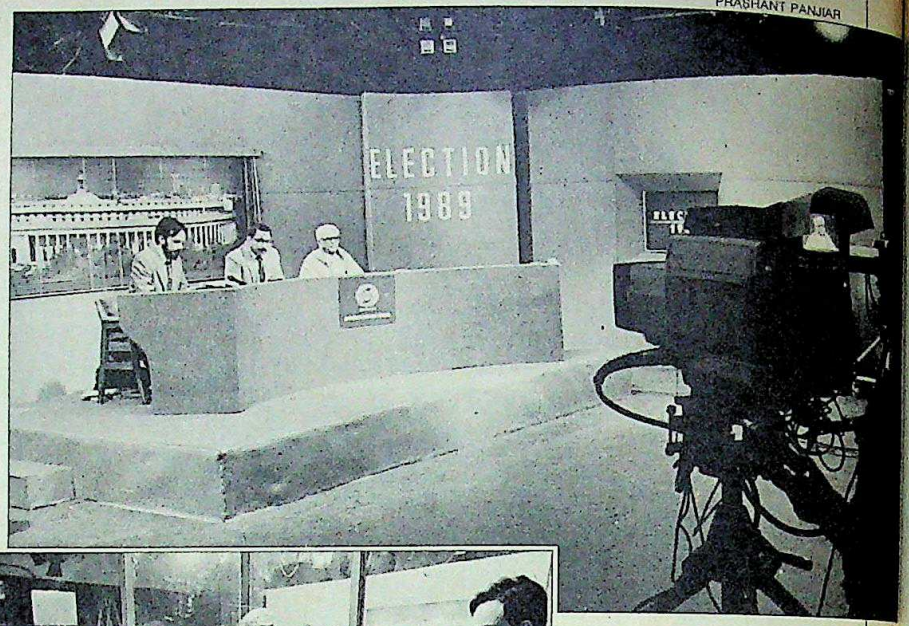
DOORDARSHAN

Winning Top Billings

TV poll show enthrals

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Roy, Dua, Karunakaran; and (left) the backup team

AS the election results poured in, the biggest winner was the medium that brought the message. By Doordarshan's shoddy standards, it was breathtaking. The high-tech news show anchored by Prannoy Roy not only had the numbers rolling in fast and slick, it took the nation right to where its history was being made, looking over the shoulders of party bosses and shooting questions at them, swift and sure. Suddenly, a captive propaganda machine flipped to become the eyes and ears of the people.

Viewers loved every moment of it, as interviews crisply followed panel discussions after spot reports that followed results. After the weak-kneed censorship which had opposition parties boycotting poll broadcasts just three weeks earlier, it hardly seemed possible that an Ajit Singh could sit there in the studio and tell an Anand Sharma that Bofors at any rate would not be part of a National Front government's programme. Roy pulled no punches. Even trenchant government-baiters like Ram Jethmalani were handed a live mike. And there was Janata Dal leader Yashwant Sinha accusing Doordarshan—on Doordarshan—of suppressing the news of Chandra Shekhar's victory.

In these uncertain days, history was made on the small screen. When L.K. Advani said his party would not ally with the Congress(I) because the BJP was determined to finish dynastic rule, commentator Pran Chopra pounced on that as a message that if the Congress(I) dumped its chief, the BJP would back it. That was soon on BBC news. Then there was B. Shankaranand of the Congress(I) making obsequious overtures to CPI(M) leader Harkishen Singh Surjeet in the studio. From the anchorman came vignettes like: "Ajit Singh's supporters are trying to persuade him to become the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh." Suddenly, prognosis had become part of Doordarshan's vocabulary.

The programme, for which Roy had been preparing since June, kept two steps ahead of Doordarshan's parallel bulletins by declaring leads as counting progressed, instead of waiting for final results. Studio two—the Delhi centre's biggest—was a beehive as dozens of youngsters bustled around phones, teleprinters and computers behind the bank of five cameras. Roy's wife Radhika kept him informed of upcoming graphics and OB link-ups through a ear-phone. The team worked like a well-oiled machine. A round table in one corner became the epicentre during breaks, as key team members joined Roy to format the next show ("Mathews hopes to have Chenna Reddy at 18:40. Shall we use that first or this recording of N.D. Tiwari? And, Itu, that map didn't work. Could you darken the shading?"). Hindi interpreter and co-anchorman Vinod Dua paced the floor, working out his lines, and political heavyweights gingerly mounted the set while Director-General Shiv Sharma and Advisor (Information & Broadcasting) Suman Dubey kept an eye.

Roy seemed the only one not bowled over by the show, giving it "six out of ten". He had wanted five times as many reporters in the field to feed a round-the-clock telecast. But that would have cost the earth. Already, Doordarshan had spent Rs 2.7 crore (Roy's share: Rs 16 lakh).

"This is the largest thing we've done so far," said Additional Director-General (News) Shashi K. Kapoor. About 3,000 of the staff were involved. Top-notch producer Abhijit Dasgupta—of Reliance Cup coverage fame—was brought from Calcutta. At a cost of about Rs 2 crore, 97 hot lines were hired to link the nerve-centre master switch room with state capitals, chief election officers and key constituencies, allowing "hot switching" to 15 outdoor broadcast vans with reporters across the country.

Roy had brought in Paul McKee, former deputy chief executive of the British Independent Television News, for a workshop with Doordarshan engineers and reporters on November 17 and 18. Over the next 10 days, some of the reporters—from among Bhaskar Ghose's crop of 'glasnost' recruits—became overnight stars. That they delivered so competently puts Doordarshan on test. Having tasted blood, the viewer wants more. Madhu Dandavate spoke for the nation as he closed the show with the hope that next time they would meet on an autonomous medium. —DAVID DEVADAS

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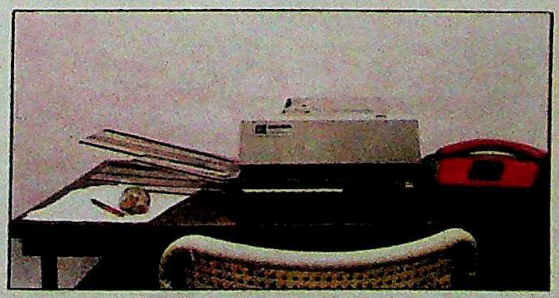

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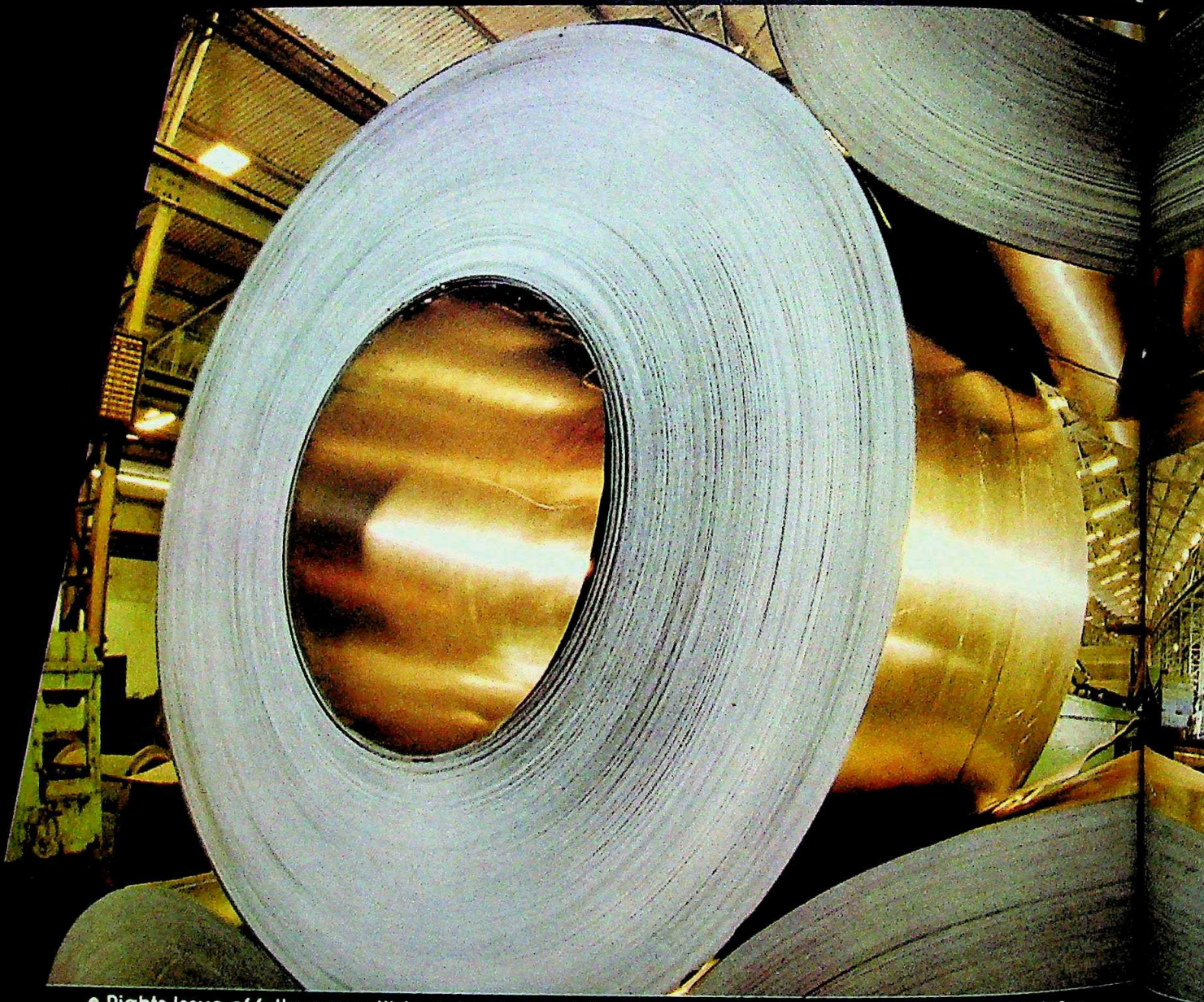

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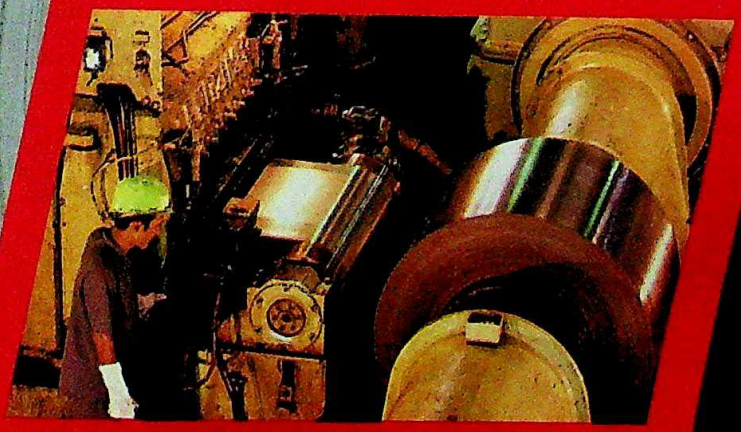

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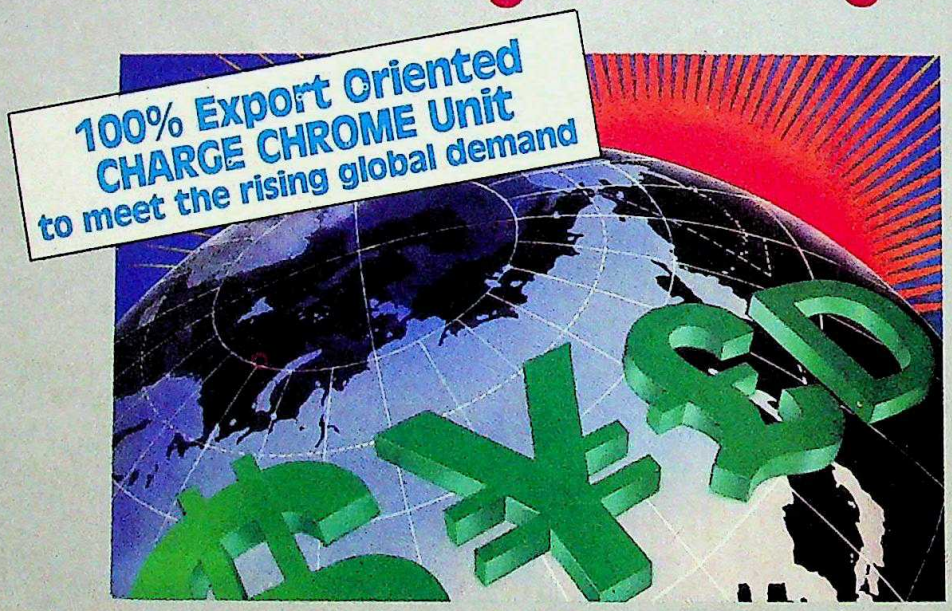

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Promises to Keep

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If the protestations of the Janata Dal, the National Front and BJP are taken at face value, yes. All this and heaven too.

Steeped as the two Indian communist parties are in the Stalinist mould, such bourgeois freedoms are of little importance to them. The CPI makes a bow to an autonomous corporation for radio and television under parliamentary supervision as the last point of its 33-point manifesto. The CPI(M) treats the subject with contempt; it does not figure anywhere in its 16-point manifesto.

Manifestos traditionally luxuriate in promises, their ringing tones promising all things to all men. The Editors Guild of India, therefore, decided to test the parties and asked them to stand up and be counted.

Each major party was asked six questions. Was it for one or more autonomous corporations for radio and television, and for separate channels for states to be run as corporations? Should the implicit freedom of expression be made explicit? Should there be a freedom of information act? Should there be a drastic revision of laws on defamation, official secrets and contempt of court? Should there be a non-official mechanism for deciding newsprint policy? Should a non-official agency determine the policy and procedures for placing government advertisements?

The Congress(I) greeted the guild's questions with total silence. Predictably, the two communist parties did not want to indulge in such games. Media for them are tools of the party in power, and of "progressive forces" where it is not. The Janata Dal replied enthusiastically. The National Front sent the four paragraphs contained in its manifesto without bothering to answer the questions posed. The BJP was specific in its response while referring to its manifesto.

As far as promises go, one could not have asked more from the Janata Dal. "Within one year of assumption of office by the new government", it promises to: establish autonomous corporations for radio and television under a parliamentary charter supervised by an independent board of governors; enact a freedom of information act; remove curbs on free debate which is at present inhibited by arbitrary notions of parliamentary privilege and contempt of court laws; remove harassing requirements for journalists' presence in courts; hold the electronic media accountable for defamatory statements; give priority to domestic newsprint production and curtail duty on newsprint; permit direct import of newsprint by newspapers; appoint regular wage boards for journalists.

The Janata Dal signs off its "declaration on the media" with a flourish: "With us a free press and an autonomous electronic media are not a matter of policy. They are a faith, a commitment." Bravo!

As behoves its image, the BJP is more pithy and to the point. It is for separate, autonomous corporations for radio and television. It would consider whether there should be separate channels at state levels. It is for specifying freedom of the press and for a freedom of information law. It wants a radical revision of defamation, official secrets and contempt laws. It opposes STC monopoly on newsprint imports and is for duty reduction. A non-official commission should oversee personal appearance in courts.

Highly satisfying as these protestations are, where do they take us? Newspapermen are a hard-boiled lot, though given to emotional reactions in stressful moments such as during elections. In the cold light of the post-election scenario, scepticism reigns. The non-Congress-ruled states are not shining examples of a keen desire to uphold the canons of a free press. If the Janata Dal's media declaration was to be placed next to the performance of the Dal-ruled Haryana, it would be a strange juxtaposition.

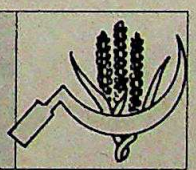
Editors' expectations are, therefore, pitched low. There will perhaps be autonomous corporations for radio and television. How truly free they will be is another matter. The cynics will say the one-year time limit the Janata Dal has given itself to transform the state-owned media, is a safe bet as the party's life span could be shorter.

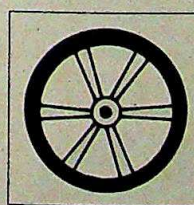
But the guild's exercise is well worth the candle. It takes the debate one stage further in talking about specifics, rather than general principles subject to varying interpretations and waffle.

Whatever final shape the new government takes, there is a new bench-mark to assess policy. But it is well to remember that even the Janata Dal talks of a free press and autonomous electronic media and it retains the Congress Government's unhealthy addiction to wage boards for journalists as to the welfare of smaller newspapers.

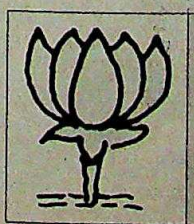
The Congress(I) greeted the Editors Guild's questions on media freedom with total silence.

For the communists, media freedom seems to matter little.





The Janata Dal insists that a free press and autonomous electronic media are a "matter of faith".



The BJP is for separate and autonomous corporations for radio and television.

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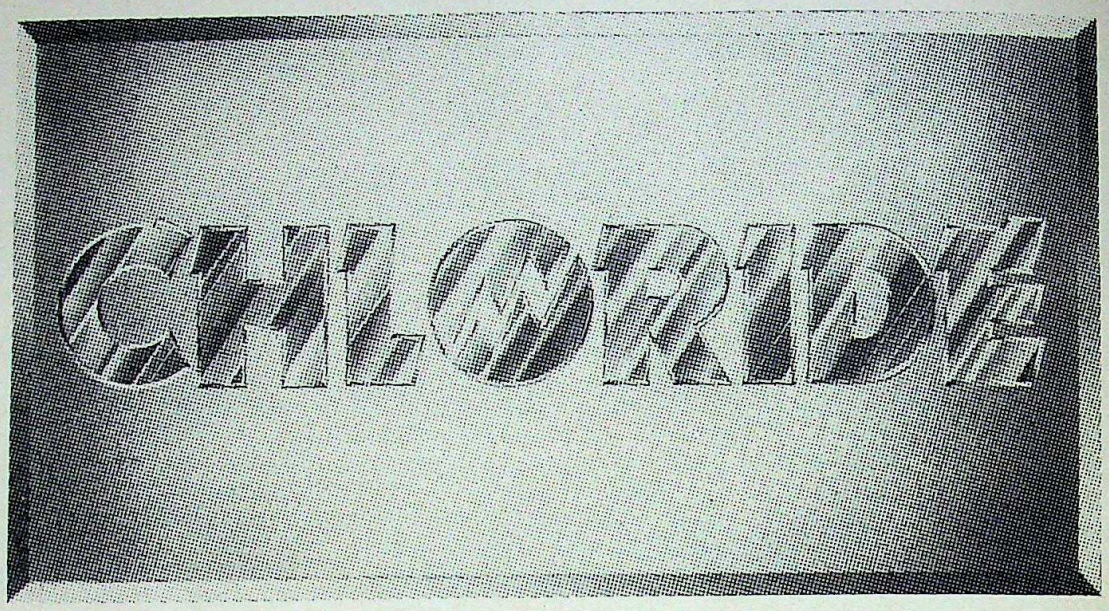

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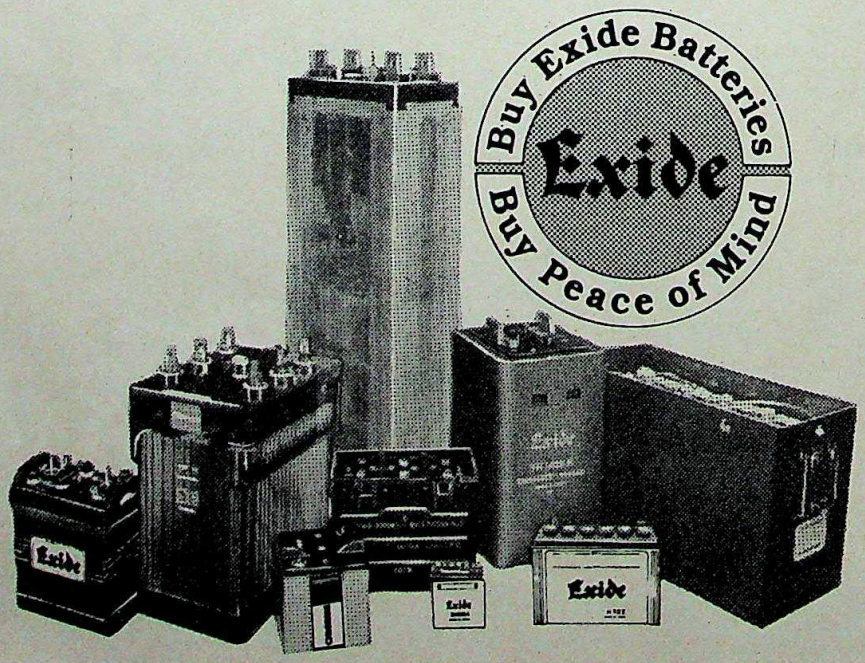

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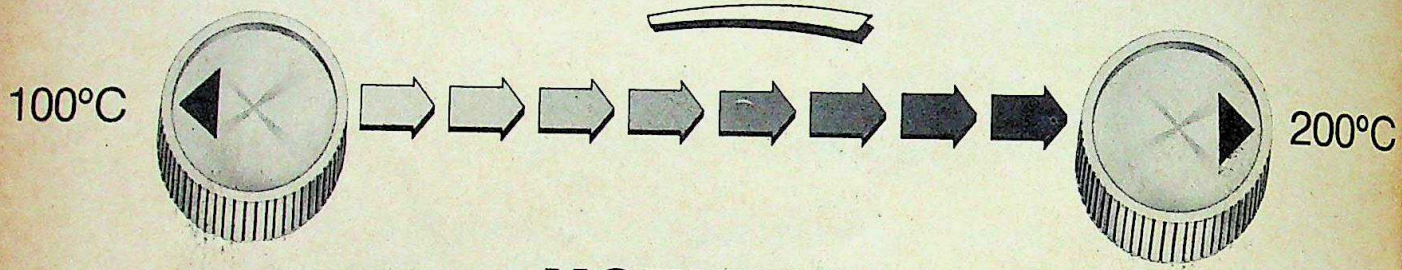

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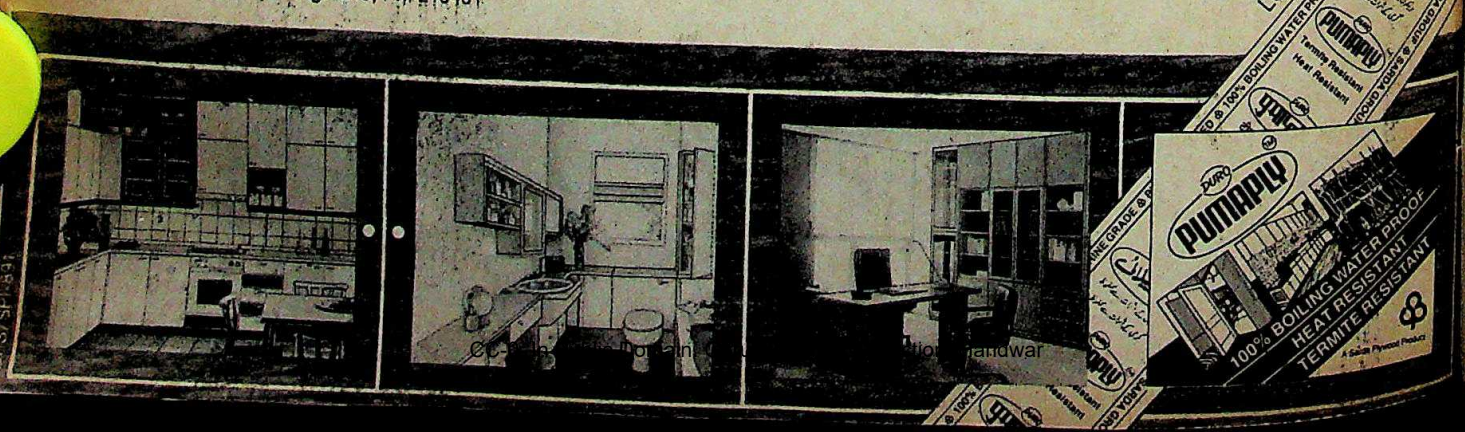

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ATHLETICS

On the Right Track

Meet throws up hope for Indian track and field

SUDDENLY, 30,000 people were on their feet. Electrified, they watched a slim, dark figure surge forward like an unstoppable stallion. A huge roar swirled around the vast stadium as, inch by gritty inch, Arjun Devaiah, 26, his sinewy legs pumping rhythmically, head thrown back, teeth clenched, closed the gap between himself and the Japanese, Y. Tachi, during the last lap of the 4x400 m relay. Then, like a concert of human power and speed, the two blurred at 30 km an hour, until Tachi simply hurled himself across the finish line. And the crowd erupted.

Indian athletics came of age last fortnight amid the pageantry of the eighth biennial Asian Track and Field Championship in New Delhi. Long used to being a poor cousin of cricket and hockey, athletics made a spectacular splash this time, dominating the sports pages for five consecutive days even as an India-Pakistan cricket Test was on. Suddenly, people were talking about batons and hurdles instead of wickets and maiden overs. Outside the stadium even members of the Indian men's relay team, whom no one seemed to have known earlier, were being mobbed for autographs much in the fashion of the cricket stars. Taxi-drivers asked whose election symbol the butterfly mascot was, and three-year-olds lined up pillows before their TV sets to do hurdles.

The crowds that streamed into the stadium were knowledgeable about the sport. At the first permit meet at the same stadium a year ago, national high jump champion N. Annavi had looked despairingly at spectators who didn't recognise him. This time, they were roaring in approval.

And no wonder. The harvest of seven gold, nine silver and six bronze medals was India's best ever at an Asian championship. It was far smaller than the haul of Asia's reigning champions, China—43 medals, 22 of them gold—but undoubtedly, India stood head and shoulders above the rest.

After three years of humiliation, Usha re-established her reign as queen of the Asian track.

▼ **P.T. Usha, 26**
Best Asian woman athlete. Golds for 400 m (51:9 sec), 200 m (23:27 sec), and 400 m hurdles (56:14 sec).

▼ **Bahadur Prasad, 24**
Best male athlete in Asia. Gold in 1,500 m (3:45:77) and a silver in 5,000 m (13:58:93).

Bahadur's string of successes marks a revival of India's traditional middle distance strength.

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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FOR SOME MEN A FAULTY TIE-UP COULD STRIP THEIR IMAGE TO SHREDS.

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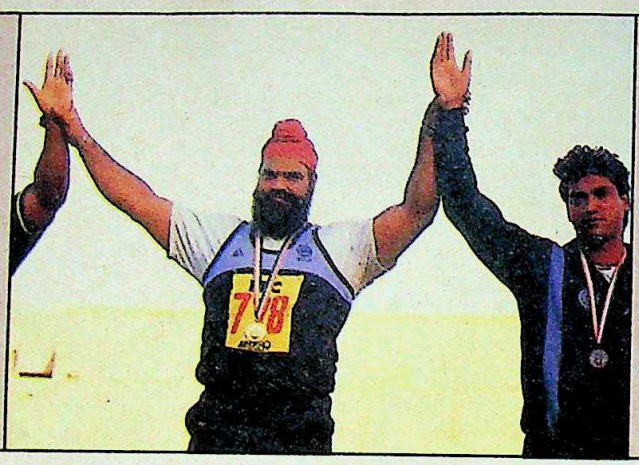
▶ Balwinder Singh, 28
Shot put gold (18:16 m)

With a little more effort, the veteran could well be in the running for a medal at the next Asiad.



Throwers mature late and at his age, the consistent improvement he has shown signals a bright future.

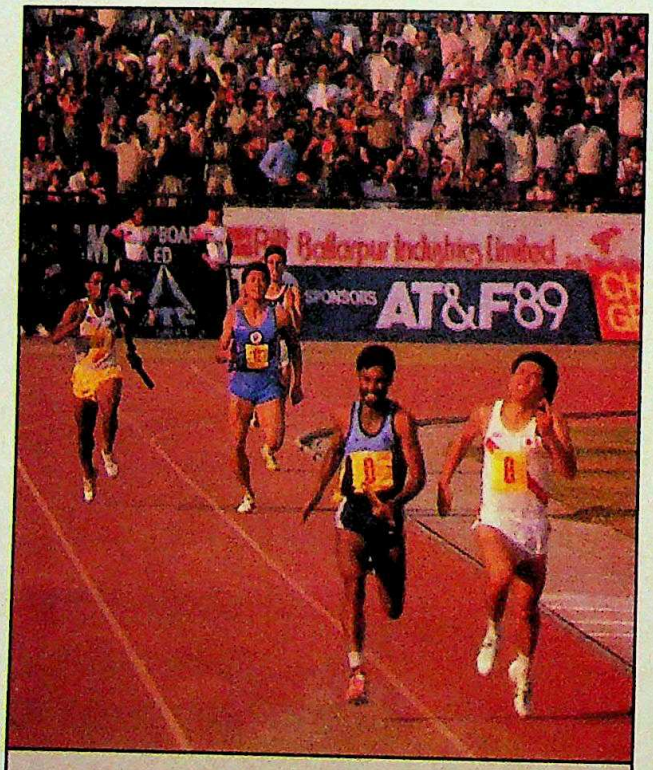
◀ S.D. Eshan, 23, shot put bronze (17:71 m)

A resurgent P.T. Usha dominated with her insuperable grace, power and speed. She set a new meet record in the 400 m (51:9 seconds) and 200 m (23:27), followed to the silver by Shiny Wilson in the first event and Ashwini Nachappa in the second—both running their best timings to date. And, unexpectedly, young Kavita Garari, who was unknown till the meet, chipped in with a silver in the 10 km walk.

But the real surprise came from the Indian men. If the award for best woman athlete went to Usha, the best male athlete of the meet was the pleasant railway ticket checker, Bahadur Prasad, 24, who brought in a gold in the 1,500 m and a silver in the 5,000 m. In the metric mile, he was closely followed by team-mate Ram Niwas, an equally promising runner. In the past India had always had one or two good middle distance runners at the Asian level till the the drought of the past half-decade. The breach is now seemingly being filled. What is even more important, Ram Niwas and Bahadur are so close in their performances and capabilities that they provide each other ample competition, something Usha could have done with in the women's sprints.

The sensation of the second day was havildar Dina Ram, who put on a heroic burst after the water pit in the last lap of the 3,000 m steeple chase. Carried on the wings of wild cheering, he swept past Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Al Dosari and Qatar's Mohammed Salimene, straight to the gold. Balwinder Singh's shot put (18.16 m) was enough to fetch another gold. The favourite, Ma Yongfeng of China, was relegated to fourth place while S.D. Eshan of Bangalore took the bronze medal with a throw of 17.71 m.

As it turned out, medals were not the most encouraging feature of the meet. In any case, this meet, at which not a single Asian record was broken, by no means establishes Asian dominance. What it did prove was that the improvements at recent domestic meets were neither flashes in the pan nor manipulated timings. And it made obvious that India is in contention for at least a few golds at the Beijing Asiad, which seemed pretty doubtful just a few months ago.



▲ Arjun Devaiah, 26, anchor of the silver medal winning 4 × 400 m relay team (3:07:22 sec: new national record)

Devaiah's spectacular effort in the last lap was the toast of the meet, showing that Indian men can still sprint.

Most encouraging is the systematic, target-oriented approach of some of the athletes. Bahadur Prasad and Ram Niwas should have come off the tracks elated at having won the 1,500 m gold and silver. Instead, they were shaking the sweat and the unhappiness off their faces: "It was a bad race. We ran for the medals, not the best timing." The dissatisfaction with their performance was heartening—a sign that India's athletes are now looking beyond the medals—to the challenge of Asia's best.

The meet also revealed a new responsiveness—both positive and negative—of athletes towards their coaches. An angry Bahadur Prasad insisted he was not going to work with any coach but his mentor, Hargobind Singh. "If Usha can have her personal coach, so can I," he declared. But Devaiah was all praise for his coach: "(Uday) Prabhu sir had worked so hard for me. Just for him, I had to run despite my injury." There is also far greater depth in such events as the shot put. Said shot putter Bahadur Singh: "At the 1982 Asian Games here, I was the only one doing 18-plus metres. Now there are four of us."

India's athletics records, some of the most endurable in the world—a dubious

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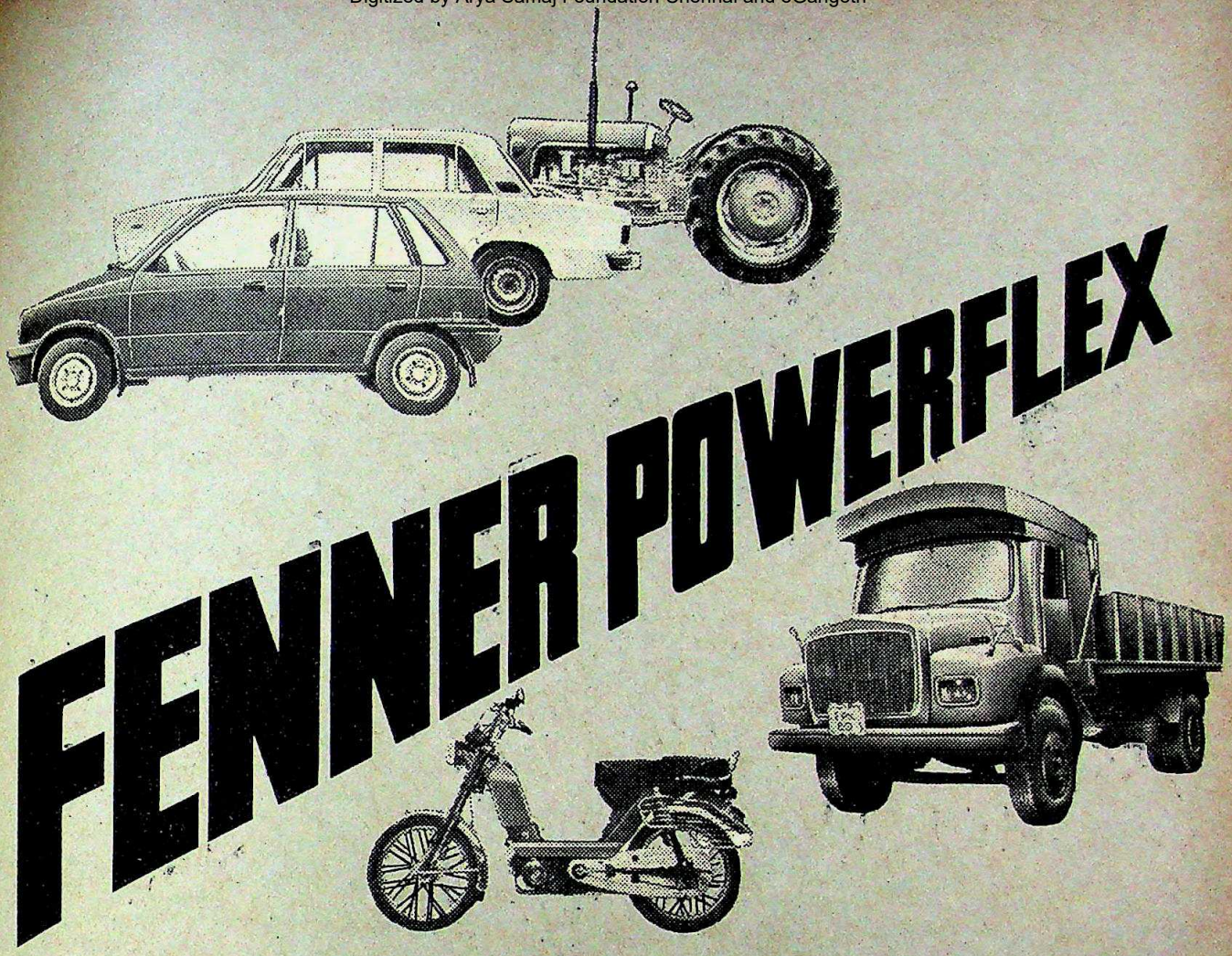

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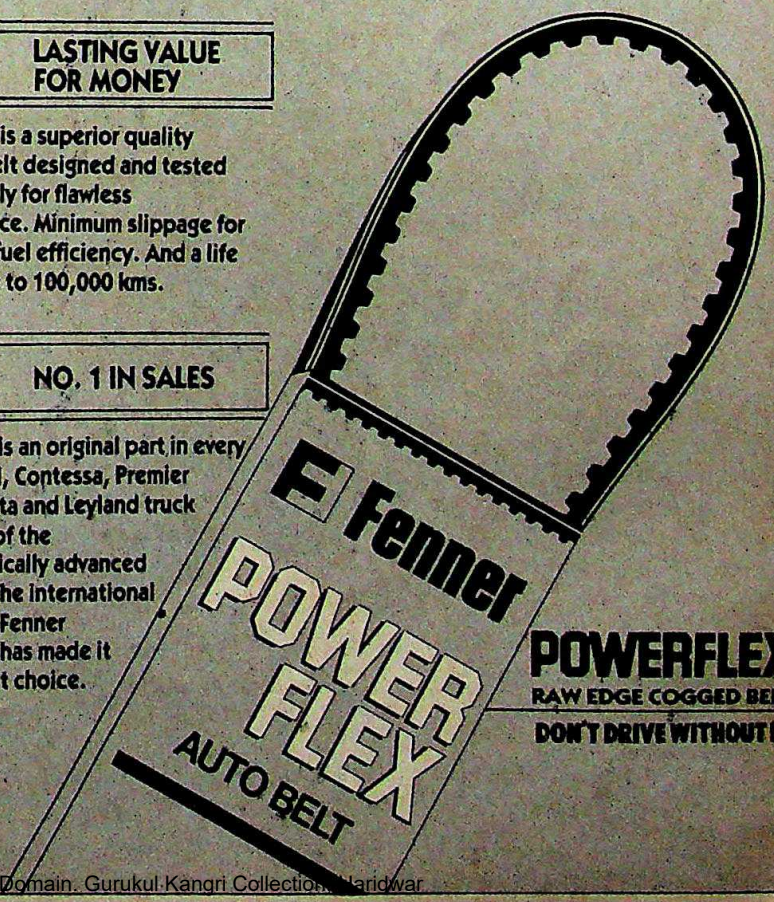

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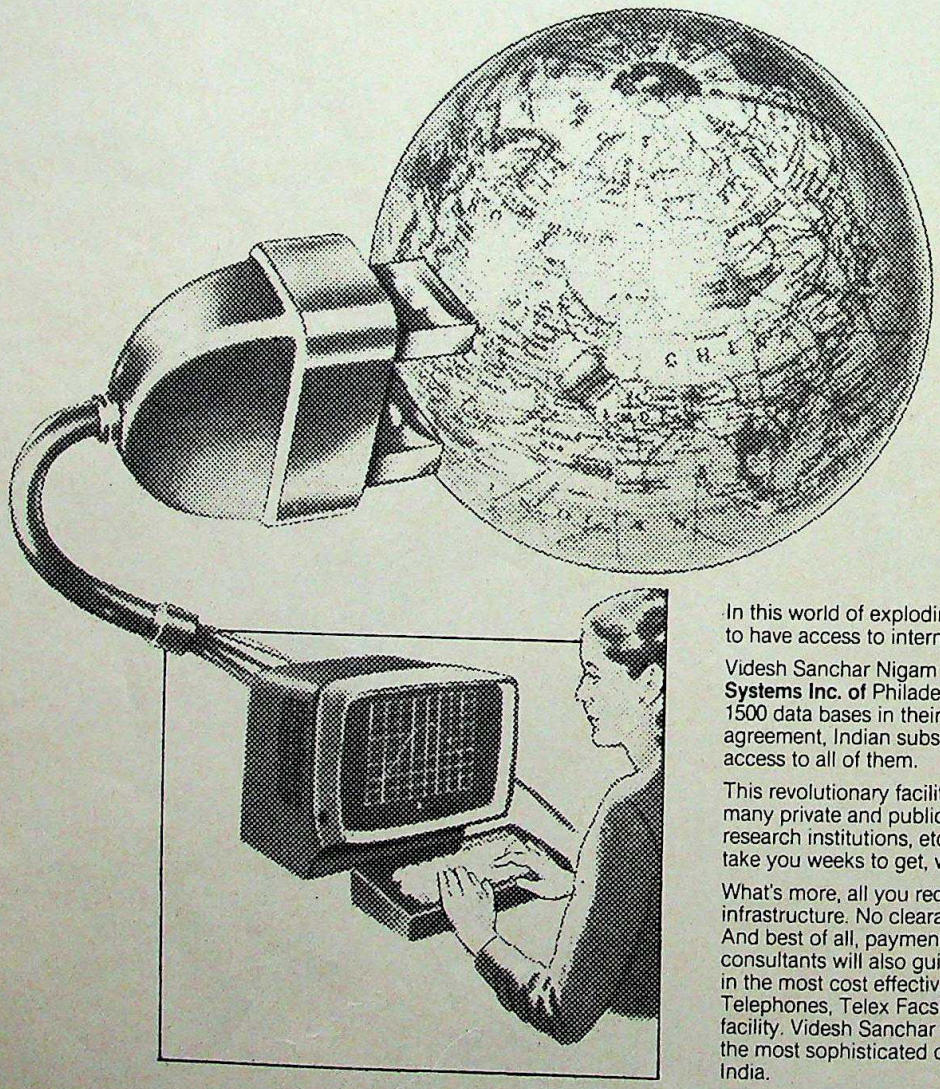

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distinction—have now begun to fall. At the permit meet in September, Bahadur Prasad broke Edward Sequiera's 3:43:7 minute record, set in 1966 on a cinder track. Bahadur, earlier a 10,000 m runner, had only switched to training for the shorter event a couple of months before the permit meet. His record now stands at 3:43:4 minutes, and is being pushed by Ram Niwas, who has also clocked 3:43:43.

But, India has a long way to run to catch up with the continent's best. Records like Milkha Singh's 45:73 seconds in the 400 m will become 30 years old next September. Devaiah's best is 47:10 seconds. His sterling performance helped the 4 × 400 m relay team to set a new national record at 3:07:22 minutes, but that is still five seconds behind Japan's 1986 record of 3:2:33 minutes. Balwinder too at 18.16 m is far behind China's Ma Yongfeng's best throw of 19.09 m but in field events performances can vary a great deal from one meet to another and if he continues to improve Balwinder could well be a serious contender for an Asiad medal.

While there might still be miles to go, the hard work and investment of the last three years has obviously been worthwhile. Commented John Holt, secretary-general of the International Amateur Athletic Federation: "The ethos, the structure, the state associations, the coaching—India's infrastructure is now among the best in the world."

Coaching camps have become a regular feature. Indian athletes are participating in more competitions and coaching camps abroad—such as the one in Glasgow last June. The work of foreign coaches like Briton Harry Wilson and East German Georg Ramlow, who have been the focus of sniping between their sponsors, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) and Amateur Athletic Federation of India (AAFI), was vindicated at the meet by the performances of their proteges—among them Dina Ram, Bahadur Prasad, Shakti Singh and Eshan.

Enterprise is also evident in such coaching programmes as the Bangalore-based SURE of husband and wife duo, Sunil and Reeth Abraham. To top that, "the incentives available to Indian athletes are not there in any other Asian country", says Maurice Nichols, general secretary of the Asian Amateur Athletic Association. A gold medallist at this meet was promised Rs 1 lakh from the Government, Rs 50,000 from the AAFI, and a bunch of smaller cash awards. Even a bronze medallist could hope to take home over Rs 80,000.

Generating commercial support is the biggest contribution to athletics of Suresh Kalmadi, president, AAFI. So he was comfortably able to run up a tab into seven figures, with entrance free and no government support—so far achieved only by cricket. "Our effort," he said, "has been to glamorise athletics."

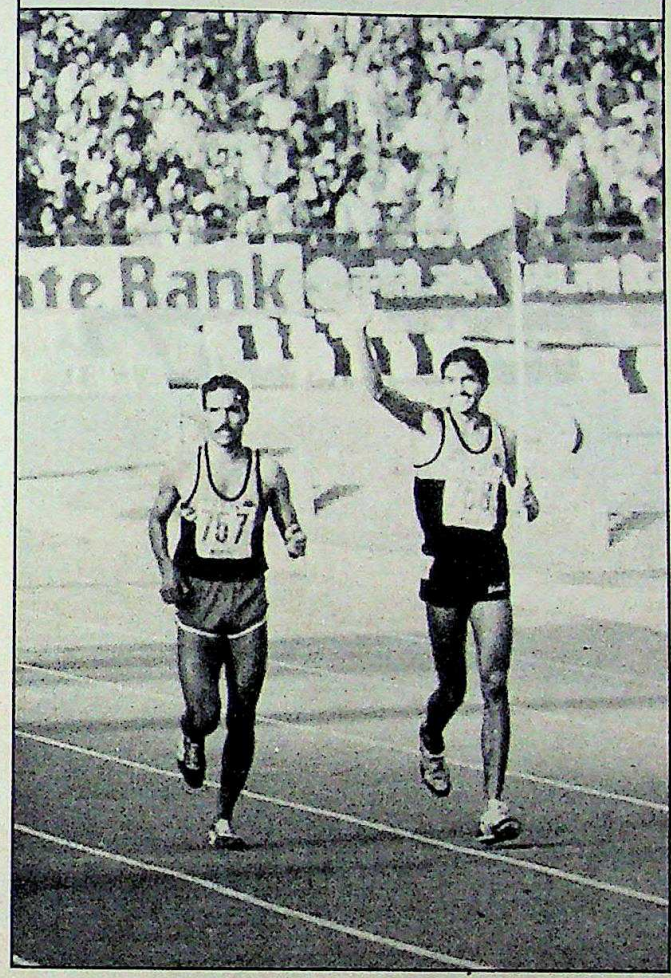
Purists, however, complained that a sports meet had been turned into a carnival. There were prancing yaks at the opening, dancing horses at the closing, camel rides and snake-charmers at evening parties at the athletes' village in the Haryana tourist complex of Surajkund. Not content, Kalmadi roped in Sharon Prabhakar and a team led by Alyque Padamsee for a song and dance routine, which turned out to be a *hangama*, Bombay style.

Now, the athletes' focus is entirely on the Beijing Asiad in 1990. On current form, Usha looks good for two golds (400 m and relay) and, with luck, even in her pet hurdles. More than her four gold and two silver medals at this meet, her timings were heartwarming: 56:14 seconds in 400 m hurdles (her best: 55:42); a meet record of 23:27 seconds in the 200 m; 51:90 seconds in the 400 m (her best: 51:61 seconds), and 3:32:95 minutes in the long relay. Significantly, it is after more than four years that she has sprinted 400 metres in less than 52 seconds and if the fire in her eyes was any indication she could indeed better her record by the Beijing Asiad.

Usha's flaw has been her slow start, but this time she just exploded off the

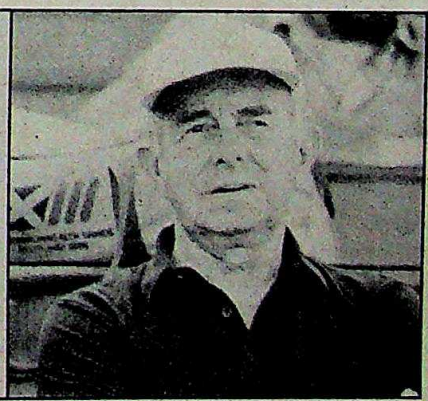
Despite winning, the duo were unhappy at their slow timing—the will to clip microseconds is back in Indian athletics.

▼ **Bahadur Prasad, and Ram Niwas, gold (3:45:77) and silver (3:46:53) medallists in the 1,500 m**



▶ **Harry Wilson, British coach**

Fine displays by Wilson's proteges vindicated the work of foreign coaches.



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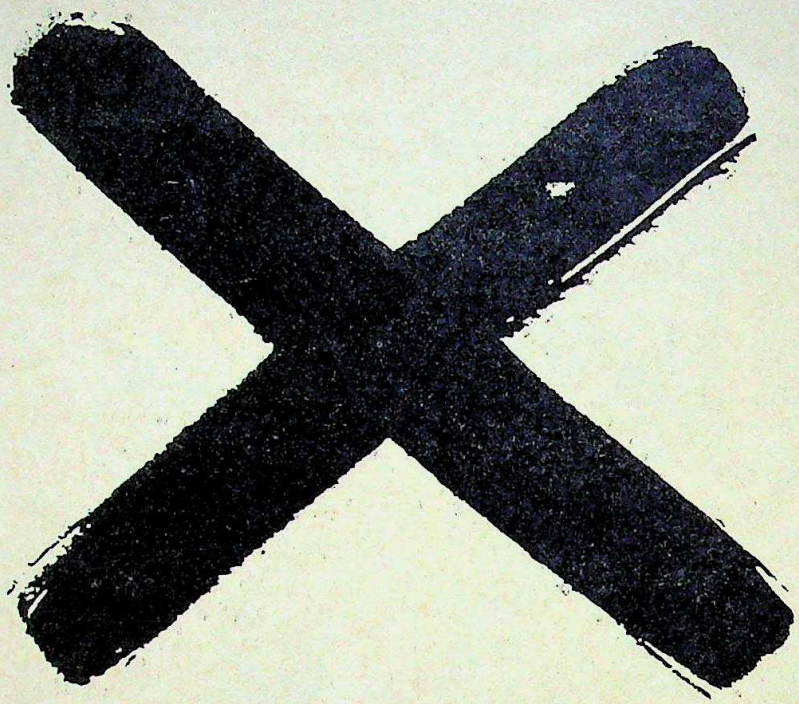

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blocks. Cured finally of her heel ailment by homoeopathy, she ran to coach O.M. Nambiar's new tactics for the 400 m, accelerating earlier than she normally does. "She had to be ahead at 250 metres," said a grinning Nambiar.

Her triumphant showing began at the hurdles. She missed her 15-stride rhythm only in the fifth and sixth hurdles, China's Chen Juying drawing abreast on the right. For a moment it even seemed that the great Indian hope would be left behind. Then pushing her gazelle-pace in a final lunge, she was home. Her timing: 56:14 seconds; Juying's: 56:24. Chi Cheng of Taiwan, who has held the Asian record for the 100 m and 200 m since 1970, says: "Usha hasn't realised her potential. She is more talented than me."

IF Usha maintains this scintillating form at Beijing, and if Vandana Rao—who was kept out of this meet because she did not participate in the Madras nationals—were returned to the fast track, the women's relay team might knick a second off its own 3:31:55 minute Asian record. However, milers Bahadur Prasad and Ram Niwas might be the only other Indian medal winners at the Asiad.

For in Beijing, the Chinese juggernaut will be on home ground. The Japanese, who came without their champion javelin thrower Mizo Guchi and pole vaulter Yamadah, brought a young team—which will no doubt be gearing up for better performances at the Asiad. So will many others. "We are here mainly to see what the field is like. We are keeping our best for Beijing," said Boughatolas Salem, athletics official from Qatar.

Even Usha—and 100 m silver medallist Ashwini Nachappa—will probably be faced next year by Filipino Lydia de Vega, who missed this meet since she recently had a baby. De Vega's 200 m best (23:35 seconds) stands above Usha's best (23:44), and now there is also the Chinese Zhang Xiao Qiong's 23:41. Shiny's forte, the half-mile, is now dominated by two Chinese, Sun Sumei (1:58:56 minutes) and Feng Yanbo (2:1:29 minutes), well ahead of the Indian record of 2:3:16 minutes.

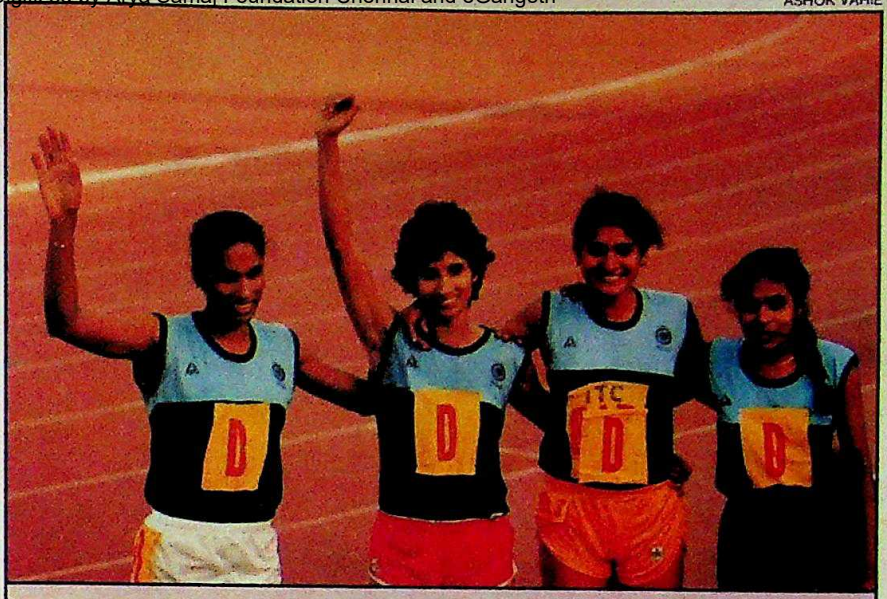
But even if this Asiad does not cause the champagne to be uncorked, it is enough that the sport is on the right track. While the athletes take a breather, the AAFI's attention has moved on to the more distant future. "Now the thrust of the athletic federation is going to be only on junior athletics," said Kalmadi.

The federation has evolved a six-year rolling plan. Between 40 and 50 men (17-18 years old) and women (16-17 years old) are to be selected for intensive training, after zonal and state meets around the country. The first crop is already in and their training is to begin this summer. The idea is to have a four to six week vacation camp and periodic two week camps later. Some of them will be exposed to competition at the Asian junior championship next year, and will form the core of the Indian team at the 1994 Asian Games.

A new crop will be picked up every two years so that the cycle continues. And, "by the year 2000, I want to have our crop of world champions", says Kalmadi. If the government-controlled SAI and the AAFI can put their best feet forward in tandem, there should be no stopping Indian athletics.

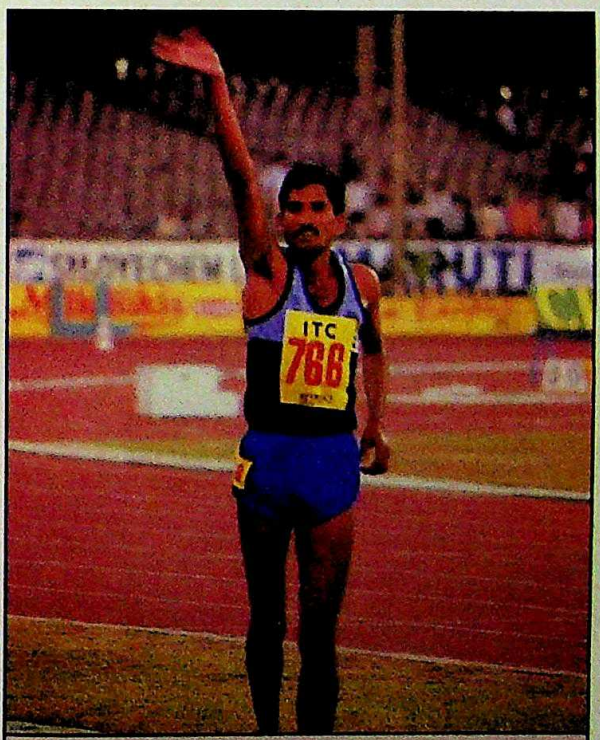
—DAVID DEVADAS with BINOO K. JOHN

ASHOK VAHIE



▲ P.T. Usha, Mercy Kuttan, Shiny Wilson and K. Saramma, Women's 4 × 400 m relay team, Gold medal and meet record (3:32:95)

Though the established line-up in India's favourite event was broken, the girls were still far ahead of the field, evidence of tremendous depth among women sprinters.



▲ Dina Ram, 25, gold medallist in the steeple-chase (8:48:16).

A game trier, he could bring back traditional Indian strength in the gruelling event.

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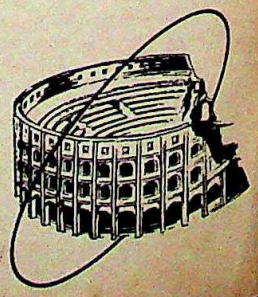
There's always been a premium on consistency



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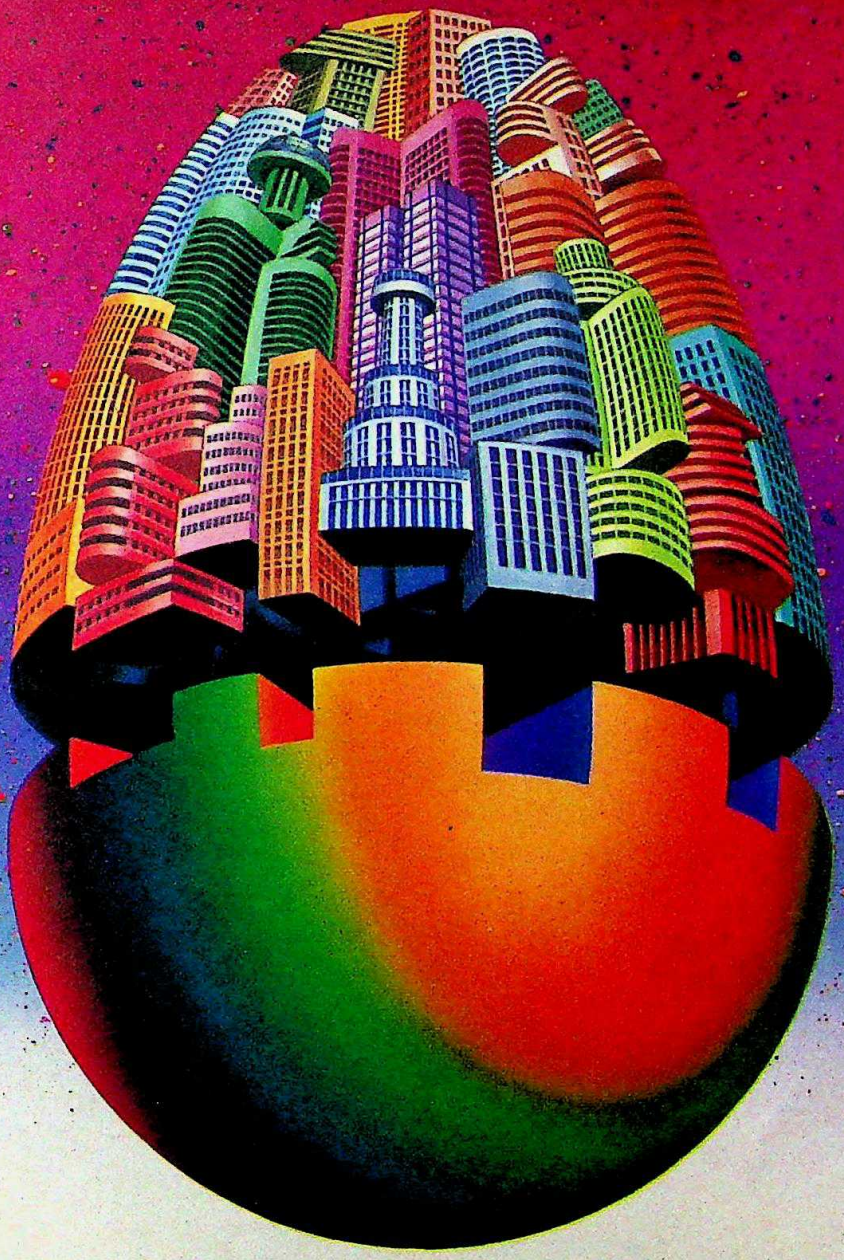

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Serene Touch

Alter's fiction flows subtly

RENUKA
by STEPHEN ALTER
Andre Deutsch
Distributed by Rupa & Co
Pages 216; Price: Rs 295

AFTER wandering in limbo for 170 years, the spirit of Jane Austen decided to be reborn in modern India. So she looked around for a suitable setting where she could write once again about the love that lies in the bosoms of secluded spinsters. Ooty and Kunoor seemed promising, but she decided against reincarnation there. The Nilgiris were nice, but the proximity of General Sundarji reminded her too much of the very Napoleon her novels had so completely invalidated. The Dehra Dun-Mussoorie region looked better. Allan Sealy, Ruskin Bond and Nayantara Sehgal lived here. The birds said Salim Ali had been around. Something of Amitav Ghosh was still sniffable around the Doon School. Then she saw Stephen Alter. Yes, he would do very nicely as a new avatar.

Written with a pleasant mixture of quiet inspiration and feminine feeling, Alter's latest novel is set among Mussoorie's upper class spinsters, housewives, tea-tables and cook-books. It is successfully Austenite, however, precisely because it is neither tea-tablish nor restricted to coffee-tables. Love, lust, lesbianism and lucre are now neither sleazy nor scandalous. They percolate out of Alter's Mussoorie kitchens and living rooms. They make one believe that an isolated world of good food and fellow feeling is as real, more human, and very much more interesting than that of Sundarji versus Rajiv G.

The first-person narrator, Rachel, is the wife of an American psychiatrist-missionary who arrives in India in 1960. Husband and wife are both carefully distinguished from stereotypes: he has left the US because "it was a little disgusting to think that somebody could make money from other people's anxieties". So he disappears to recover his sanity, and that of his patients, within a Ranchi asylum. Rachel and her two teenage sons move to Mussoorie. Here the boys go to school, while Rachel writes the novelistic-diary that is *Renuka*. The early bits of the novel read like the musings of a pleasant colonial woman humanely describing the native country to her brethren back home.

Anglicised ladies on a lonely hilltop can play mahjong, gossip about each other, and form a women's club to discuss recipes. Rachel has too much cooking within her own self to be sucked into the mindless patter of the various female evangelists who surround her. She prefers the company of Renuka, an extraordinary Bengali woman who has fled family tyranny to write poetry within Mussoorie's "verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways". Renuka is almost six feet tall. She is repulsed by the thought of marrying a man. Sensitivity and imagination make her a quiet rebel against the hideous masculinity that dominates society and culture in India. Rachel and Renuka are both, in fact, Austenite rebels against social ideologies that are aggressive and repressive—most particularly in relation to singular women. The emotional bonds that develop between these two lonely women on a hilltop are described with a subtlety and delicacy unusual in Indo-Anglian fiction. The unhurried and unmelodramatic flow of Alter's prose attractively matches the values his novel upholds.

The appealing softness of the world that comprises this novel is upset by the arrival of Renuka's brother from Calcutta. His presence causes a fine development within the plot, as well as an emotional climax which disturbs our settled ideas about the heterosexual basis of human love. A small range of other characters—Rachel's sons and their girl-friends, baptist ladies hunting for heathens to convert, the occasional servant woman and her problems—further enliven the central story.

All things considered, this novel makes particularly fine reading within our 'macho' social context. For it is a context which Alter's novel correctly, and most aesthetically, repudiates.

—RUKUN ADVANI

Alter: feminine feeling

EXTRACTS

Renuka was always unpredictable and impulsive. She would exhaust me with her enthusiasm, talking constantly about some book she'd read or some memory which had been jogged in her mind. When I was with her there was an irresistible excitement to her words, her imagination. If I hadn't known her better, I might have called it childishness, the way she threw herself upon me without restraint. She had a way of overcoming my inhibitions. I don't think there is anyone who could make me feel as happy and lighthearted as Renuka.

Epic Spoof

A send-up of modern history

THE GREAT INDIAN NOVEL
by SHASHI THAROOR
Penguin
Pages: 423; Price: Rs 95

HAD this book not been so funny, its delicious irreverence so unpartisan in its sweep of the pantheon of Indian politicians, it would have sent its author down the Rushdie path, and triggered off an avalanche of protests. Revered leaders, even Mahatma Gandhi, fall like nine pins in this novel. Shashi Tharoor has taken the Mahabharat as a blueprint and filled it with a contemporary cast for his witty send-up of independent India. A sort of India revisited with the *dramatis personae* of the epic getting quite a bruising.

Penguin, in fact, has been rather smart by keeping the print so tiny—it needs a magnifying glass—and the book so long that it will keep away all but the ivory tower lot, not generally prone to taking to the streets. For those who make it through the, at times, windbag wordiness and the too-smart puns—Sir Richard Churchill, with Attenboroughian characteristics, describes Gangaji (Gandhi cast in the role of Bhishma, the celibate obsessed with "toilet cleaning") as "Public Enema Number One"—the insights into both current politics and the epic are reward enough. And sometimes the puns take off marvellously: he refers to the engineered birth of the Pandav Five as "heir-conditioning"; one of the chap-

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EXTRACTS

Ved Vyas to Ganapathi:

"Karna was not much of a Muslim but he found Gangaji too much of a Hindu...Karna found the Kauravas under Gangaji insufficiently secular, and this made him paradoxically, more consciously Muslim....When the Mahaguru, in one of his more celebrated pronouncements, declared his faith in all religions with the words, 'I am a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian, a Zoroastrian, a Jew,' Karna responded darkly: 'Only a Hindu could say that.'"

"At the end of it all, Priya Duryodhani stood alone amongst the ruins of her old party, having smashed to pieces all the pillars that had supported her. Alone, but surrounded by the recumbent forms of newly-elected supplicants prostrating themselves amidst the rubble, the ciphers whose empty heads collectively gave Duryodhani a bigger parliamentary majority than even Dhritirashtra had ever enjoyed."

ter headings is "The Rigged Veda".

But the touch of genius is in the casting. Dhritirashtra is the blind, aristocratic disciple of Gangaji with a weakness for Fabian Socialism and a fatal charmer for the ladies of Bloomsbury. Later he becomes the country's first prime minister. But on his single-minded way there he manipulates the shafting of his "pale" brother Pandu—the one who has celibacy thrust on him—who storms off, fed up of the non-violent ways of his mentor, to Germany and Japan, allowing the author literary licence to surge into verse: "Away with Tolstoy, Ruskin, Buddha: Their ideas make little men littler. No more 'truth-force', only *yuddha*—it's time to learn from that chap Hitler." The two struggle for the leadership of the *Kaurava* Party which after independence splits, one side going over to Priya Duryodhani, Dhritirashtra's only child with the famous "arched brow" who, when only 12, poisoned her cousin, Bhima, and threw him into a lake. Later, as prime minister, she was to impose a "siege" on her country.

Then there is Mohammed Ali Karna, "adopted son of a rich man's driver"—he has a sun-like glow on his face and likes cocktail sausages. The dapper lawyer-disciple of Gangaji and bright light of the Kaurava Party becomes the founder of Karinistan. A country which Priya Duryodhani will later help split further and form Gelabi Desh. A touch of genius is Draupadi Mokarasi (get it: referred to often as D. Mokrasi), born on January 26 as a result of the union between Dhritirashtra and Georgina Drewpad, wife of Viscount Drewpad who oversees the partition of the country.

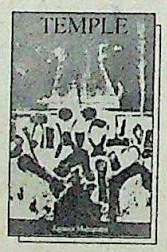
Tharoor takes us right down through all the trysts with destiny with other characters like Jayaprakasha Drona and bearded socialists. And in the end the narrator, Ved Vyasji wakes up to the India of the day: "a land of computers, corruption, of myths and politicians and box-wallahs with moulded plastic briefcases... muddling chaotically to the twenty-first century." And wants to dream again.

—MADHU JAIN

Song of Shakti

Homage to the Indian woman

TEMPLE
by JAYANTA MAHAPATRA
Dangaroo Press
Pages: 58; Price: Rs 138



THERE is no woman/ who is not alone,/no woman who is sure/she has found her way/to her real purpose of life,/ no one who doesn't return to the idea/that there is something more fitting/than release...."

That may not approximate to the Indian concept of the divine force, the female *shakti*, but for Jayanta Mahapatra it is one gleaming shard of truth in the kaleidoscope of alternating images that is Indian womanhood. The woman as the oppressed and the oppressor, as the destroyer and creator, as the all powerful and weak, as Sita and Putana (pure and vile). Cliched, but continually pregnant with poetic promise.

With *Temple*, Mahapatra fulfils an obligation every Indian poet must bear: plumb the agony and the enigma of the Indian woman, "an autumn of longing, moving backward in her solitude, moving slowly, a riddle on its pedestal". And he pays homage at length; and he does it impressively. His 50-odd pages of free verse are pegged on two news items—one of a suicide and the other of a gang-rape—that portray the plight of the Indian woman, who cannot shut out "the bursts of pain that keep coming to sting her from the dust of lies and the scabs of myths".

Our minds were tied to the myth
that womanhood was pure, one
with the repose of the gods,
our eyes soiled with the infinite,
our hands smeared with ash
to hide their touch from men.
But had I no right to my dream?
Which happiness is mine, if not this one?
Whose harsh spit sputters my race?
Who fills my village with voices?
And when the flames engulf me,
which inner light will vindicate
my happiness?

Mahapatra writes in the measured cadences of a finished hand—his post-modernist pen almost Eliot-like in its incantatory spells—and the imagery, typically, is arresting: "Now like a mound of freshly steamed rice/ she sits, in the white-haired vapour/ of a new hour, an ambiguous presence/ on a reed mat..." But every now and then the images—paddy, rivers, earthen lamps, temples, breasts, ashes, light, darkness—pile up so much as to numb. You have to jerk yourself to attention and start all over again.

The poem is hallucinatory and dreamlike, and escapes succumbing to the triteness of the subject matter because it neither agitates nor rails. It operates at a plaintive decibel, mixing, and unmixing myth, illusion and reality, as the flow of the images demands. And this the poet makes clear in the opening lines: "This memory is strange as a taunting memory/ shifty as the wind...."

The first few pages also make it clear that once again Mahapatra is not out to provide recreational material for the hours between the reading of the evening newspaper and the switching on of television. *Temple* is not for the poetry buff; this is stuff for the devotee.

The Rockefeller Foundation grant that Mahapatra used to write this poem appears well-spent. And not only is his obeisance to the Indian woman done, but *Temple* adds fair weight to the impressive corpus he has been accumulating over the last 15 years. Now to await a purchasable edition of the work.

—TARUN J. TEJPAL

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NAMAS BHOJANI

Sheena: chips to *couture*

◆ From selling computers to selling *couture* is not a long way off. At least not for leggy, six-footer **Sheena Singh** who made it in the length of a ramp. The 25-year-old who has been chosen to model Yves Saint Laurent *haute couture*, from amongst hundreds of stunning aspirants, is a major in marketing and database management. She is working with a public relations firm in Bombay. And to complicate matters, she is not only fluent in Russian, she also wants to finally become a chief executive. Says she: "I always believed that I'll never exploit my looks. I have always worked with my brain." But who says rubbing strapless shoulders with the glitterati of Paris takes a toll of the good ol' grey cells.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Sharon: boxed in

◆ She was billed as the froth on the champagne at the 8th Asian Track and Field Meet, but in the end she wound up as a jack-in-the-box, with the lid closed. When **Sharon Prabhakar** exhorted the spectators to "come sing with me" the *Tracks of Friendship*, not a voice quavered in response. So she went for the hoi polloi heart: *Ek, do, teen,...* Not one watcher added on. Worse was to come as the hydraulic lift sucked her back into the cardboard cake. Unscheduled items extended the closing ceremony, and the singer was left entombed. And she'd counted *ek, do, teen* hundreds of times over before the exit could be made.

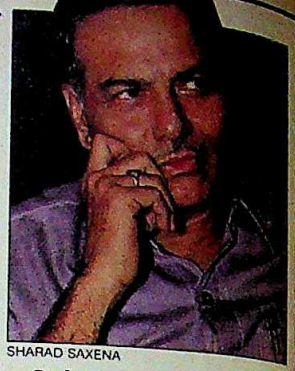
Merchant and Ivory

◆ The producer: **Ismail Merchant**. The director: **James Ivory**. The scriptwriter: Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. Must be a film with an Indian bent, or a classical source? Surprisingly, it's neither. This one is based on a best-seller, *Mr and Mrs Bridges* by Evan Connel; it is set in Kansas city; and it's about marriage and the domestic detail that follows it. And its a casting coup. The blue-eyed superstar Paul Newman plays the lead, and in the film he beds his real wife, Joanne Woodward. Typically, Merchant says: "This is a great project." And, yes, the old homeland connection survives: Woodward's name in the film is India Bridges.

◆ For a month, the post of the secretary to the President was hung. Then while handing over power, the Rajiv Gandhi government also found time to hand over **P. Murari** to President R. Venkataraman. In time-bound cliche, the secretary, information and broadcasting, declared: "I consider it my privilege and honour to work with the President." Considering how crucially important the President's advisers are going to be now, at least one supercrat of the outgoing regime, 'Bob' Murari, retains his pre-eminence.

Murari: high office

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



SHARAD SAXENA

Sinha: savvy spokesman

◆ Just as the elite were despairing of the Janata Dal's country yokel image, there came cause for cheer. The new party spokesman, **Yashwant Sinha**, captivated on the poll talk shows with his easy charm and suave turn of phrase. But about his new charge the former IAS officer sounded apologetic: "Even a mild-mannered man like me now has to react, very sharply sometimes." But why worry? The public's reacting all right.

HEMANT PITHWA

Babi: sad return

◆ She was more Zeenie baby than Zeenie herself, and the mystery she left behind brooked no ravelling. Well six years later, '70s sex-bomb **Parveen Babi**, who even made it to *Time*'s cover, is back. And it's poignant. A shadow has resurfaced: cheeks puffed, hair scraggy, mind ravaged by trauma. She harangues about a megastar who's been conspiring to kill her, and calls it "the greatest story in the world". And there are no takers. Certainly, a return more sorry than the vanishing.

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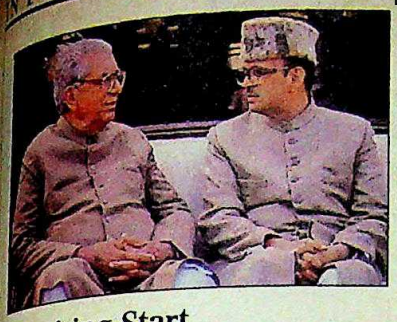

Promising Start

The new Government got down to business with surprising smoothness and purpose. The kidnapping of the home minister's daughter created an unforeseen crisis, but overall it was an encouraging start. Both the appointments to the ministry and the new policies unveiled on several fronts were greeted with approval.

COVER STORY 26

Purges and Plans

As the once all-powerful Congress(I) recovers from its shock defeat at the hustings, there are signs that the Old Guard is reclaiming its old importance. Veterans have taken over as chief ministers. And as the party looks for scapegoats, the coterie that surrounded Rajiv Gandhi is now the target of attack.

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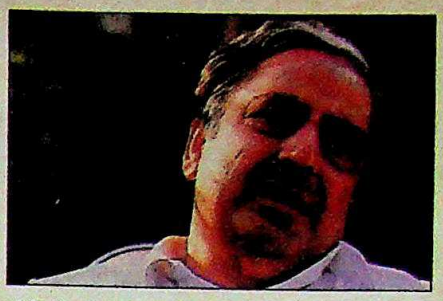

Abduction Anguish

The tragic abduction of Rubaiya, daughter of Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, by Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front members stunned the nation. While condemnation of the militant action was universal, it served to spotlight the turmoil in the state and the alienation of the chief minister.

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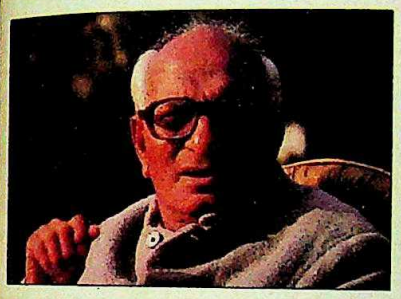

Leaning to the Left

Days after assuming office, the new Government spelt out its economic policy which has been generally welcomed. But whether it can succeed in implementing that policy depends not on good intentions but on its ability to untangle the economic knots it has inherited from the previous regime.

BUSINESS 96

The Fading Glitter

Benazir Bhutto completes one year in office with a no-confidence motion hanging over her head and general criticism of her style of functioning. Because of various pressures, she has not been able to make fundamental changes. As yet, there is no real threat to her government. But the problems are piling up.

NEIGHBOURS 139

Back on the Front Foot

Underdogs India emerged from the gruelling cricket series against Pakistan with their honour restored. The highest laurels undoubtedly go to Sanjay Manjrekar, but his was only part of a great joint effort. The players' fighting spirit and teamwork contributed a great deal to the comeback.

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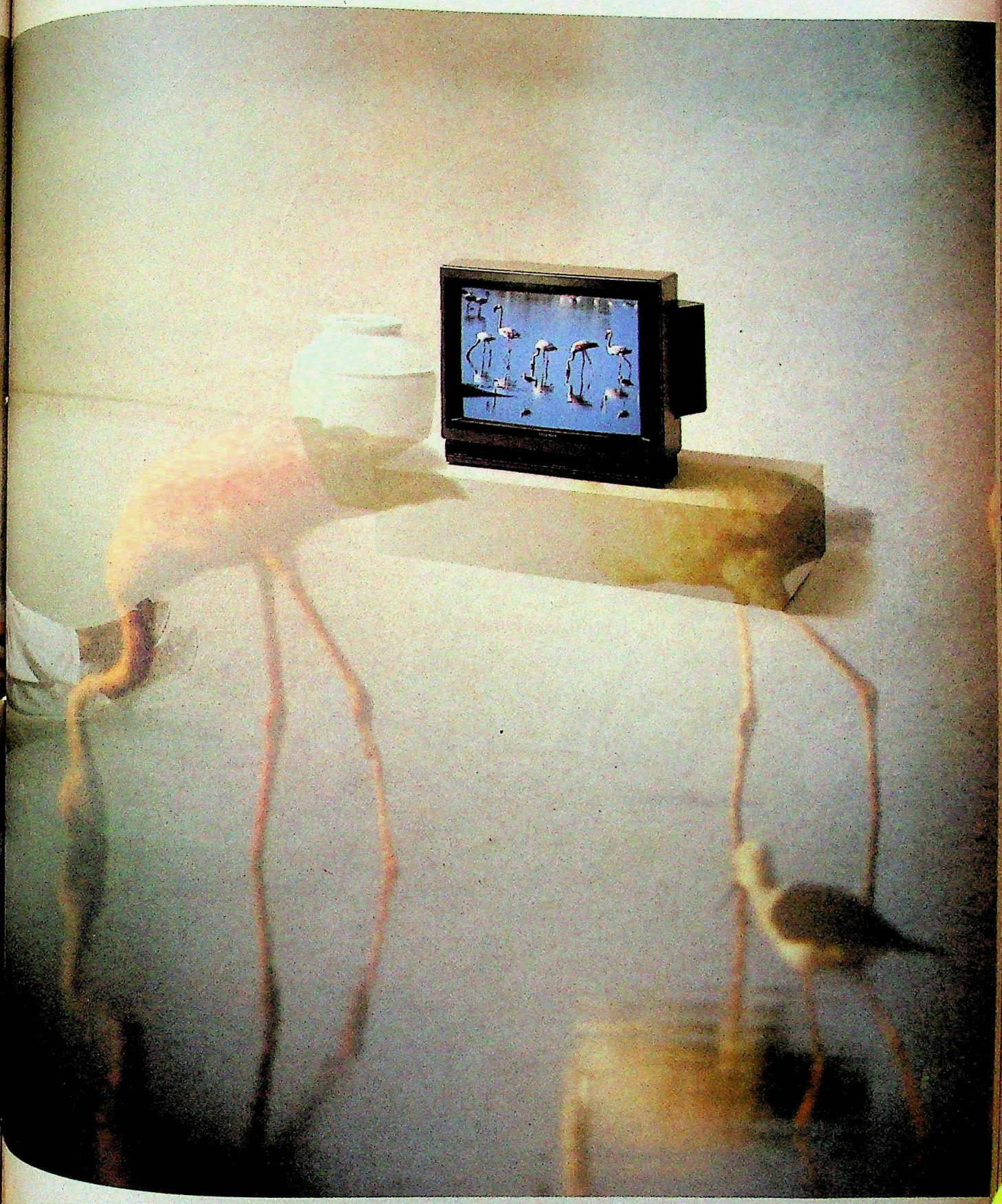

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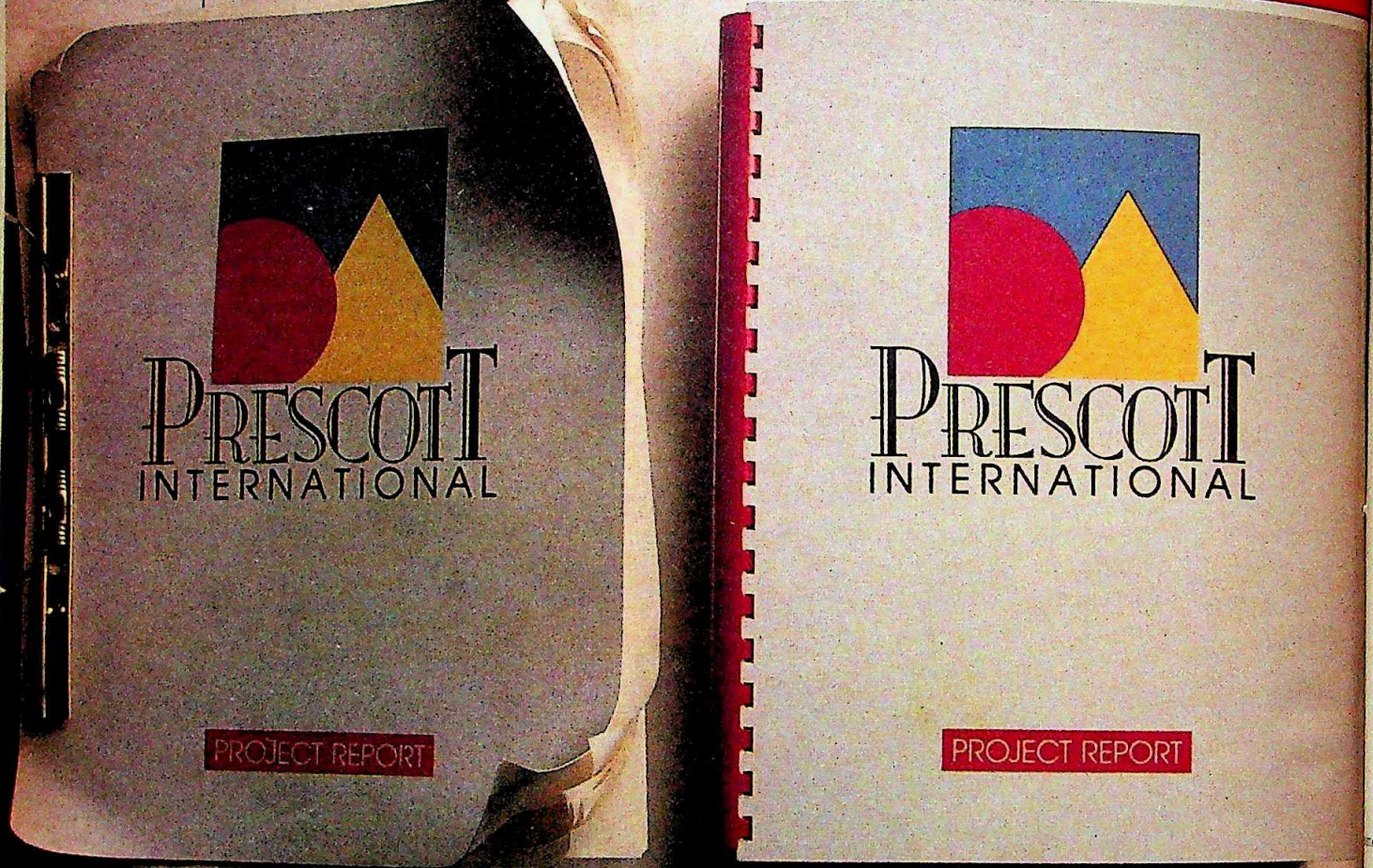

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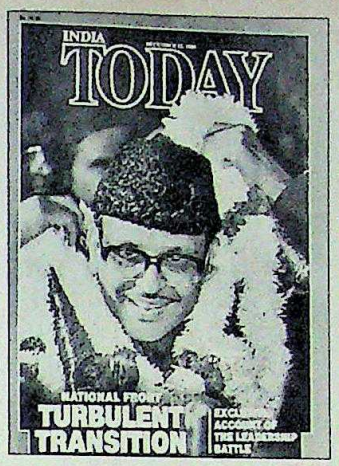

DAUNTING TASKS

Removing corruption and bringing down the mounting prices of essential commodities should be among the new government's top priorities ("Turbulent Transition", December 15). Only then can it retain the trust of the people who voted for it.

Vadodara — **DHIREN BHATT**

■ An important message sent by the voter in the present elections is that no politician should underestimate the might of the electorate. Those who are in power should not live in ivory towers and take the support of the people for granted.

Essex, England — **B.N. SHARMA**

■ If V.P. Singh fulfils his promises, he may, perhaps, be able to clear the 'misty dawn' looming on the Indian horizon and make the sun shine on the masses once again.

Sonepat — **K. GOPAKUMAR MENON**

■ The confidence placed by the electorate on the National Front is very reassuring. But what is needed most at this juncture is collective leadership, stability and honesty at the Centre. And by asking the cabinet ministers to declare their assets, V.P. Singh has taken a step in the right direction.

Delhi — **V.A. MENON**

ASTONISHING ACCURACY

I am astonished at the accuracy of your poll predictions ("A Vote for Change", November 30). You predicted that "a hung Parliament seems to be an inevitable outcome with the next government needing the support of either the BJP or the CPI-M (or both) to form a government" and "the Congress(I) will remain the largest single party". Both predictions have proved true.

Bangalore — **BIPRADIP BANDOPADHYAY**

■ Congratulations for achieving a hat trick of successful opinion polls on the general elections.

Ranebennur, Karnataka — **DR P.S. BANAGAR**

■ Your accurate opinion polls have added a new dimension to the elections.

Mathura — **RAJIV KUMAR TRIPATHI**

■ The real winners of the 1989 elections are not the newly-elected MPs and MLAs, but psephologist Prannoy Roy and MARG.

Yavatmal — **S.N. PANDHARIPANDE**

■ Kudos to INDIA TODAY, Prannoy Roy and MARG for predicting the election results accurately. Your opinion poll will raise your magazine's popularity to new heights.

Daltonganj, Bihar — **A.S. WALIA**

■ Your state-wise election analysis and poll predictions have demonstrated that no government can ignore the importance of the media.

Trivandrum — **A. JACOB SAHAYAM**

■ INDIA TODAY has been very successful in predicting the mood of millions of Indian voters. V.P. Singh has indeed forged ahead to prime ministership and Rajiv Gandhi has been forced to sit on the opposition benches. The predictions are a milestone in media forecasting.

Pune — **DR VASANT GOKHALE**

■ The accurate prediction that the Congress(I) would win just 195 seats was good work on your's and Prannoy Roy's part.

Incidentally, Poll Talk was hilarious and made good reading.

Bangalore — **G.V. GURUDUTH**

■ Whatever the results of the ninth Lok Sabha polls, your 'election special' issue is indeed a collector's item.

Bhubaneswar — **DHANANJAY PATRO**

■ The election reports were a real eye-opener. The press has done a wonderful job of analysing the political atmosphere and informing the people of the trends in the country. This is important for the success of democracy and your magazine has played a vital role in ensuring this.

Indore — **PRABHAKAR S. HARSOLE**

UNIMPRESSIVE THEATRICS

Our leaders have adopted a hedonistic style to woo voters ("The Chariot Brigade", November 30). How can mature and educated voters fall for such

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gimmicks? The scene looked more like a 'rath' rally than an election campaign.
Meerut P.N. BANERJI

A MARKED DIFFERENCE

"Frantic Pace" and "Making Waves" (November 30) brought out the difference between the two contenders for the prime ministerial post—one desperately lacking in confidence, and the other brimming with it. A close-up of Rajiv Gandhi with puffy eyes and a fading smile was in complete contrast to the smiling and calm V.P. Singh.
Varanasi AMBRISH SAHNI

■ It is unfortunate that the Congress(I) resorted to 'divide and rule' politics to win favour with the people. Its blatant attempts to arouse communal feelings combined with the existing problems of unemployment and corruption made a travesty of the slogan: *Mera Bharat Mahaan.*
Godda, Bihar SAJJAN KUMAR THAKUR

A DISTURBING TREND

It was disturbing to note that various political parties allowed criminals to contest the elections ("Day of the Don", November 30). With Indian politics becoming dirty, it appears that the people will now have to accept the underworld dons as their true representatives.
Madras ROBIN PALARAMB

A CLARIFICATION

In "A Close Contest" (November 30), you have wrongly described Ramesh Chennithala as a Christian. He belongs to the Nair community and contested the Lok Sabha elections on a Congress(I) ticket from the Christian-dominated Kottayam constituency.
Trivandrum V. KRISHNAMOORTHY

LIMITED POWERS

"Tortuous Task" (November 15) brings out the insufficient powers of the Election Commission. The new government should provide the commission with adequate staff and improved facilities so that it can check electoral malpractices effectively.
Mathura V.G. PANDE

SORDID AFFAIR

The alleged molestation of environmental activist Mukti Dutta by former Union minister Z.R. Ansari in his office ("Shock Charge", November 15) is a glaring example of the gross misuse of power. One wonders how the minister went unpunished and even managed to get a Congress(I) ticket for the elections without any hitch.
Bhagalpur DEEPAK KUMAR JAYASWAL

■ The women's liberation movement in the country received a big jolt with the report of the alleged assault on Mukti Dutta by Ansari. A similar incident occurred last year when the Director-General of Punjab Police K.P.S. Gill allegedly patted the rear of a woman IAS officer, Rupan Deol, at a party. Gill has remained unpunished so far. Similarly, Ansari has managed to escape scot-free.
Meghalaya SUJIT PAUL CHOUDHURY

■ The shocking incident involving Ansari goes to prove once again that those in power cannot be brought to book for any misdeed.
Bangalore ESTHER NATHANIEL

A NOBLE GESTURE

Prakash Chand Joshi's work among the orphans in Punjab ("Rescuing an Orphaned Future", November 15) shows that humanism is still alive in the state. More people, irrespective of caste, creed and religion, should come forward to complete this Herculean task.
New Delhi M.L. NARAYANAN

HEROIC EFFORT

When Miandad blasted Chetan Sharma for a six on the very last ball of the innings in the Australasia Cup, Sharma was called the 'villain of the Indian cricket team' ("A Gruelling Battle", November 15). Now that he has scored a ton in just 93 balls against England during the Nehru Cup and also has a hat trick to his credit, should not he be renamed the 'hero of Indian cricket'?
Ranchi UPMA & PAVAN PRAKASH

WRITERS' HAVEN

Although Indians' writing in English has moved up a few notches on an individual's shopping list ("Finding a Niche", November 15), the '80s have yet to throw up an experiment like P. Lal's Writers' Workshop in the '50s and '60s. It welcomed anybody with a writer's itch. The point is not how many literary reputations were created by Lal, but the fact that he gave writers an opportunity to express themselves.
Taiwan MURLI MELWANI

UNFORTUNATE SILENCE

Seymour Hersh's willingness to apologise to Morarji Desai and settle the case out of court clearly showed that he conceded the doubtful validity of his story ("Disappointing Verdict", October 31). In spite of this, the jury decided that the arguments of Desai's lawyers did not meet the requirements of the US libel laws. Unfortunately, even the Indian Government found it more expedient to sit silent and abet this gross calumny against a former prime minister known for his honesty.
Pondicherry B.G. PATTEGAR

DEPLORABLE TREATMENT

N.L. Patel's harrowing experience in Nadiad ("In the Dock", October 31), shows that 40 years of Independence have done nothing to improve the judicial situation in India. If the chief judicial magistrate is subjected to such treatment from the police, one can imagine the plight of the common man at the hands of these people.
Barrackpore ABHIK DAS

FATAL FALL

The crash of a Mirage 2000 aircraft and the tragic death of Wing Commander Ramesh Bakshi ("Disastrous Display", October 31) have been a blow to our defence services. But sentiments apart, it is the duty of the air command to explain how the officer exceeded his brief and attempted the unscheduled roll.
Pune SURENDRA MOODLIAR

■ How can the Indian Air Force organise air-shows just to amuse a handful of people? Such displays should be banned immediately.
Kathmandu N.N. PANDEY

■ If an experienced pilot could make an error, one shudders to think of the fate awaiting younger pilots with less skill and experience.
Shillong ANGEL XAVIER

SUCCESS STORY

"The Big Push" (October 31) justifiably showers praise on Dhirubhai Ambani. But as far as service to the nation goes, the Tatas are unmatched by any industrial house in the country. Ambani's success lies basically in his tact in dealing with the bureaucracy. Laws are made and abrogated to suit his needs and style.
Agra DEEPAK AGARWAL

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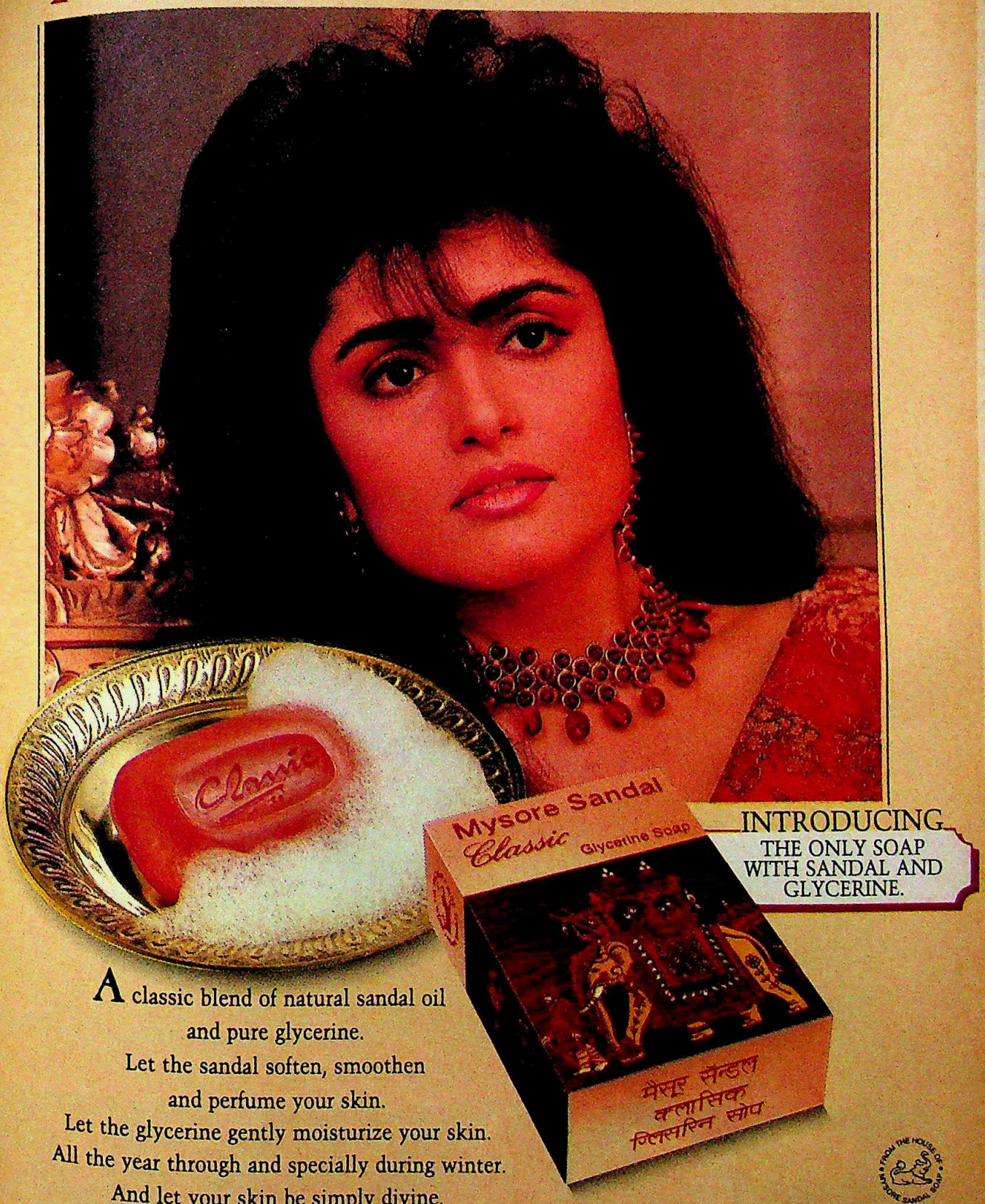

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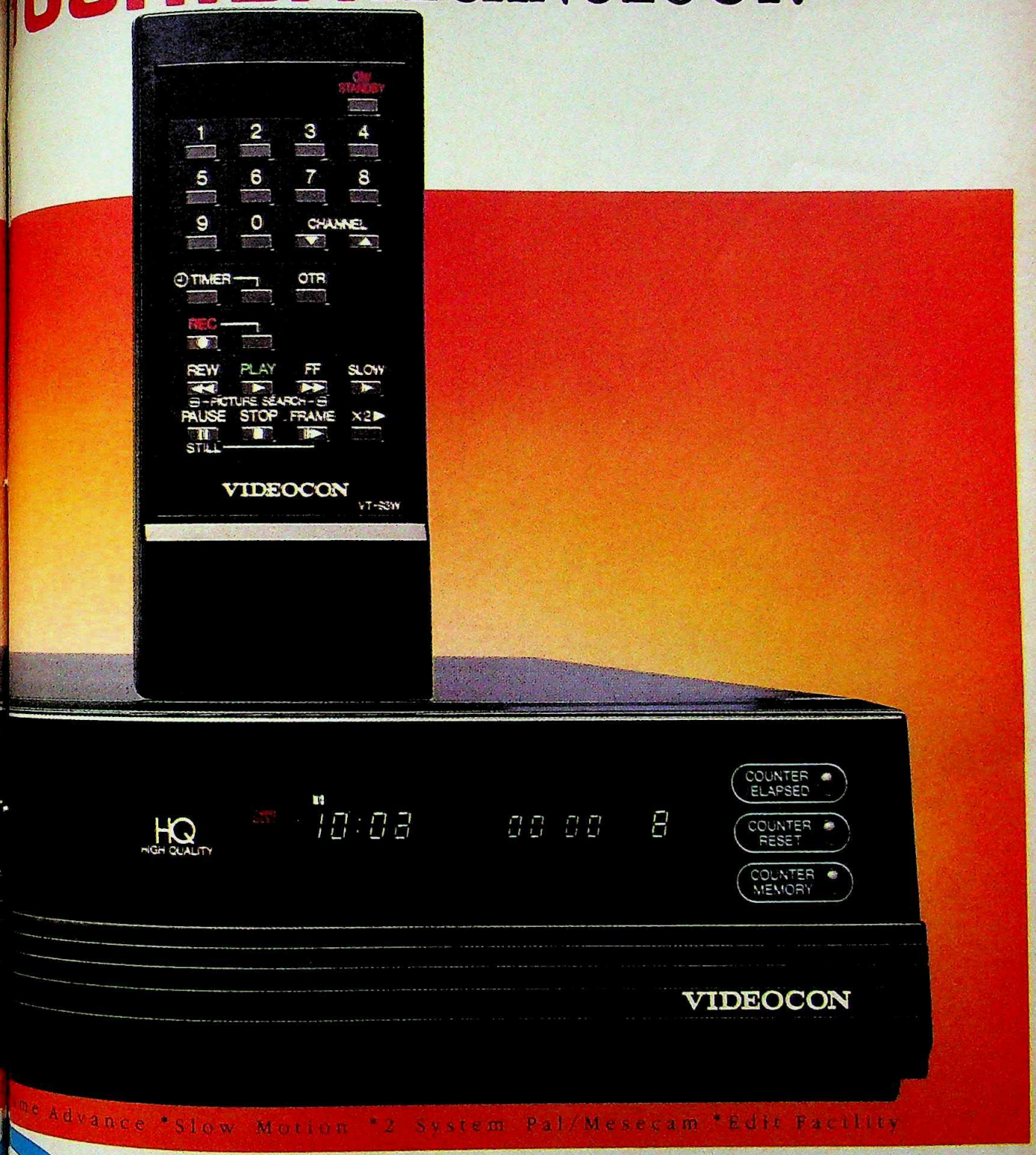

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The Indian Card

IN choosing Mufti Mohammed Syed as India's first Muslim home minister, Vishwanath Pratap Singh has sought to put his money where his mouth is—by demonstrating that notwithstanding the critical support given to his new government by the BJP, he is not afraid of demonstrating his concern for the nation's minorities.

There is little doubt that Mufti's appointment will go some distance in assuaging the fears of India's more than 100 million Muslims, especially in the Hindi heartland, where communal passions were fanned into a militant and violent frenzy before and during the elections. But the bitter aftertaste lingers on. The menace is still with us. Like a coiled serpent waiting to spring into venomous action.

The recent election may have ushered in change and demonstrated once again that the Indian voter exercises his franchise with precision and responds intelligently to national issues when brought before him in a cogent and reasoned fashion. But it also demonstrated that he responds equally vigorously and passionately to fundamentalist hate groups and their campaigns aimed at rejection of vital liberal traditions such as secularism embodied in the national consensus created by Jawaharlal Nehru.

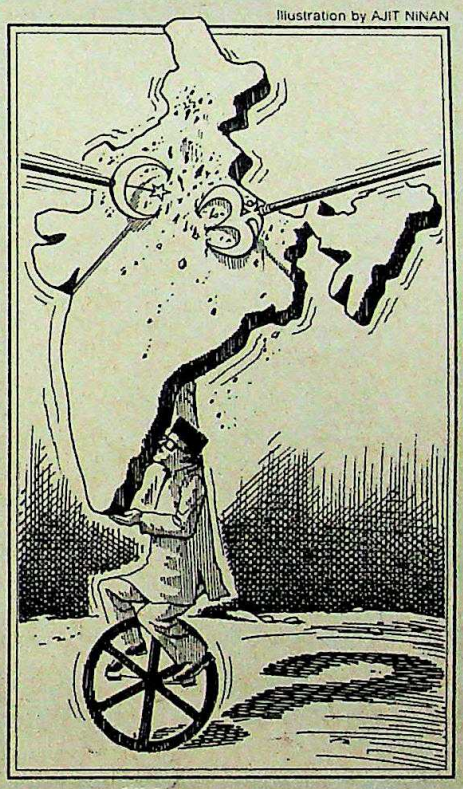
This tendency was manifest in its most socially vulgar and fundamentally crass dimension in several parts of the country where Hindu candidates, backed by fundamentalist parties, openly campaigned on the platform that they did not want a single Muslim vote. That the Muslim vote was irrelevant to them. This has a dangerous portent. The message it seeks to convey to India's minorities is that their participation in a democracy did not matter; that Hindu democracy counted for more than secularism.

More than technical arguments such as repealing Article 370 or reorganising the Minorities Commission, it is this advocacy, so blatantly in evidence during the elections, which reveals the true face of communalism. The concept of a Hindu nation or Hindutva by implication relegates minorities to the position of a sub-nationality, whose votes are dispensable, within India. The consequences of such religious chauvinism are too horrendous to contemplate. The spectre of a permanently alienated minority living like a fifth column in an India whose nationhood still rests on a fragile consensus is a disastrous threat to the very stability of the country. One needs only to harken back to the cruel lessons of Partition.

Central to all this is that once again, the survival of the foundation-stone of Indian democracy—secularism—is on test. And in large measure, none has been more responsible for secularism's decline than the Rajiv Gandhi government. History will surely judge that the decision that ultimately played havoc with the centrist forces—the Janata Dal and the Congress(I)—was taken on November 9, when a vacillating prime minister sandwiched between conflicting advice allowed the Shilanyas in Ayodhya in the hope of playing a last-minute Hindu card.

In a single stroke, ths decision upset the delicately balanced centrist and moderate vote bank, causing Muslims to flee the Congress(I) in large numbers to the Janata Dal to punish the Congress(I), and large numbers of Hindus from both the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal towards BJP-affiliated candidates. In places like Bihar, the communal divide was ominous.

Illustration by AJIT NINAN



Political insecurity and the relentless quest for votes led Rajiv's government to compromise and waffle on issues where resolve, calibrated thinking and bold leadership were of the essence. Decisions taken on merits, and consonant with a professed ideology, no matter how unpopular, are what establish a leader's abilities. And decisions once taken must be credibly explained and ruthlessly enforced.

During his tenure, Rajiv repeatedly failed to be decisive and leader-like. The Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi war clearly has its roots in Rajiv's support for the Muslim Women's Bill that sabotaged the Supreme Court decision in the Shah Bano case. This produced a Hindu backlash, for the Hindus felt if the Government could subvert the law, they too could refuse to abide by the court verdict on the Ayodhya dispute.

Repeatedly, whenever there was need for swift, decisive action—whether against PAC culprits for their role in Malliana; against perpetrators of the Sati cult; against police excesses in Punjab; against Farooq Abdullah's misrule—there was appeasement in the interest of a Hindu card, or a Muslim card or a Sikh card. It was this that made a mockery of Rajiv's 21st century image. None ever doubted Rajiv's deep and personal commitment to secularism. But the modern mind that his supporters were trying to project through gimmicks and advertising slogans failed to pass muster in the most critical challenge of all: stern leadership against obscurantist forces.

There are lessons in this for the precariously balanced new government. Similar challenges await Vishwanath Pratap Singh. Notwithstanding his own unimpeachable secular credentials, there are still doubts about his oblique political flirtation with the BJP, whose top leaders are moderates but whose rank and file displays fiery religious militancy. He too will be tested, sooner rather than later, in the same infernal crucible as was his predecessor. And his success will depend on his ability to tackle the crisis of secularism head on, by continuing to play not the Hindu card or the Muslim card or the Sikh card, but the Indian card in the supreme interest of revitalising the national consensus.

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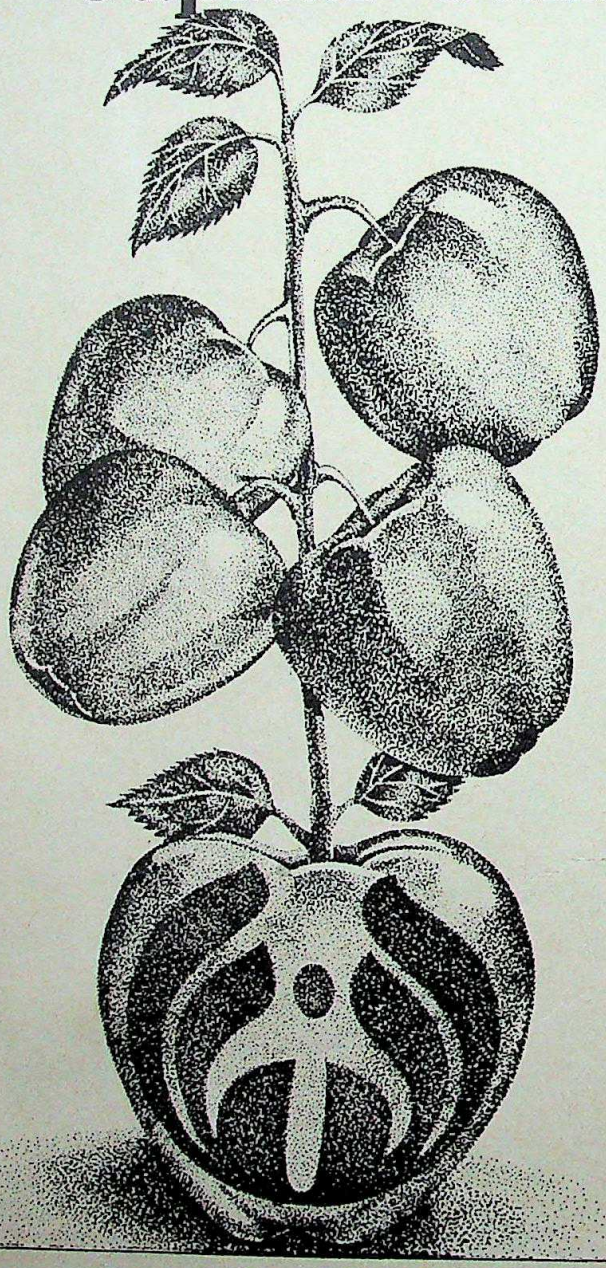

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250	17,600	—
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Diplomatic Muddle

● During any period of governmental transition, controversies, chaos and confusion are bound to mushroom within the key ministries. Hardly had the new cabinet been sworn in, when the foreign office found itself embroiled in a ticklish situation over who should be the guest

of honour at Republic Day.

This invitation is usually reserved for a foreign potentate of some standing and also symbolises the nation's foreign policy directions. Before the elections, Rajiv Gandhi had been consulted on the issue, a shortlist prepared—from which Rajiv chose the name of A. Jugnauth, prime minister of Mauritius, a country with a sizeable and influential Indian population.

But as soon as V.P. Singh was elected prime minister, his advisers were of the opinion that some heavyweight like Gorbachev or even Benazir Bhutto ought to be invited for the occasion as a fitting gesture to the new prime minister's first Republic Day function.

But this request caused considerable embarrassment within the Ministry of External Affairs, which had already sent informal feelers to the Mauritian Government. And even as a new Indian foreign minister was being sworn in, senior ministry officials were going around in circles, trying to figure out some diplomatic solution to the problem.

Relaxed Bonhomie

● The defeat of the Congress(I) has ushered a new air of easy conviviality into the nation's capital. This was immediately apparent when the National Front and the Janata Dal convened their first meeting in Parliament's Central Hall to choose the new prime minister. Gone were the armies of Black Cat commandos, the heavily guarded VVIPs, and the arsenals of Sten guns. Inside the hall, people mingled and chatted freely.

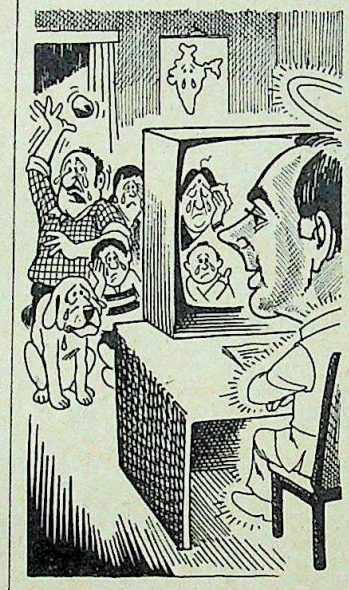
The same air pervaded V.P. Singh's swearing-in at Rashtrapati Bhawan. Even Rajiv Gandhi, who attended with several of his former ministers, was relaxed and approachable. Taking advantage of this cordial atmosphere, a slim, bespectacled young man brushed past sev-

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

eral VIPs standing near Rajiv, and extending his hand, exclaimed in a clipped Oxford accent: "Mr Gandhi, my name is Ajeya Singh." Rajiv's smile froze on his face when Singh added loudly: "I'm the son of Mr V.P. Singh." A journalist standing nearby joked: "He should have invited Rajiv for a holiday to St. Kitts."

A Nice Turn

● A leading cartoonist had predicted during the election campaign that there would be a sympathy wave for Rajiv Gandhi—but after the elections—implying, of course, that Rajiv would lose. And lose he did, exactly as the cartoonist had foreseen. As for the sympathy wave, while



there's no wave as such in evidence, there's a palpable sense of nostalgia for the balding young former chief executive with his shy smile.

And a lot of it has to do with the power of television. On November 29, the entire nation watched Rajiv's brief appearance on TV in which he said he accepted "the people's verdict with all humility", adding: "As I demit office, I wish to thank the people of India for the affection they have showered on me with such abundance."

It was proper, perfect, with just the right note of sentimentalism. Mr Nice Guy was back. And noticed. And suddenly a lot of Rajiv baiters were saying, well, he was not such a bad guy after all.

One group of advisers had been pressing Rajiv Gandhi to take on a harsh, confrontational tone during that speech. But the view that finally prevailed was that of Gopi Arora who helped draft the text.

V.P. Singh's first televised address to the nation, incidentally, was in contrast, entirely his own work.

Crossed Signals

● The release of Simranjit Singh Mann and his associates from Bhagalpur jail in Bihar was not without some crossed signals. On November 30, former home minister Buta Singh ordered that not only should the conspiracy case implicating him in Mrs Gandhi's assassination be withdrawn against them, but also the sedition case registered in Bihar.

But former minister of state for home affairs P. Chidambaram tried to bung a spanner into the scheme. He issued instructions to former Bihar chief minister S.N. Sinha that Mann be released only on bail.

When Singh discovered this, he was livid. He made an angry call to Sinha and said that not withdrawing the case was tantamount to counter-

manding one of the last major decisions of the outgoing prime minister. Sinha issued an immediate directive releasing Mann, and informed Singh: "As desired by you, I have issued orders for the withdrawal of the Bihar case against Sri Mann and all of his associates, and their subsequent release from judicial custody."

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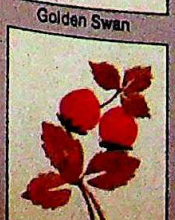

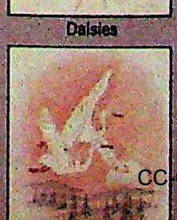

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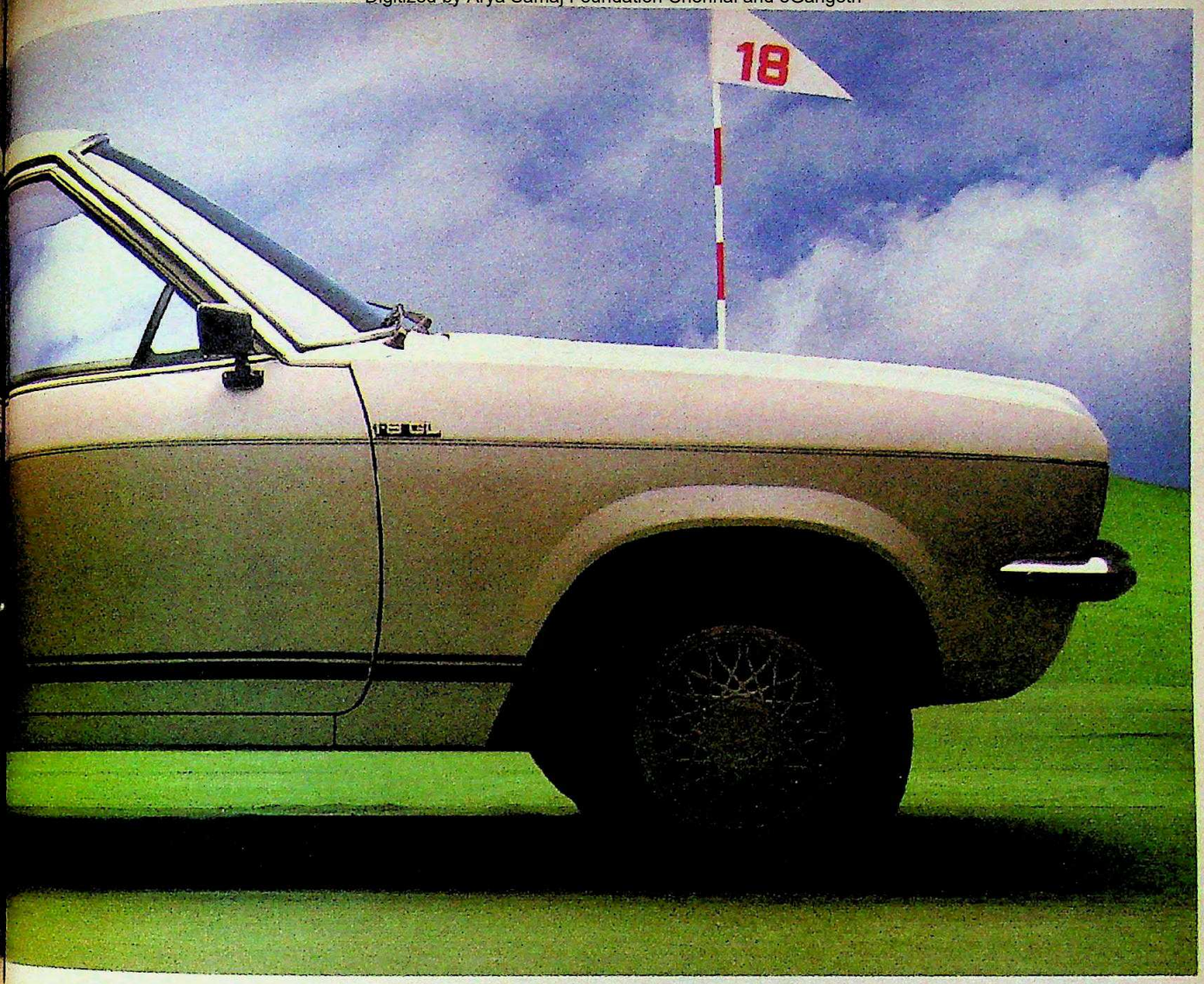

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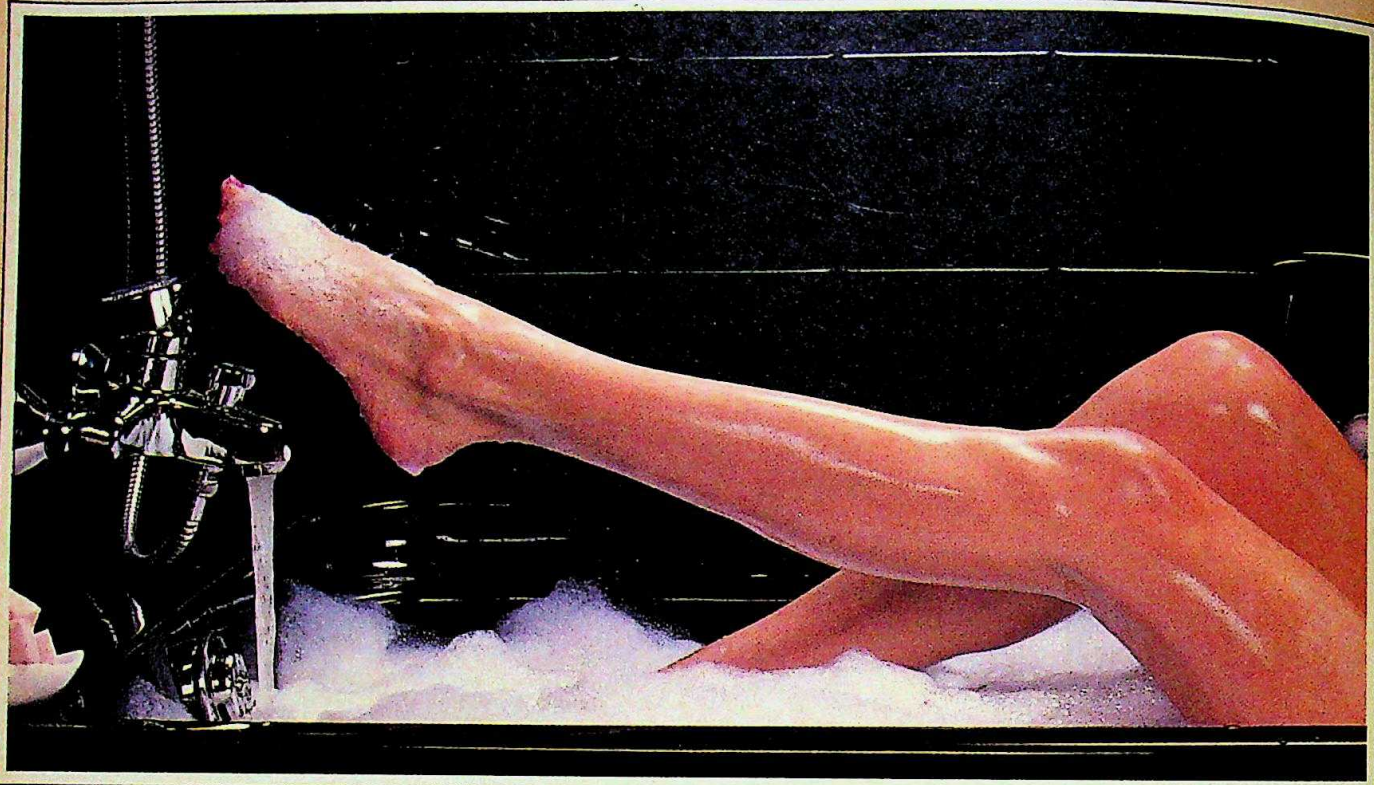

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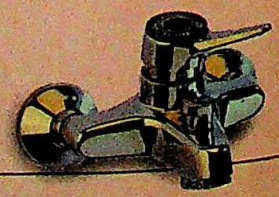

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• *After a long and dark night, the day has dawned but it is still a misty dawn.*
■ V.P. SINGH

• *I have been worrying for the last five years, now it is Vishwanath's turn to worry.*
■ RAJIV GANDHI in *The Telegraph*

• *I had wanted to perform the role of a* Tau *(elder uncle)—I will now do so from within.*
■ DEVI LAL, on his appointment as deputy prime minister

• *If the Government is the accelerator and the Opposition the brake, we are in a position to press both.*
■ L.K. ADVANI addressing a public rally in New Delhi

• *People's mandate is not for settling personal and political scores. I am against revenge.*
■ CHANDRA SHEKHAR

• *He (Rajiv) was taxed with a weakness for western and yuppie ways and for corrupt and elite cronies, and never got much benefit from these tendencies—a technological surge or comfort of good counsel.*
■ *The Washington Post*

• *The only thing Rajiv Gandhi has managed to do quite successfully is to break up the Congress Party, and that takes some doing to destroy a 100-year-old party.*
■ ARUN NEHRU

• *Rajiv or no Rajiv, we support the Congress(I).*
■ JAYALALITHA

• *We have created a vacuum, now we have to fill it.*
■ KANSHI RAM, on the performance of Bahujan Samaj Party in *The Telegraph*

• *Now I can sleep. I have had a long innings.*
■ N.D. TIWARI, after quitting as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh

• *While Rajiv Gandhi was the creation of the electronic media, V.P. Singh is a paper horse, essentially a creation of the* Indian Express, The Hindu *and* The Statesman. *In this battle, the paper hero has won, the electronic hero has lost.*
■ GIANI ZAIL SINGH in *The Indian Post*

• *My critics should eat their words. Usha is still the best in Asia.*
■ O.M. NAMBIAR, P.T. Usha's coach, in *Sportstar*

• *All that I had access to at the House of Commons were free football tickets.*
■ PAMELLA BORDES on London television, quoted in *The Times of India*

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PRIME PANTOMIME

■ It isn't difficult to find instances of the former prime minister's gaffes. But this one by him at an election meeting in Pilibhit was a real howler.

From the word go, the situation was satirical. As his entourage arrived in three helicopters, the make-shift platforms and pandals, set up for the meeting, were blown off and the crowd blinded by a cloud of dust raised by the choppers' propeller blades.

Then Rajiv began to trip up. First, he mispronounced Beesalpur, an assembly segment, as Vishalpur. Then he addressed the local MLA hopeful, Babu Ram, as Ballu Ram. As if this wasn't enough, he even shook hands with the wrong man. An obviously affronted Babu Ram then set things straight by shoving aside the wrong man and clasping the prime minister's hands with both his hands. The crowd loved it all, bursting into laughter.

Moral: putting your best foot forward always helps. Even as others put theirs into their mouth.

BALLOT BRIBE

■ Counting agents had a few surprises in store for them during the recent elections. For along with the customary stamp on the ballot paper, some innovative voters had added other things too. For example, a lady voter left a mark on the paper definitely more colourful than the indelible ink—her lipstick imprint.

However, what took the cake was a Rs 20 bill that suddenly fluttered out of a ballot sheet during counting in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh. Caught totally off-guard, the astonished agents opened the sheet to discover that the bill came with a message: the money was to be divided equally between the President, the prime minister, the election commissioner and the chief minister of the state. The irreverent voter had yet another request: please get my work done now.

Obviously, it's a voter totally unaffected by the screaming campaign against corruption.

PRISON PASSIONS

■ The life and times of Charles Sobhraj don't raise much dust any more. But his partner in crime, Narendra Singh, certainly does. Having spent the last 22 months confined in a Lucknow jail, he has made an unusual request to the local additional sessions judge: he wants to watch the popular teleserials, *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat*, on a video cassette recorder.

His reason: being behind bars has alienated him from mainstream Indian culture. Besides the alienation from popular culture, he thinks that a little entertainment will certainly go a long way in relieving him of the monotony and tension of prison life. And he also fervently believes that watching the religious serials will surely have the necessary reformatory effect on him.

Though it remains to be seen whether the authorities grant his request or not, one thing seems certain: his prison term cannot outlast the never ending saga of the *Mahabharat*.

RAZOR YOJANA

■ After the Free Egg, Free Meal and Free Tooth Powder schemes, there seemed to be another freebie up for grabs: razors. A group of villagers crowded outside a nationalised bank in a village near Bangalore recently, demanding free razors for all under a so-called government-sponsored programme. Bank employees were puzzled for they weren't aware of any such programme.

The reason for the misunderstanding was finally traced to Doordarshan's recent publicity blitz on the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana. Given the last government's penchant for pre-election magnanimity and its westernised image, the villagers had mistaken the word rozgar for razor.

Obviously their inability to figure out the not-quite subtle difference between the words razor and rozgar show that the status of Hindi is on the razor's edge.

BOMB TEASE

■ The presence of all those Black Cat commandos, sniffer dogs and metal detectors has created a sense of paranoia in the capital. As a result, its residents tend to be a rather high-strung lot. Their nervousness was aggravated recently when they spotted a cord dangling suspiciously from a brief-case lying on the steps of a city building.

A panicked group of persons immediately called the bomb disposal squad who arrived on the explosive scene with amazing speed. Using their expertise, they gingerly prised open the brief-case. In an anticlimactic end, what was presumed would be a detonator turned out to be nothing but a bottle of rum and an underwear whose cord was innocuously dangling outside. The bomb-happy squad personnel had no other option but to disappear from the scene discreetly, a sheepish grin on their faces.

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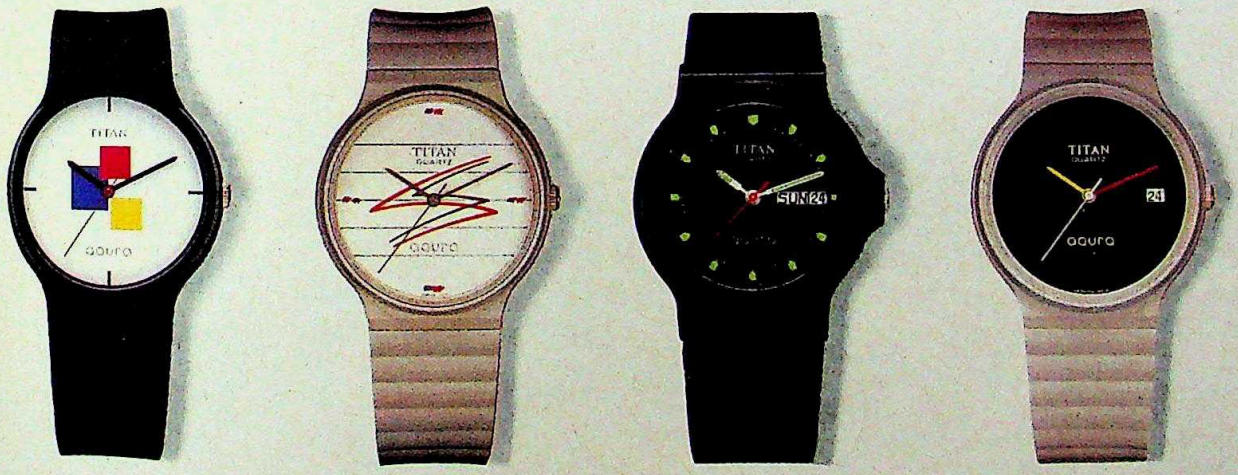

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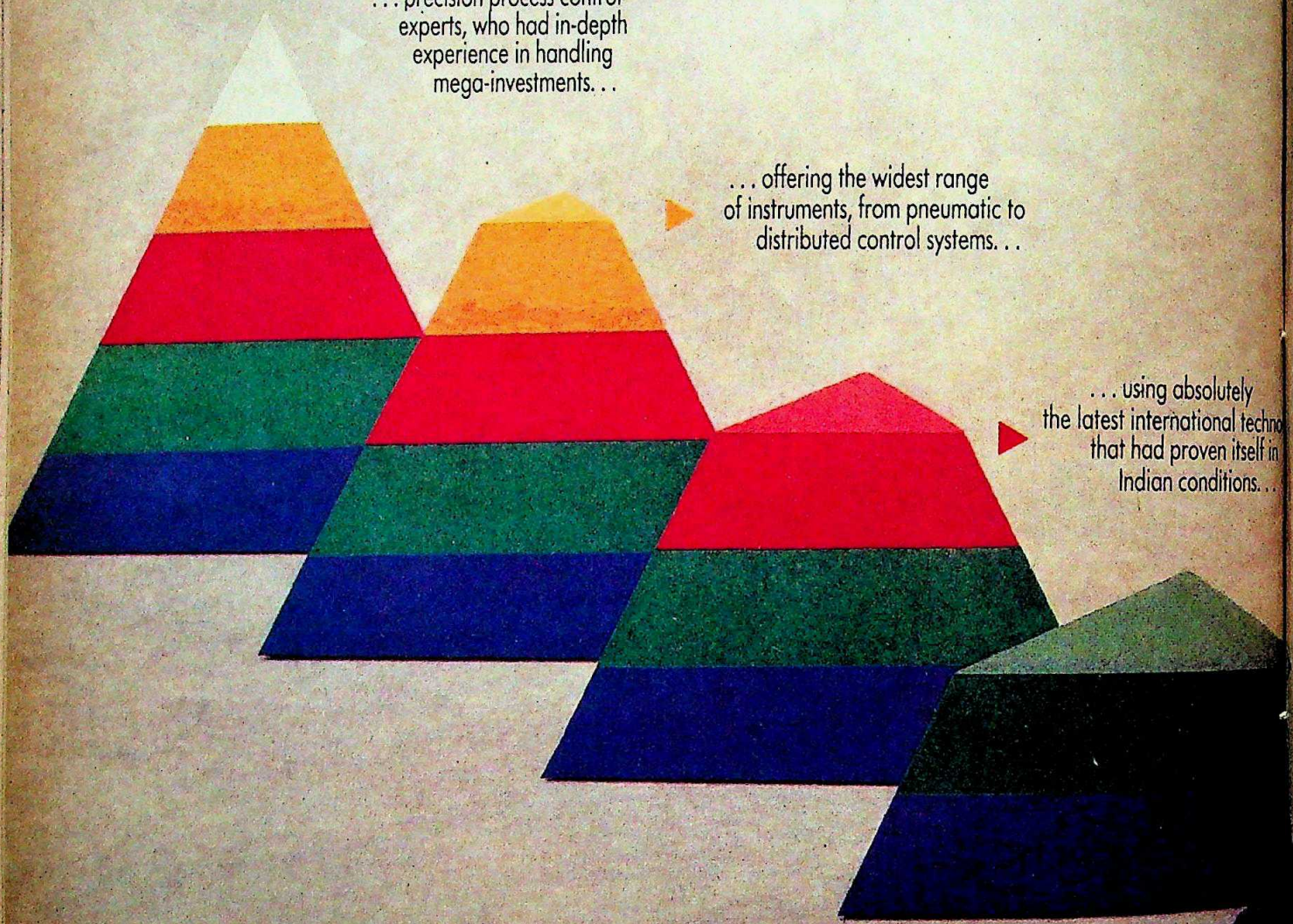

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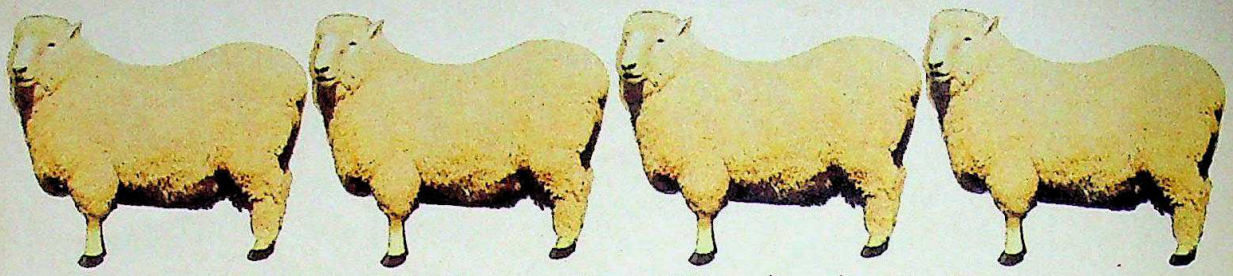

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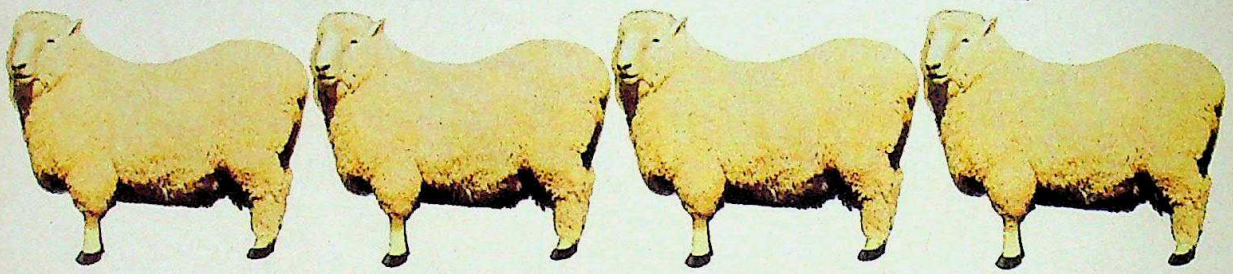

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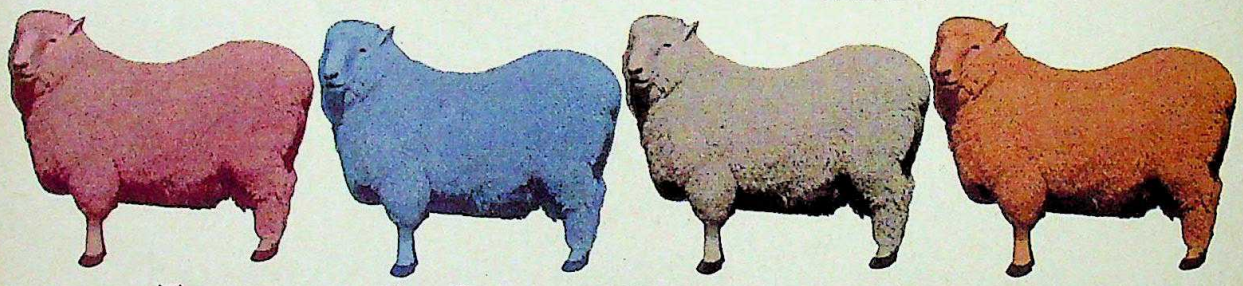

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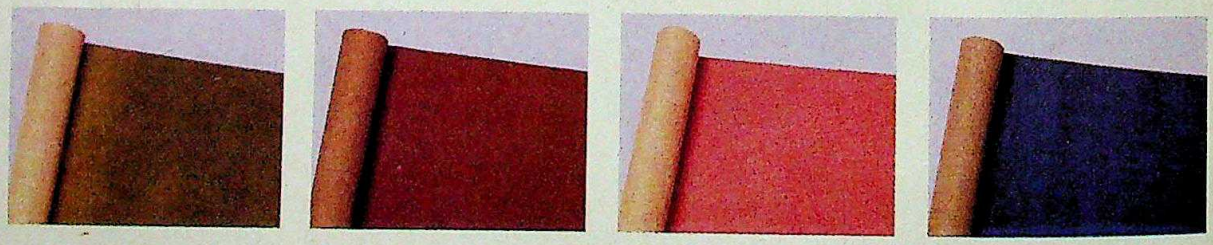

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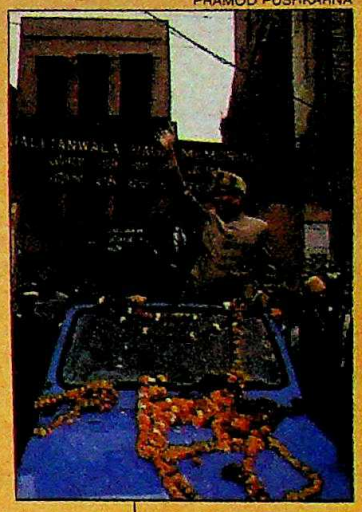
Promise of Change

THIS was the fortnight that was. A disorderly transition turned into a quiet political triumph; a cabinet dispensation that is difficult to fault; the sidelining of potential trouble-makers and an atmosphere of unobtrusive authority. Even the tragic hostage-taking of the home minister's daughter by Kashmir terrorists failed to dampen the increasingly upbeat mood as the new Government slipped silently into gear. V.P. Singh's 'misty dawn' seems to be clearing with each passing day to reveal a subtle but significant difference in style and substance.

"India likes to be governed, and not ruled," says a Bombay businessman elsewhere in this issue. And that is the crucial difference now. India is being governed and no longer exists under the imperial rule that characterised the final Rajiv years. The sudden lifting of the oppressive veil of security is merely one example. But it is a crucial one. The sight of the prime minister riding through Amritsar, the crucible of terrorism, in an open jeep is just the kind of reassuring signal that the country—and Punjab—needs.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



The prime minister's visit to Amritsar was a reassuring signal.

The dispensation of the Cabinet by V.P. Singh was difficult to fault.

PRASHANT PANJIAR

Much of the credit belongs to V.P. Singh. Gone is the wimpish image that has hobbled his political career, the indecisiveness that had become his political signature. The office seems to have transformed the man. If the selection of a Muslim as home minister and his Punjab visit were uncharacteristically bold initiatives, it is equally obvious that he has stamped his style on the functioning of his government. The message is unmistakable: continuity and subtle change.

The promise may turn out to be illusory. After the Rajiv Gandhi experience, there is a wariness about putting too much faith in India's political leadership. But already, barely a fortnight after coming to power, the fund of goodwill for the new prime minister has increased in considerable measure. Unlike Rajiv, V.P. Singh has come into office with the lowest of expectations. That is an advantage that he has exploited with unusual skill and tact.

There has been no witch-hunt or show trials, no attempt to denigrate the previous government or blame it for the problems that plague the country. The security around Rajiv has been increased rather than decreased, as many had falsely feared. That is a sign of maturity and grace, attributes that seemed to have been lost forever to Indian politics.

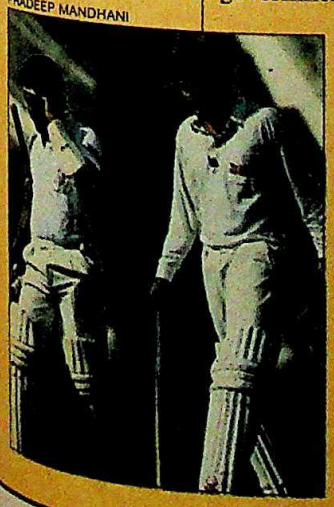
There is, undoubtedly, a long way to go before this government can establish its credentials on the basis of political and parliamentary security. But certainly, in the eyes of the people, V.P. Singh's mandate has already acquired a legitimacy that goes beyond its numerical strength in the Lok Sabha. That is as much a tribute to his own values and commitments, as it is to the sagacity of the illiterate Indian voter who saw in him the return to sobriety and decentralisation of power.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

The abduction of Sayeed's daughter failed to dampen the upbeat mood.

The Indian cricket team transformed itself into a fighting unit.

PRADEEP MANDHANI



The challenges are daunting. But no longer do they seem insurmountable. The faults are in the system. That is what requires change. It is a system where a Farooq Abdullah can ignore his people's problems while jaunting around the world and still continue as chief minister though he has lost his mandate many times over.

That is the greatest promise that V.P. Singh brings; the promise of sober change. It is perhaps fittingly symbolic that the Indian cricket team, perennial underdogs, has welded itself into a fighting unit capable of upsetting any odds. Judging by its initial start, the National Front Government holds out a similar hope for the future.

—DILIP BOBB

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NEW GOVERNMENT

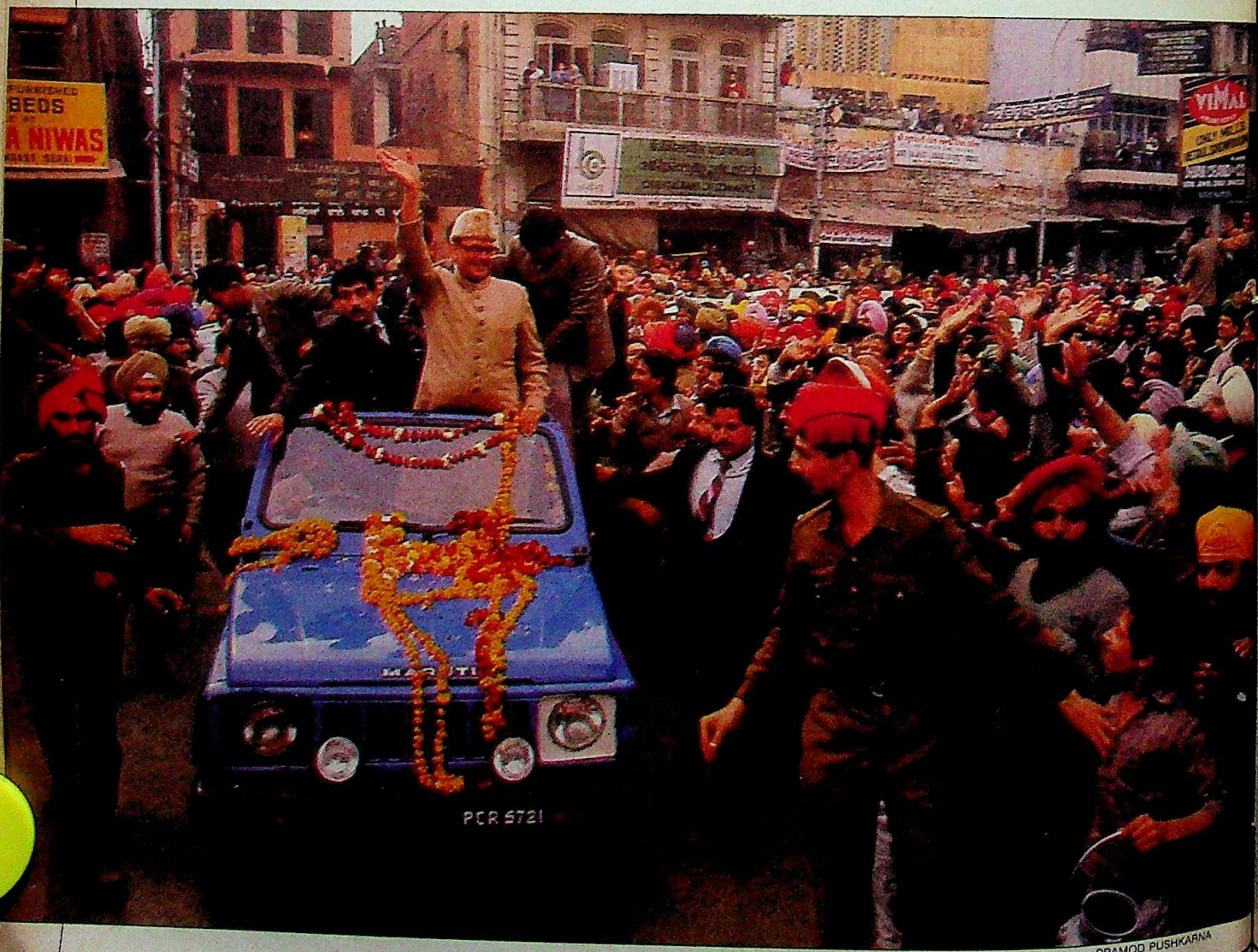
Promising Start

FOR the nation's first fur-capped prime minister, it was a fortnight of perpetual motion. Of action. Decisions. Long-term strategies. Of forming a government. Playing honest broker between ambitious colleagues. And the most harrowing task of all, overseeing the nerve-shattering five-day negotiation that led ultimately to the release of Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed's kidnapped daughter, Rubaiya, by Kashmiri extremists (*see Special Report*).

Within three days of his swearing-in, V.P. Singh had not only put together a balanced and workman-like 18-member cabinet, but also managed to iron out major conflicts in the allocation of portfolios. And even as the kidnap ordeal convulsed the Government, it barely slowed it down. Mufti himself attended a half-dozen cabinet panel meetings to clear appointments of senior civil servants including the lieutenant governor of Delhi. At week's end Singh was confidently preparing to prove his majority support in the Lok Sabha in the forthcoming mandatory confidence motion. The prime minister was taking charge. There were no back-seat drivers in the front seat. This was evident not only from the allocation of ministries, but also from his dramatic visit to the Golden Temple—a decision he personally made just a day before the actual visit. Says Santosh Bharatiya, a newly-elected member of the Janata Dal from Uttar Pradesh: "Though we believe in collective leadership and no hero-worshipping, in running the Government it is the prime minister who has to take the initiative. And V.P. Singh has shown that quality during his first week in office. He has emerged as consensus politician."

Formation of the Cabinet was the first major test of Singh's own credibility. For it would reflect whether Singh meant business when he talked about integrity, ethics and a practical approach to governance. He meandered carefully, and with

V.P. Singh in an open jeep in Amritsar: positive signals



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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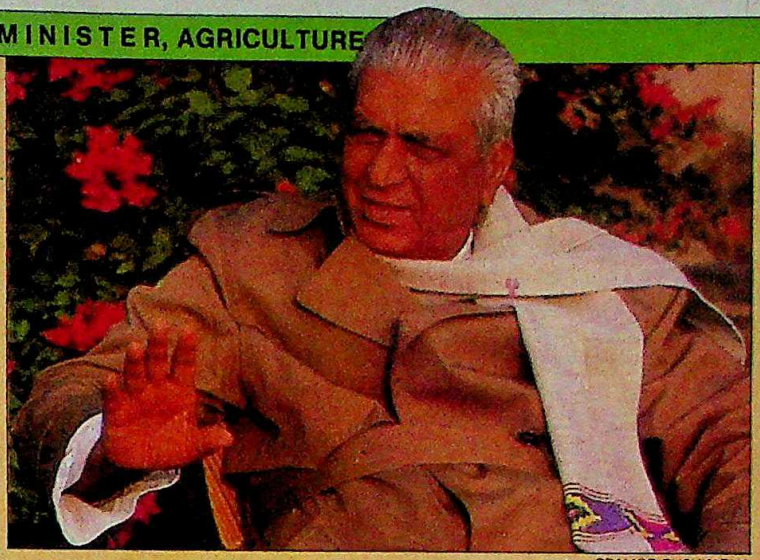
DEVI LAL, 75, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, AGRICULTURE

It's been a long ride for the 75-year-old Devi Lal from his Teja Khera farmhouse in Sirsa to 3, Race Course Road, the residence of the deputy prime minister. Also minister for agriculture, Lal outlines his plans for the agricultural sector:

"Smooth supply of water and electricity to all farmers is my first priority. Our farmers are under tremendous financial debt which is why we promised to waive loans up to Rs 10,000.

"I also want to increase support prices. Then, irrigation facilities have to be improved.

"Under no previous plan did the expenditure on the agricultural front go beyond 34 per cent. I am going to ensure that it goes up to 50 per cent. Disparity between the rural and the urban sector has to be removed."



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

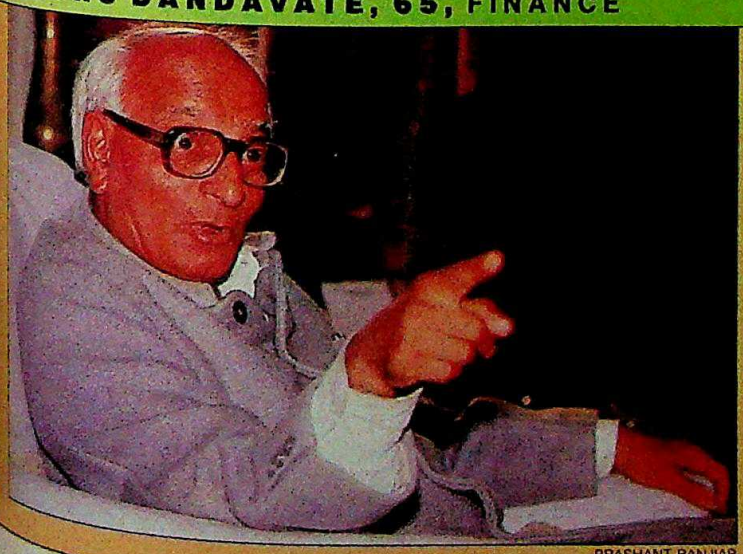
the native shrewdness that is becoming his hallmark, he consulted all top leaders but kept the ultimate choices close to his chest. And the Cabinet that finally emerged was that of Prime Minister V.P. Singh. Power brokers were accommodated but weren't allowed to dominate or overwhelm the structure. Of the 18 ministers, 14, including four from the other electoral partners, are personally loyal to Singh, not to any other Janata Dal leader. The remaining three are Devi Lal loyalists.

The loyalty factor taken care of, Singh also took into account another key consideration in forming his cabinet—giving his government an ideological balance. Madhu Dandavate, George Fernandes, Sharad Yadav, Nilamani Routray, M.S. Gurupadaswamy and Ram Vilas Paswan are former socialists. K.P. Unnikrishnan and I.K. Gujral are known for their left-of-centre leanings. And right of centre are leaders like Arun Nehru, Arif Mohammed Khan, Devi Lal, and Ajit Singh. V.P. Singh told INDIA TODAY: "While selecting members of the Cabinet, I had in mind background, stature and political experience. To each, according to his liking and thinking, has been my basic consideration."

NEXT, the allocation of key departments was the outcome of careful planning in terms of competence and image-projection. The new Cabinet, whatever may be the drawbacks, cannot be criticised for planting square pegs in round holes. Contrary to general expectations that Singh would retain the finance department, he sprang a surprise by choosing for the slot Madhu Dandavate, highly-respected parliamentarian with an unblemished record of integrity. On this critical portfolio rests the survival and credibility of the Government. Dandavate is expected to produce a "pro-poor" budget. But equally important, Dandavate will be called upon to lead an assault against black money and big business privateering in consonance with Singh's election promise—to delink big money from the electoral process while putting the fear of god into economic offenders protected under the *ancien regime*.

What observers call a master-stroke is the US-educated Ajit Singh's selection as industry minister. There were several hopefuls for the post, including Fernandes. But Singh stuck to Ajit because he is not dogmatic, is capable of handling multinationals, and represents a practical approach to industrial modernisation. Since industrial policy is likely to be more liberal than fiscal and monetary policies, Ajit, himself a liberal, is bound to feel at home. Says he: "There's a big mess here that needs cleaning. There is a general perception that this ministry kills entrepreneurship and creates monopoly. But we'll change this image soon."

MADHU DANDAVATE, 65, FINANCE



PRASHANT PANJIAR

Unassuming and soft-spoken, Madhu Dandavate has come a long way since his days as a teacher of physics in a Bombay college. As finance minister, he is among the most powerful men in the country. Still, the tasks before him—reducing the trade and budget deficits, increasing foreign exchange reserves, checking inflation—are many and the options few. His views:

"My top priority is to check the rise in prices of essential commodities. Then, to create more jobs, we will ensure that goods that can be made by small units are not produced by large units.

"The foreign exchange position is serious. But if we are forced to borrow from abroad, we won't accept any humiliating conditions dictated by lenders like the IMF. We will try and stop the reckless import of non-essential items."

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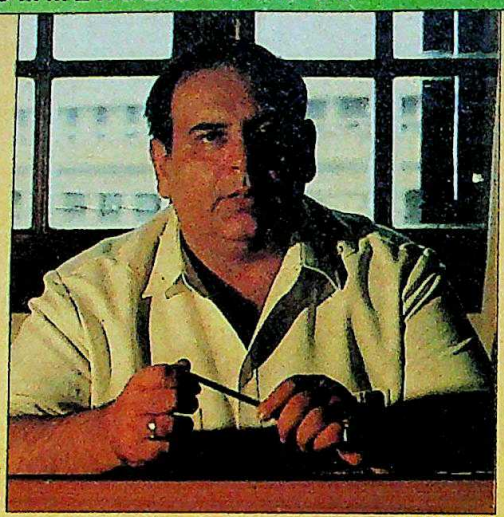
ARUN NEHRU, 45, COMMERCE & TOURISM

As Union Minister for Commerce and Tourism, Arun Nehru's task is to reduce the trade deficit and encourage tourism. A former corporate executive, Nehru brings considerable managerial expertise to his job. As minister of state for energy and internal security, he successfully handled tricky problems. Characteristically, he plunged into his job, meeting officials and personally visiting offices to review the situation. His plans:

"From now on export promotion will be the major thrust of the Government. Our policy framework is clear: raise exports and minimise imports.

"We will ensure that agencies like the State Trading Corporation (STC) do the job of exports. I can assure you that STC imports will be reduced by over Rs 1,000 crore by next year, and that non-canalised exports will rise by an equal amount.

"Tourism will be the leading foreign exchange earner. The India Tourism Development Corporation will, instead of running hotels, provide management expertise and go out of the country in search of new markets."



RAGHU RAI

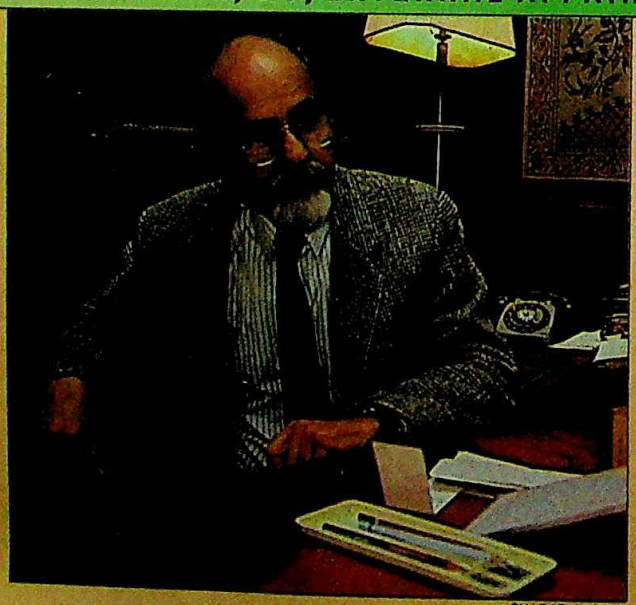
Similarly the appointment of Fernandes as railway minister has placed the fiery trade union leader in a position where, to ensure the success of his government, he will have to extract responsible behaviour from railway trade unionists rather than mollycoddle them. And no one understands the turbulent trade union politics better than Fernandes. Because of Gujral's lengthy experience as a diplomat, he was a natural choice for the post of foreign minister.

The only fix in which Singh found himself was finding a portfolio for Devi Lal whose supporters had lobbied vigorously for his appointment as home minister. But Singh chose to make him the agriculture minister. This too was a sound political decision. As home minister Devi Lal would have brought a slightly blighted look to the new Government because of widespread fears that his son Om Prakash Chautala would try and manipulate him for personal ends. As agriculture minister, the *"Tau"* of Jat politics inherits his most natural political constituency—the farmers. And in his capacity he will be able to do on a national scale what he did in Haryana—writing off peasant loans and also taking credit for the allocation of 50 per cent of the budget to the rural sector.

THE selection of Mufti Mohammed Sayeed as home minister was also acclaimed. The choice of a Muslim for this post was a reassurance to Muslims in the Hindi heartland and to the alienated militants in Kashmir that notwithstanding the Janata Dal's truce with the BJP, their interests would be protected. Also Mufti is expected to tread cautiously in dealing with Hindu fundamentalists. But there was another reason for Mufti's choice. Traditionally, because of the lesson of the challenge to Jawaharlal Nehru from home minister Sardar Patel—this portfolio has been reserved for someone without national ambitions. Mufti fits this bill. Like Buta Singh, he has no base of his own from where he can mount any national political challenge. Says Mufti: "To fight communalism and extremism is my first motto. While we believe that there is no problem which can't be solved through negotiations, we will never compromise with those who divide the country."

Though the cabinet formation is yet to

I.K. GUJRAL, 70, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS



SHARAD SAXENA

Inder Kumar Gujral's first day in office brought an immediate reminder of the delicate diplomatic course the new Government has to chart: a high-level Sri Lankan delegation was waiting to see him about the pull-out of Indian troops. Gujral, former ambassador to the Soviet Union, was easily the most suitable choice for foreign minister. On foreign policy priorities, he says:

"The priorities will be determined by our party's manifesto which emphasises improved relations with our neighbours, primarily Sri Lanka and Nepal. We have inherited a certain situation. History can't be undone.

"Given the type of goodwill we are trying to express, we hope to receive a similar response from all our neighbours. We want our relations with Pakistan to be warmer and closer. On China, it is possible to further the relationship. Then, we would like to see an Afghanistan that is independent, democratic and non-aligned.

"The Soviet Union has been a reliable friend. With the United States, we would like to open our doors and windows in order to improve further on our relationship."

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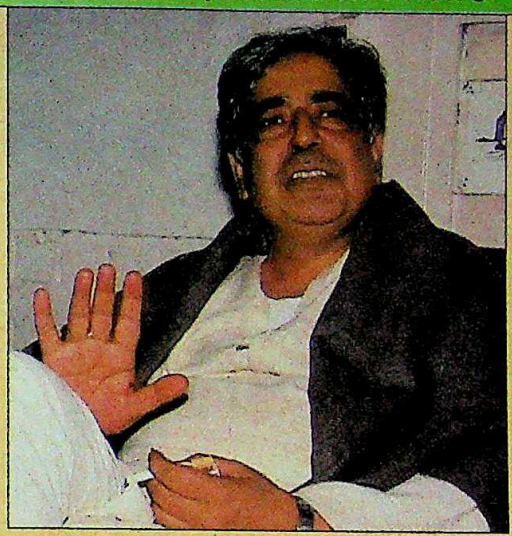
MUFTI MOHAMMED SAYEED, 53, HOME AFFAIRS

A lightweight Kashmiri politician, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed must never have imagined that he would be the nation's first Muslim home minister. His mild manners and secular image won him the coveted post. But his North Block office, vacated by Buta Singh, will not be a bed of roses. The shocking kidnapping of his daughter soon after he assumed office was evidence of that. His mettle will be further tested in the months to come. Says Mufti about his assignment:

"We have to bring the various communities together. The politics of hatred and the gun have to to be replaced by harmonious relations. We would rather sit in the Opposition or on the road than exploit religious sentiments.

"We will not let blood flow in the sacred land of Ayodhya, which is a testimony to our secular traditions. We will solve the Ram Janmabhoomi problem by involving the people of Ayodhya.

"While extremism will be dealt with firmly, we will never encourage terrorism. We believe in winning the hearts of the people and not in scoring a victory by eliminating anyone physically."



SHARAD SAXENA

be completed, the overall message is clear. V.P. Singh and his 'A' team—comprising Nehru, Khan, Mufti, Gujral and Fernandes—have kept the key portfolios. Nehru was chosen for the most important commerce department—which controls Rs 60,000 crore worth of foreign trade. Khan was inducted to deal with the high-profile civil aviation and energy departments. It was clear that Singh proposes to run the Government with the active participation of younger elements like Nehru, Khan, Paswan and Yadav who were all dealing with both economic and infrastructural portfolios.

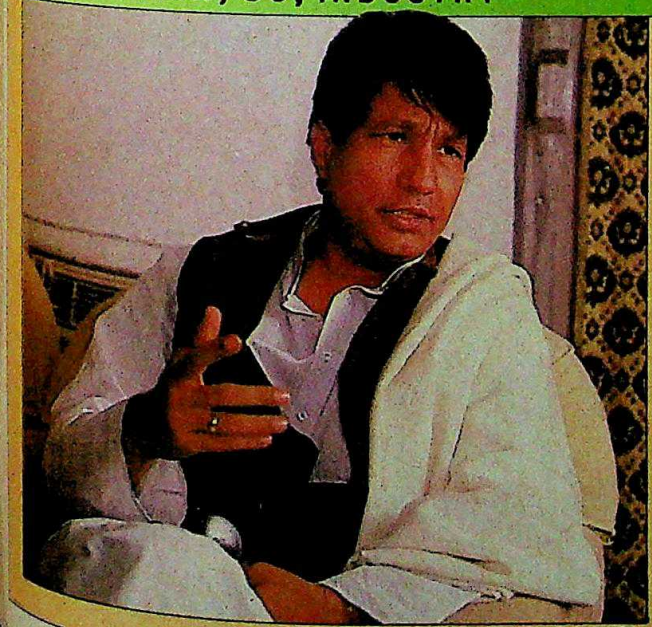
Singh kept defence and personnel because the two departments will play the most significant role as the new Government's mission begins to unfold. Singh is committed to find out the names of the Bofors pay-off recipients and this can be done through the Defence Ministry and the CBI which comes under the personnel department.

IF Singh succeeds in tightening the screw on defence purchases, he will score a major victory over the defence agents responsible for his ouster. Additionally, elimination of kickbacks and irregularities in defence purchases will also ultimately control the runaway defence budget to which Singh is committed in order to divert money from defence expenditures to a pro-poor budget.

The caste orientation of the new Cabinet did reflect the caste domination of the Janata Dal which had 14 of 18 ministers excluding the prime minister. As against one Thakur, there were three Jats—Devi Lal, Ajit Singh, Nathu Ram Mirdha—giving it a totally rural orientation, two Muslims and two Scheduled Caste members. To minimise the north-south divide, over 25 per cent cabinet-level representation was given to the south, even though it threw up only three party MPs.

Another buzzword doing the rounds of the new Government is decentralisation. Following strictly the cabinet committee system, the prime minister constituted five important panels to deal with basic issues like price rise, Panchayati Raj, autonomy to the electronic media, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir, right to information and a committee on right to work. The panels have been given time

AJIT SINGH, 50, INDUSTRY



SHARAD SAXENA

When Ajit Singh returned from the US in 1986 to take over his father Charan Singh's position in the Lok Dal, few gave him even an outside chance in the bad, bad world of Indian politics. Less than four years later, he has confounded all his critics, by making it to the Union ministry. Oddly enough, for the son of a man who was known as the champion of the rural areas, Ajit Singh is industry minister. His views:

"Industry has to produce more goods but at the same time it has to generate more jobs. In all developed countries, the proportion of workers in agriculture has shrunk but not in India. The trend has to change.

"Big business houses will have to meet their export obligations. If small and cottage industries can export, why not large corporations?

"About Maruti, I am not saying that efficient cars are not needed. But the Rs 500 crore in scarce resources invested in it should have been spent on improving the public transport system."

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THE PRIME MINISTER

Refreshing Openness

THE next time you see a car sail past you on a New Delhi road and the man in it seems to resemble the prime minister, take a second look. It may be the prime minister.

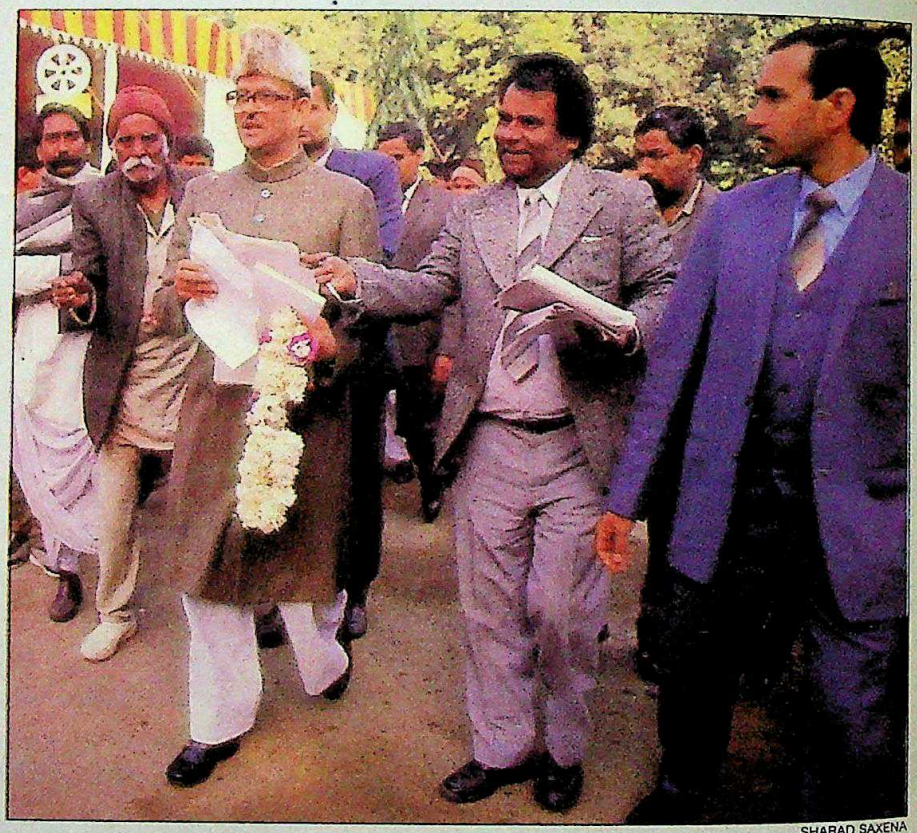
For the first time ever, the country's head of government will be driving around the city like an ordinary man. The customary dozen bullet-proof Mercedes and Contessas have been got rid of. The air-conditioned ambulance will stay home. There'll be just three escort cars. And, this is only the beginning of the dismantling—ordered by Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh—of the Rs 50-lakh-a-day security apparatus that once cocooned Rajiv Gandhi.

For starters, the contingent of over 400 special securitymen forming the elaborate three-ring security circus has been pared down to a detail of about 15. Singh has a handful of guards in the inner ring and a bare dozen for the outer one. No barricades block the roads leading to his house on 28 Lodhi Estate. Visitors are only required to pass through a metal detecting frame outside.

Also missing from Singh's house are the expensive X-ray machines for checking visitors' belongings. The ferry cars used to carry ministers to the prime minister's house have been dispensed with. Visitors can now park their vehicles outside. They won't be towed away. A house next door has been acquired to function as his office.

Singh made his intentions clear immediately after assuming office. A day after, when over 500 well-wishers and political colleagues descended on his three-bedroom house, a dozen guards of the elite Special Protection Group (SPG) threw a ring around him. Singh was furious. "Please don't try to keep me away from the people," he said. "They are my best protectors. The prime minister's chair is temporary but people are permanent." That was the first hint of the sea change to come.

The new prime minister has refused to wear a bullet-proof jacket arguing that he isn't on anybody's hit list. His family too has declined to use bullet-proof cars and escorts. His wife Sita Devi, his sons and his daughter-in-law go out in ordinary official cars, accompanied by two armed guards. Traffic on the road along which Singh travels won't be blocked for more than five minutes. And all other roads on his route will be kept open till the last minute. Securitymen haven't yet recovered from the shock of the new rules. But when Singh ordered that policemen should not line the route, they put their foot down.



SHARAD SAXENA

Singh with supporters: accessible

Other changes, however, are being carried out. The new prime minister has ordered that the 1,200-strong SPG, which costs over Rs 2 crore a month to maintain, be either disbanded or reduced in numbers. Senior officers on deputation from the army or the states are to be sent back. The one concession Singh has made relates to Rajiv Gandhi. He will be allowed to retain the personnel he requires for his personal security.

But easily the most obvious change is at the Prime Minister's Office. Visitors are still frisked but the corridors leading to the office are not crowded by brusque Sten gun-toting guards. Even a deputy secretary who served Rajiv in the Prime Minister's Office and who is now awaiting transfer orders admitted: "There's a fresh air blowing through the whole place, a sense of freedom."

Rajiv's ministers and Congress(I) MPs would envy the access their Janata Dal counterparts have to the prime minister. They don't have to wait for the telephone operator to locate the prime minister's private secretary for permission to put through calls even to low-level personal staff members. Singh's new private secretary, H.P. Sharma, himself picks up the phone. And he has been instructed not to refuse calls without informing the prime minister of the identity of the caller. Says Singh: "If people can walk into any office without fear, they will be the most powerful check on the Government."

The difference between the old order and the new seems to be that while Rajiv revelled in the elaborate security set-up, which even now continues to burgeon, Singh despises it, as he does pomp in his life style.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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GEORGE FERNANDES, 59, RAILWAYS

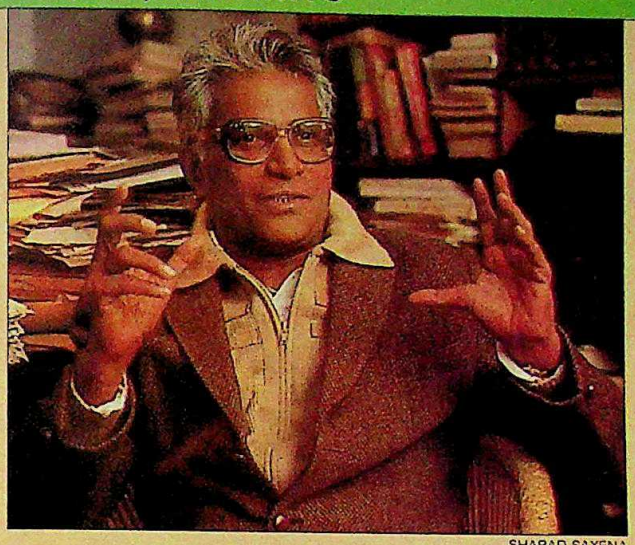
Way back in 1974, George Fernandes led a nationwide rail strike, in the process paralysing the ministry he now heads.

The former industry minister is determined not to be a passenger in his ministry. He spent the firs days "sinking his teeth int the problem" and came up with a mouthful:

"The passenger service sector is running at a tremendous loss. We should decide whether the state should subsidise superfast air-conditioned express travel or do something about the ordinary man who is forced to sit on the roof and travel.

"The railways are facing a resource crunch. I'm toying with the idea of involving local people by floating bonds and getting states to share the financial burden.

"Our freight revenues are showing a decline. We have to do something about the powerful truck operators' lobby that cuts into our business."



SHARAD SAXENA

limits to submit their proposals for implementation. In fact, the first Cabinet meeting decided to give priorities to issues on which there will be hardly any opposition from even the Congress(I). The subjects likely to be discussed in the short Parliament session are:

- Bill seeking autonomy to Doordarshan and All India Radio;
- Legislation recommending far-reaching electoral reforms;
- Bill to appoint a Lok Pal which will be empowered to look into corruption charges against cabinet ministers, including the prime minister.
- A comprehensive bill for Panchayati Raj incorporating the changes suggested by the DMK and the Marxists.

The prime minister wants to achieve these objectives with the active involvement of all ministers. Unlike his predecessor who accumulated a high level of power concentration in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Singh has made it clear to the ministers and the officials that he would not like his office to intervene in any ministry. He has also begun the process for pruning his own office as well as the all-powerful Cabinet Secretariat which controls half the Government and has been serving as a parallel cabinet without any direct responsibility and with unlimited funds at its disposal.

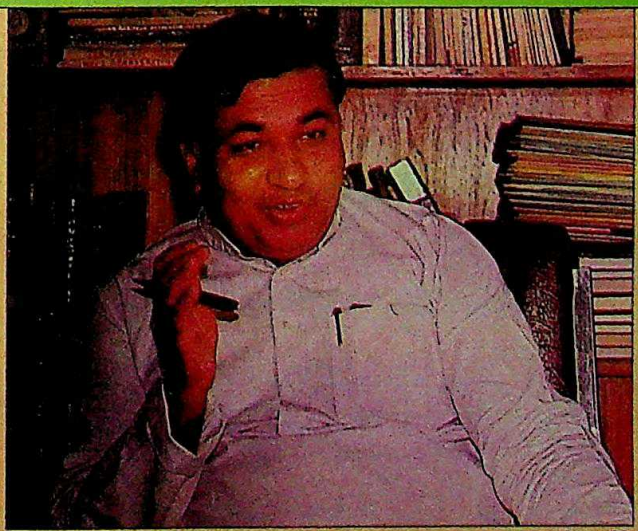
SINCE senior government secretaries had become used to dealing with the PMO directly, many of them tried to follow the same track after V.P. Singh took office and sought appointments with the prime minister for seeking his direction. They were quietly told that they would have to deal with their own ministers and Singh would meet them in groups if there was any need. Even in the selection of senior bureaucrats, Singh has given total freedom to the ministers and other leaders. For example, when the question of choosing a new chief secretary for the Punjab Government came up for discussion, various people suggested numerous names. But Singh made it clear that the decision should be left to the new Governor Nirmal Mukherjee who had to deal with the situation. Similarly, there was a lot of pressure on Singh to rehabilitate Bhure Lal who suffered at the hands of Rajiv's clique as director of enforcement. But Singh made it clear that only the finance minister would decide the assignment for Bhure Lal. And finally, in the selection of a civil servant for a key ministry like Information and Broadcasting, the decision was left to the new Minister P. Upendra. Singh told INDIA TODAY: "The PMO should not be involved in taking decisions in areas which are the

ARIF MOHAMMED KHAN, 38, ENERGY & CIVIL AVIATION

For the past three years Arif Mohammed Khan stood solidly behind V.P. Singh as he took on Rajiv Gandhi. Now, as the youngest cabinet minister in charge of both civil aviation and energy, he faces a different challenge—of restoring the credibility of the airlines system and ensuring sufficient power. His priorities:

"We will remove the manmade shortage of power in the country. We will see to it that none of the industries suffers in production due to the lack of power supply in the central sector. If all goes well we will be able to create a corporate adline: If there is a light in a remote corner of an Indian village, think of us.

"In civil aviation, we would like to create a situation where people set their watches by the flight timings. I have told the airline officials that the Goverment does not mind giving them the best service conditions. But they must deliver or else...."



JAGAN NEGI

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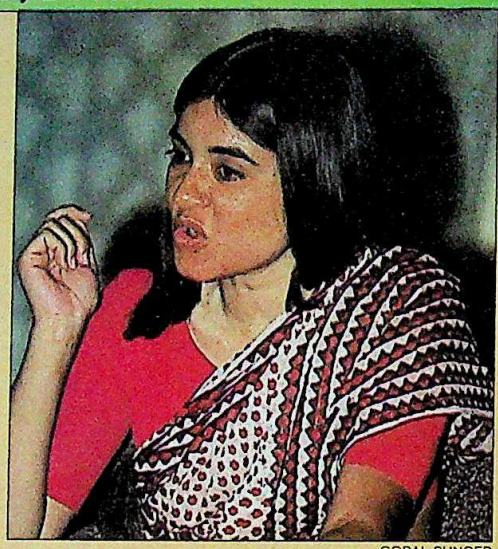
MANEKA GANDHI, 33, ENVIRONMENT & FORESTS

The towel-clad model of the '70s is now a minister. Maneka Gandhi has emerged from the traumas of her personal and political life—her husband Sanjay Gandhi's death, her subsequent rejection by the Gandhi family, the tragic death of her father, a humiliating defeat in the 1984 polls at the hands of brother-in-law Rajiv Gandhi—and finally acquired an identity of her own. As a prolific columnist, the Janata Dal general secretary has earned the reputation of being a forceful advocate of environmental issues. That ensured her a berth as Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment & Forests. Says she:



GOPAL SUNGER

"I see my new appointment as a victory for environmentalists. It is too early to say exactly what my approach will be.

"We haven't implemented environmental laws properly. On the Narmada project controversy, I have to go into the details of the project before making a categorical statement.

"Although I view the Green Party as a concept, right now I am not into it. Instead, I will try to re-green the country. We will seek more support from voluntary agencies and ensure that they are heard at all levels."

responsibilities of the ministers concerned. My office should be dealing with major policy directions and monitoring and leave it to others to contribute in a government which means business."

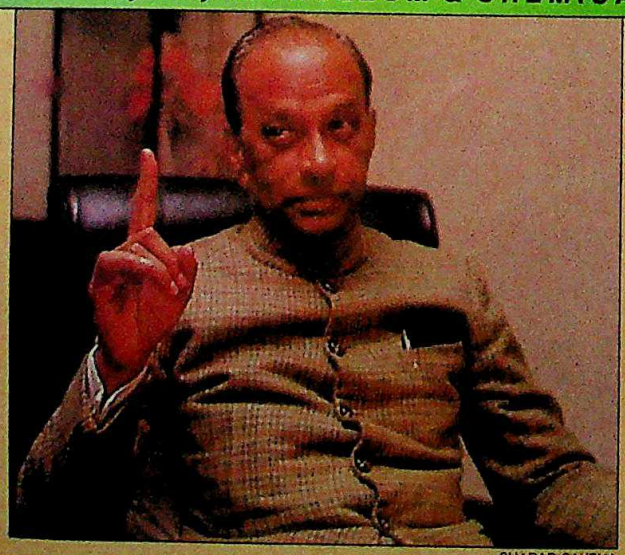
Singh was also determined to telex yet another message: that he would adopt a reconciliatory and not confrontationist approach on national political issues. This was immediately reflected in his first televised speech to the nation, a speech he wrote himself. Though parts of the speech sounded like a script from a Hindi film, it did have an emotional poetic impact on the audience. He said: *"Sarkar ki tijori khali hai, dilon me aag lagi hui hai, zameen lahu se rangeen hai aur keematon ne insaani jaane sasti kar di hai. Hamare paas do hi taakaten hai: apni himmat aur aap ka vishwas"* (The Government's coffers are empty, there is a fire raging in our hearts, the earth is stained with blood and high prices have made human lives cheap. We have only two strengths: our courage and your faith). Said Shatrughan Sinha, the film star who campaigned actively for the Janata Dal and other opposition candidates during the elections: "For me it was Raja Saheb's new face. His delivery and tone of each word was so effective that it would need actors like us to practise for over a month to create that kind of impact with the masses."

So far Singh's reconciliatory approach has kept his party hawks at bay. They had been attempting to prevail on him to dissolve all the state governments where the Congress(I) has lost badly, remove immediately all senior civil servants like the cabinet secretary, the officials in the PMO, heads of both the CBI and the Intelligence Bureau (IB) who were key political players during the Rajiv era, launch prosecution against Lalit Suri, Satish Sharma, Amitabh Bachchan and compulsorily retire Congress(I) governors. But Singh put his foot down even on the immediate sacking of IB chief M.K. Narayanan. Singh's view is that if the new Government wants to create a clean record, then it should not follow the vindictive and extra-legal practices of the Rajiv Gandhi government. Officials who had become the former government's political handmaidens and the executors of its vindictive policies, Singh avers, should simply be ignored and left to repent on their own. So, during his first days in office, he ignored the press secretary to

M.S. GURUPADASWAMY, 67, PETROLEUM & CHEMICALS

With the Janata Dal almost wiped out in Karnataka, V.P. Singh's choice for a cabinet member from the state fell on the stern-faced M.S. Gurupadaswamy, a Rajya Sabha member.

Gurupadaswamy was a member of Mrs Gandhi's cabinet from 1967 until 1969, when he parted ways with her. Now, 20 years later, he finds himself a central minister once again, this time in charge of petroleum and chemicals. His priorities:



SHARAD SAXENA

"Oil, gas and chemicals are important to the economy. This ministry must act as a catalyst for economic growth.

"Adequate quantities of kerosene and cooking gas must reach the consumers. We will get states to streamline the distribution system. We will do our best to increase oil production. And try to simplify procedures and rationalise systems to make them more functional.

"The issue of allowing drugs banned elsewhere into the country is a grey area. Not all of them might be harmful."

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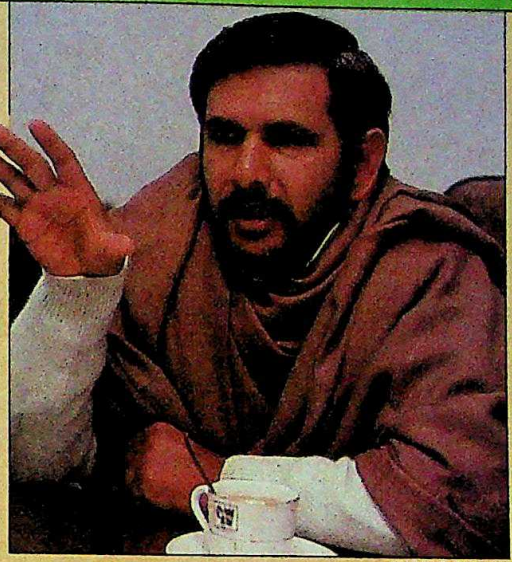
SHARAD YADAV, 44, TEXTILES & FOOD PROCESSING

Sharad Yadav, union minister for textiles and food processing, looks uncomfortable in his newly painted office in Udyog Bhavan—which handloom department officials are working overtime to decorate. An engineer from Jabalpur, Yadav is happier in Hindi than in English. His priorities:

"We will stress on handicrafts and the handloom sector. This is our priority area. We will try and speed up the new textile policy paper under Abid Hussain. If the Abid Hussain Committee cannot recommend anything, then we will set up another committee.



SHARAD SAXENA

"Our party had opposed Pepsi. I have asked for the Pepsi file. We will review it. We will look at how the project benefits farmers. We will have to look into its advantages and disadvantages before taking a decision.

"Our policy on food processing is two-pronged. We will give a new thrust to deep-sea fishing. Secondly we will develop cheap food for pregnant mothers. Till now the department was encouraging elitist foods like soft drinks which poor people can't even relate to. We will not encourage multinationals to come into food processing."

the prime minister, G. Parthasarthy, hardly bothered to consult T.N. Seshan, Montek Ahluwalia and refused to seek any advice from the RAW and IB chiefs. But then a few symbolic sackings were made. Finance secretary Gopi Arora was replaced with Bimal Jalan, Romesh Bhandari was moved out from Delhi, and S.S. Ray forced to resign from Punjab.

But even as the new Government was sliding into gear, it was not without a sense of the enormously weighty problems it faces. Some of them come from within his own government. There's the irrepressible Devi Lal to contend with. He loves to keep a high profile and to speak out on sensitive policy, political and governmental issues without consulting party colleagues. And irresponsible utterances can serve to embarrass or even destabilise the precariously-balanced National Front Government. For example, seven hours after his swearing-in as deputy prime minister—a post which he chose himself—he demanded that he be flown to Madras in an IAF plane to attend the wedding of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Karunanidhi's daughter.

THIS was in sharp contrast to the new image of austerity that V.P. Singh's Government was trying to project. So, while the prime minister travelled in an Indian Airlines plane, the deputy prime minister was given a BSF aircraft and the whole incident became the object of public ridicule.

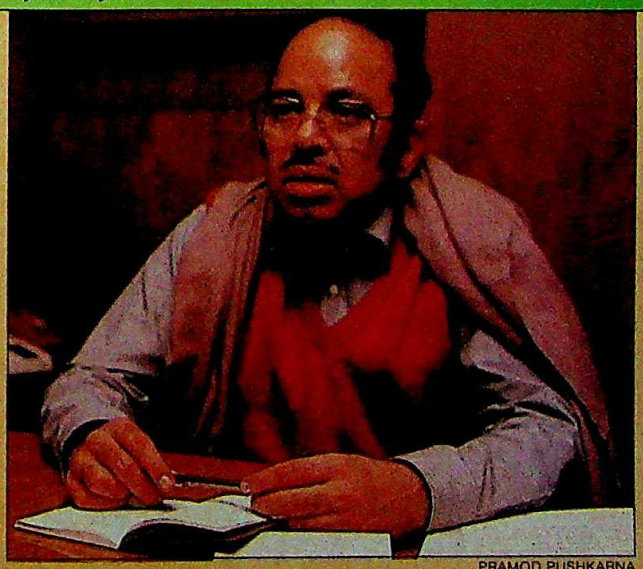
If that wasn't enough, Devi Lal made a public announcement in Madras that the Centre had decided to release an extra 50,000 tonnes of rice for Tamil Nadu. It was done without anyone's knowledge. And to make matters worse, no department had at that time been allocated to him. Later, the shoot-from-the-lip Jat spat out another embarrassing projectile. He announced that the Government would like to restrict the reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to one member per family. Under current rules all members qualify. And what made matters worse was that the new Government during its first cabinet meeting had agreed to extend the current policy by another 10 years.

And the defeated, but still aggressive, Congress(I) has been quick to attack whenever it got an opening. Says Congress(I) spokesman Anand Sharma: "The true colours of this crippled government

MURASOLI MARAN, 52, URBAN DEVELOPMENT

A Tamil script-writer and producer of repute, Murasoli Maran, the amiable DMK Rajya Sabha member, is the ideologue of his party and editor of Murasoli, a party organ. As Minister for Urban Development, Maran will handle 36 subjects ranging from housing and central public works to the administration of four Delhi markets and the Nehru Rozgar Yojana. A monumental task. His plans:

"Gandhiji said the real India lives in the villages. That situation is changing fast. Now one out of three Indians lives in urban areas. We have to focus on building other nodal cities to relieve the pressure on the major metropolises.



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

"We will recast the Rozgar Yojana and make it less of a give-away programme or a loan mela. We need not jettison it.

"In housing, the Government alone can't do all the funding. Co-operative ownership must be encouraged in a big way.

"Urban transportation will be a priority area."

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RAM VILAS PASWAN, 43, LABOUR & WELFARE

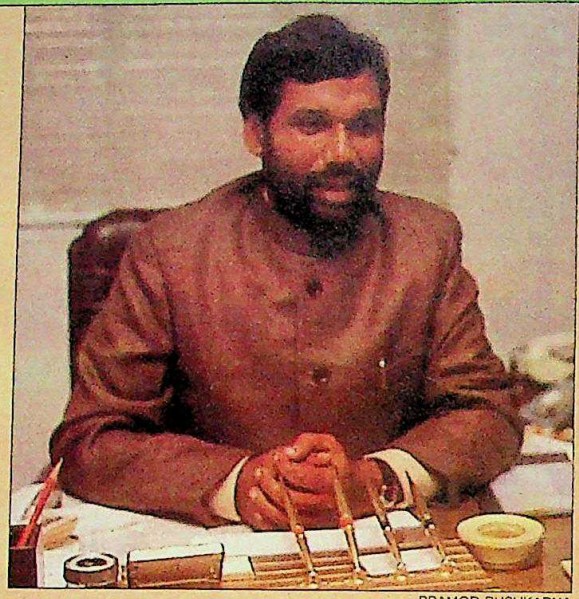
Ram Vilas Paswan, his rural pronunciation notwithstanding, is clearly at home in his plush office in Shram Shakti Bhavan where he presides as minister for labour and welfare. He warmly embraces visitors and solicitously orders coffee for them, while struggling to turn away an ex-minister from Rajasthan waiting to see him. On his priorities, he says:

"Under the Labour Ministry, my first and foremost priority will be to evolve a time-bound programme to abolish bonded labour all over the country. I'm also keen to bring about labour participation in management.

"Concrete measures to stop the exploitation of unorganised labour including agricultural and migrant labour will be taken.

"As promised in our manifesto, we will not dereserve any seats—60 per cent reservation will be given to Scheduled Castes and Tribes, physically handicapped and women.

"Implementing the Land Reforms Acts is among my priorities. We will also launch a three-pronged attack on the drug menace."



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

are coming out now. Not only was it born out of deceit, but the greedy rulers will finish it before it takes a final shape." But the Janata Dal leaders dismiss this as wishful thinking. Says Khan: "We are a democratic party and not a party of slaves and masters like the Congress(I). Here everyone's point of view is considered useful, but finally consensus is the principle and not dictatorship."

But the party does have a very real problem in this area. Because it has no structural organisation like the AICC(I), it has no real party spokesman who is able to react quickly to counter either disinformation or the mounting attacks by the Opposition. The Congress(I) was quick on the uptake right from the start. Following V.P. Singh's televised address in which he said the "nation's coffers are empty", former finance minister S.B. Chavan immediately reacted denying this. But no response was available from the National Front.

Devi Lal and his group are not the only problem. While the cabinet-making was relatively smooth, it still left key partymen sulking. Because of the meal-ticket compulsions of the minority government, most MPs wanted either chief ministerships or cabinet posts.

AND many are still sore. Maneka Gandhi and Chandra Shekhar protege Yashwant Sinha were unhappy over their role in the new Government. Both were expecting cabinet posts. Sinha simply decided to keep out of the Government.

V.P. Singh will continue to feel the pulls and pressures of these forces. Leaders like Ajit Singh, Chandra Shekhar still claim the support of a sizeable number of MPs capable of switching allegiances should some major crisis erupt. According to Janata Dal sources, Devi Lal, with about 25 MPs, has the largest chunk of followers; Ajit about 20, and Chandra Shekhar about half a dozen. But these leaders don't pose any immediate threat to Singh, because the three groupings—while they have come together to form the Janata Dal under V.P. Singh—are unlikely to come together for unified support to any of the other leaders. But they constitute more than a third of the Janata Dal and can be of great nuisance value to Singh in case the party does not fare well in the assembly polls.

Moreover, the prime minister's real

DINESH GOSWAMI, 54, STEEL, LAW & JUSTICE

Dinesh Goswami entered public life on a Congress ticket in 1971. After he lost the 1977 election, he joined the Congress(S). He entered the Rajya Sabha in 1978, and continued as an independent after resigning from the Congress(S) in 1979. Later, he joined the Asom Gana Parishad.

Now, he has to prove his administrative abilities in the Ministry of Steel and Mines as well as that of Law and Justice.

Citing the appointment of Sabyasachi Mukharji as chief justice of India, Goswami said:

PRASHANT PANJIAR

"We are determined not to break conventions, except in exceptional cases.

"We will pay a lot of attention to electoral reforms. The objective is obviously to reduce the blatant influence of money and muscle power.

"Other matters calling for attention are the strengthening of the Election Commission, providing state funding for elections, and sundry matters such as whether an election needs to be countermanded if an independent candidate dies."

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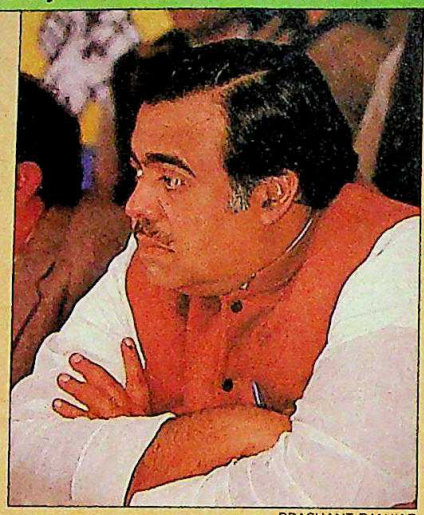
K.P. UNNIKRISHNAN, 53, SURFACE TRANSPORT & COMMUNICATIONS

"I am calling from the residence of the minister of communications. This phone does not ring. please send someone immediately." That was the private secretary to K.P. Unnikrishnan, the new minister for surface transport and communications. Obviously, there was no need to emphasise to Unnikrishnan the enormousness of the task at hand.

A seasoned politician, Unnikrishnan has been a prominent and able parliamentarian since 1971 and he took command immediately, asserting his authority over telecom whizkid Sam Pitroda as soon as he took charge. Says he:



PRASHANT PANJIAR

"Everyone's contribution is welcome but they will have to function within the structure. There is only one minister, one prime minister and one council of ministers responsible to the people through Parliament.

"Transport and communications are the lifelines of any country and crucial to the very existence of a nation. But resources have had to be thinly spread and a serious problem might arise during the eighth plan. The rural areas also need roads. They also need telephones. My priority, however, will be the development of national highways."

tightrope-walk between the communists and the BJP has only now begun in earnest. The flashpoint will arrive when the BJP demands the restoration of Ram Janmabhoomi to the Hindus and repeal of Article 370. In addition, there are senior elected BJP partymen who are insisting that they be given a more meaningful role in the new Government. Some of them are miffed that they were not invited to go to the Golden Temple with Singh. Tensions are already beginning to show.

Right now Singh remains confident that these are teething problems. And since he has accomplished so much through negotiations with disparate groups whose umbrella support he enjoys, Singh will continue to find solutions to the problems through negotiations. The assembly elections, even though they may cause more feuding between the Janata Dal and the BJP, will, conversely, Janata Dal leaders hope, further cement the Janata Dal factions together because if they are to perform well they must remain united. Says Nehru: "The very fact that we are in a minority and depend on others will keep our government going for the next five years. In fact we will consolidate our position after the assembly elections."

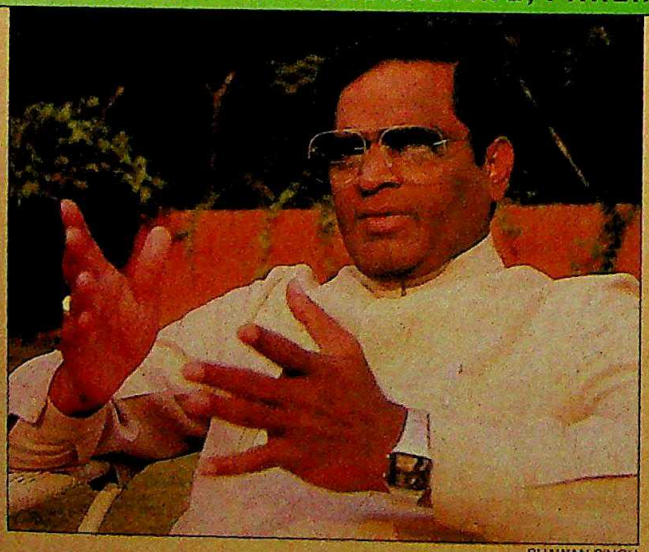
BUT so far, the party is hardly ready, in an organisational sense, to face the coming electoral contest in various states. With most party leaders having received ministerial berths at the Centre, and now glued to their chairs, there is hardly any political activity in the Janata Dal headquarters that suggests intensive preparations for the next battle in less than two months time.

It's a tough row to hoe. But so far V.P. Singh's best bet has been his performance—decisive, leaderlike and politically savvy. In a few short weeks, without the help of gimmicks, ad slogans, or well-orchestrated party propagandists, he has been able to transform his public image of a waffling, wishy-washy, reluctant leader to that of a man of action. If he is able to sustain the momentum and continue to perform in a manner that adds to his stature as a national leader of a stable government, there is little doubt that he will be able to continue to be his party's lion vote-catcher in the assembly elections. In that eventuality, the threats to his government from within—and without—are bound to diminish. For strength flows from strength.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

P. UPENDRA, 53, INFORMATION & BROADCASTING, PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS

Parvathaneni Upendra's devastating wit ("Should I take this opportunity to welcome our prime minister on his latest visit to India?") made him a popular member of the Rajya Sabha. Now, as minister of information and broadcasting, he has to finalise the modalities of granting autonomy to the electronic media. He is also in charge of parliamentary affairs. His priorities:



BHAWAN SINGH

"On the question of autonomy for Doordarshan and All India Radio we are looking at the BBC model. I have to prepare a paper for the Cabinet and we will decide by the coming parliamentary session.

"Doordarshan is already more free, even before autonomy. I have told the director general not to accept requests from ministers. Everything will go by merit. Even the prime minister will only be shown if the item has news value."

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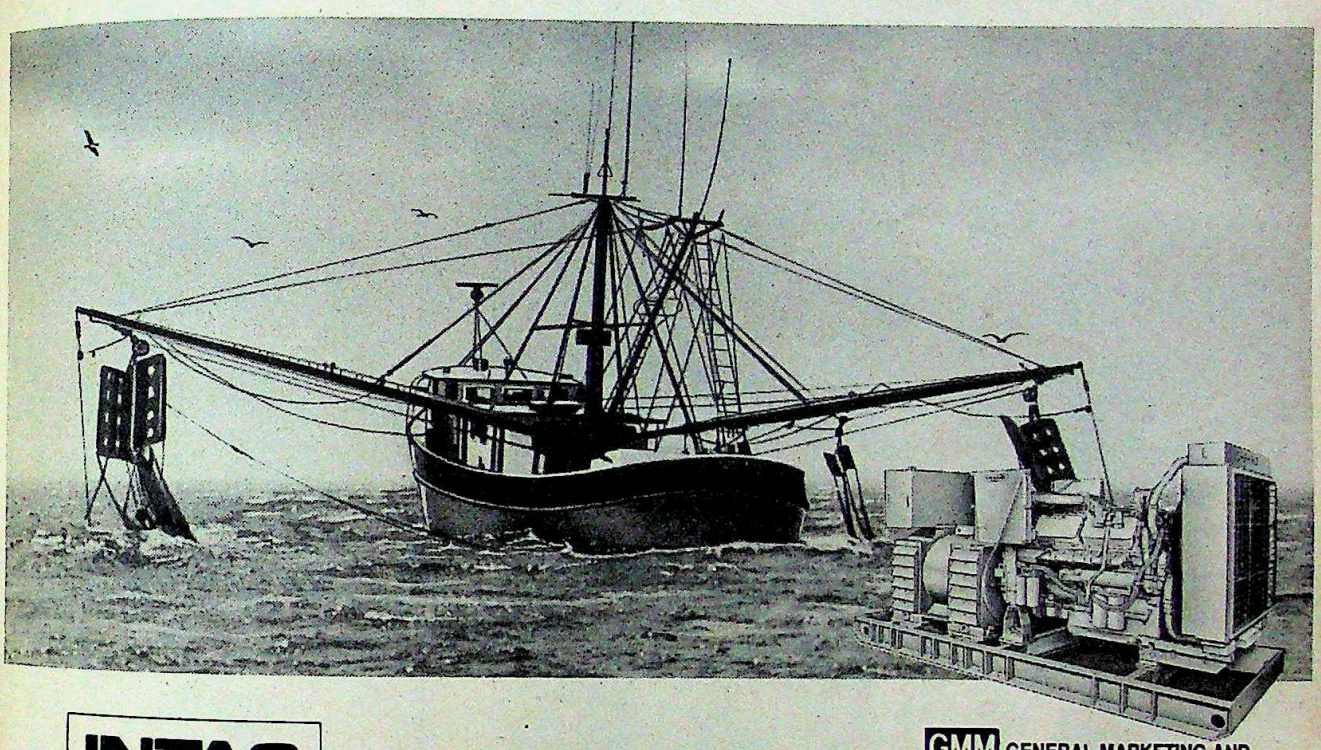

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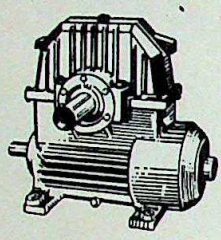
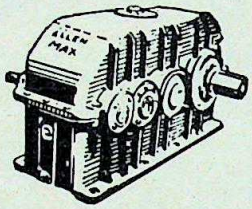


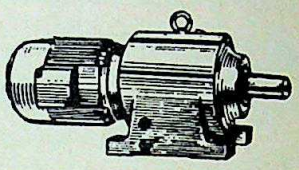
WORM REDUCTION GEAR UNITS

ALLEN-MAX



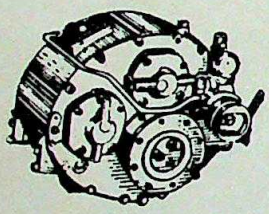
HELICAL SPEED REDUCERS

OPTIMAX



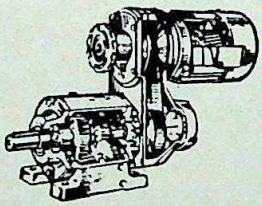
GEARED MOTORS

SEAMAX



MARINE GEAR UNITS

VARIMAX



VARIABLE SPEED UNITS

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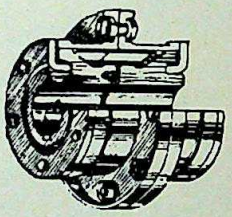
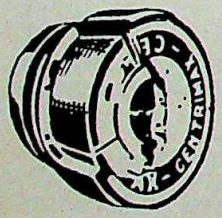


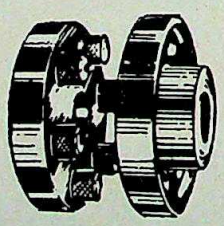
CURVED TOOTH GEAR COUPLINGS

CENTRIMAX



CENTRIFUGAL CLUTCH

FLEXIMAX



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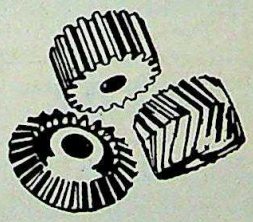

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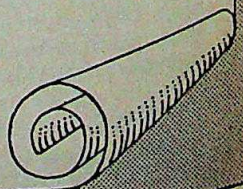

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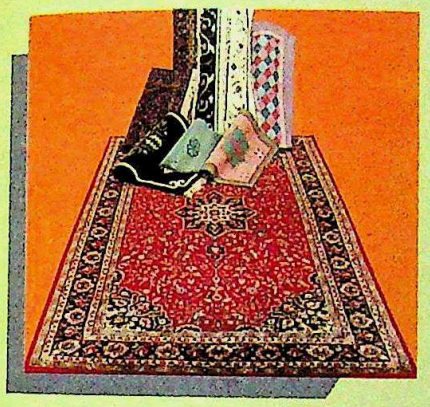
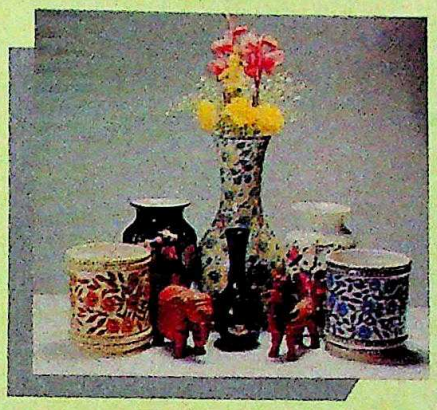

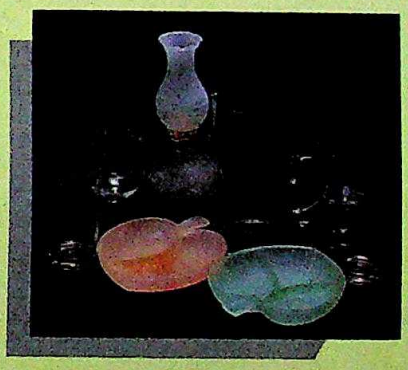
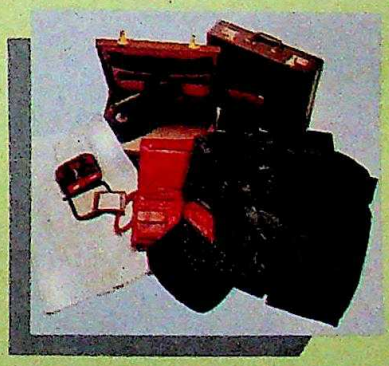
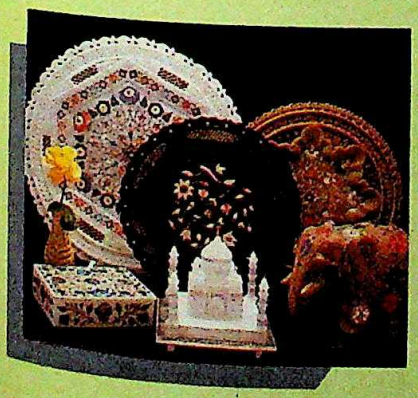

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CONGRESS(I) LEADERS

The Powers that Were

The once all-powerful Congress(I) stalwarts are now confronting a life without power and adjusting to new routines. While some have taken the defeat in their stride, others demonstrate hurt pride. But for most, it's sabbatical time.

RAJIV GANDHI

Darshans continue but the imperial glitter has faded

THE December morning cold chills to the bones. And the lethargic mist curls around the windowpanes, subduing the day. But for the occupant of 7, Race Course Road, there are a host of memories to provide warmth. Of a silvery grey Mercedes and a rust-coloured Range Rover that he drove with abandon. Of fleets of airplanes and helicopters that took to the air at the nod of his head. Of a country of 800 million that ran to his writ of having spent 40 of his 45 years in the prime ministerial house.

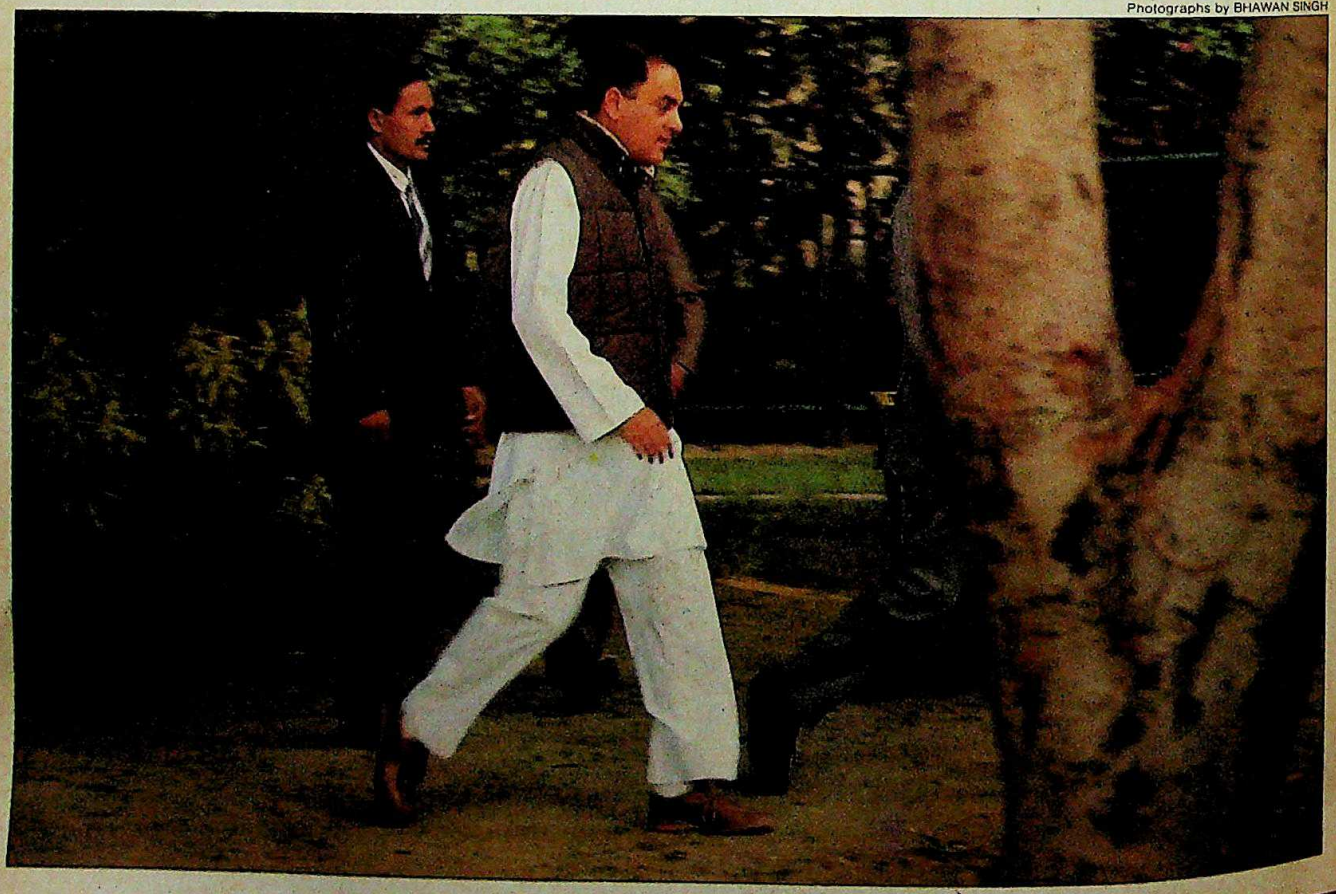
Yet it is not memories alone that provide Rajiv Gandhi with solace. For though he may have lost his sceptre and his fangs, several trappings survive. Before the morning mist has dissipated people have gathered outside the house of the leader of the Opposition.

Among them: Congressmen from Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, Tibetan Buddhist monks, Mahila Congress(I) workers from Jammu and a dozen-odd students of Jawaharlal Nehru University. Around 8.30 a.m. the security personnel start frisking the visitors in. The aura of power and privilege still hangs over the place. The Special Protection Group (SPG) is still on guard. And members of the staff still ask: "Want to meet the PM?" And laughing apologetically, still hand out the "PM's house group meeting pass".

> **Defeat has not changed him: he still finds it difficult to relate to the immediate context.**

Inside, on the sprawling lawn, mattresses have been laid. Between two trees hangs the banner of the Dalit Sahitya Academy. Dapper in kurta-pyjama and an ash-coloured windcheater, Rajiv appears for the morning *darshan* with folded hands at 9:05 a.m. Meandering across the lawn, he meets the visitors in groups. In an impromptu address to the academy delegates, he dwells on his pet

Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH



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subject—a new education policy which he tried to implement. "You know the kind of education they give at government schools, and how many people can afford to send their children to public schools?" he orates. Defeat has not changed him any: he still finds it difficult to realte to the immediate context.

Meantime Darbara Singh, Bhajan Lal, A.R. Mallu and Pratibha Patil arrive. Satish Sharma is nowhere to be seen. Is this the return of the old-guard? Rajiv shuttles between the groups. Defeated fire-brand from West Bengal, Mamta Banerjee, requests him to visit the state. Urdu litterateur and Rajya Sabha member Bekal Utsahi, presents him a copy of his latest book, *Rang Hazaron Khushbu Ek.*

Photo sessions abound. Combined with the strengthening sun, it all makes for a holiday atmosphere. Rajiv moves to the next enclosure. Hare Krishna monks—ISKCON—from Bombay lie in wait. Mahamantra Das presents him the Bhagavad Gita which will endow "the leader with a rare moral and spiritual strength". Some party leaders petition for the exclusive ear. Rajiv takes them aside. MPs, AICC(I) functionaries mill around.

But there is no denying the fact that the imperial glitter has faded. That the lack of panic conceals as much resignation as confidence. It is Rajiv Gandhi's smile that is the accurate pointer: it hangs unchanging, tired and inane. Inertia sits heavy. Though Bhubaneswar Prasad Gupte, a freedom fighter from Sunbhadra in Uttar Pradesh tells Rajiv, "You must fight back, we are all with you", no one seems to be ready to march out to join battle.

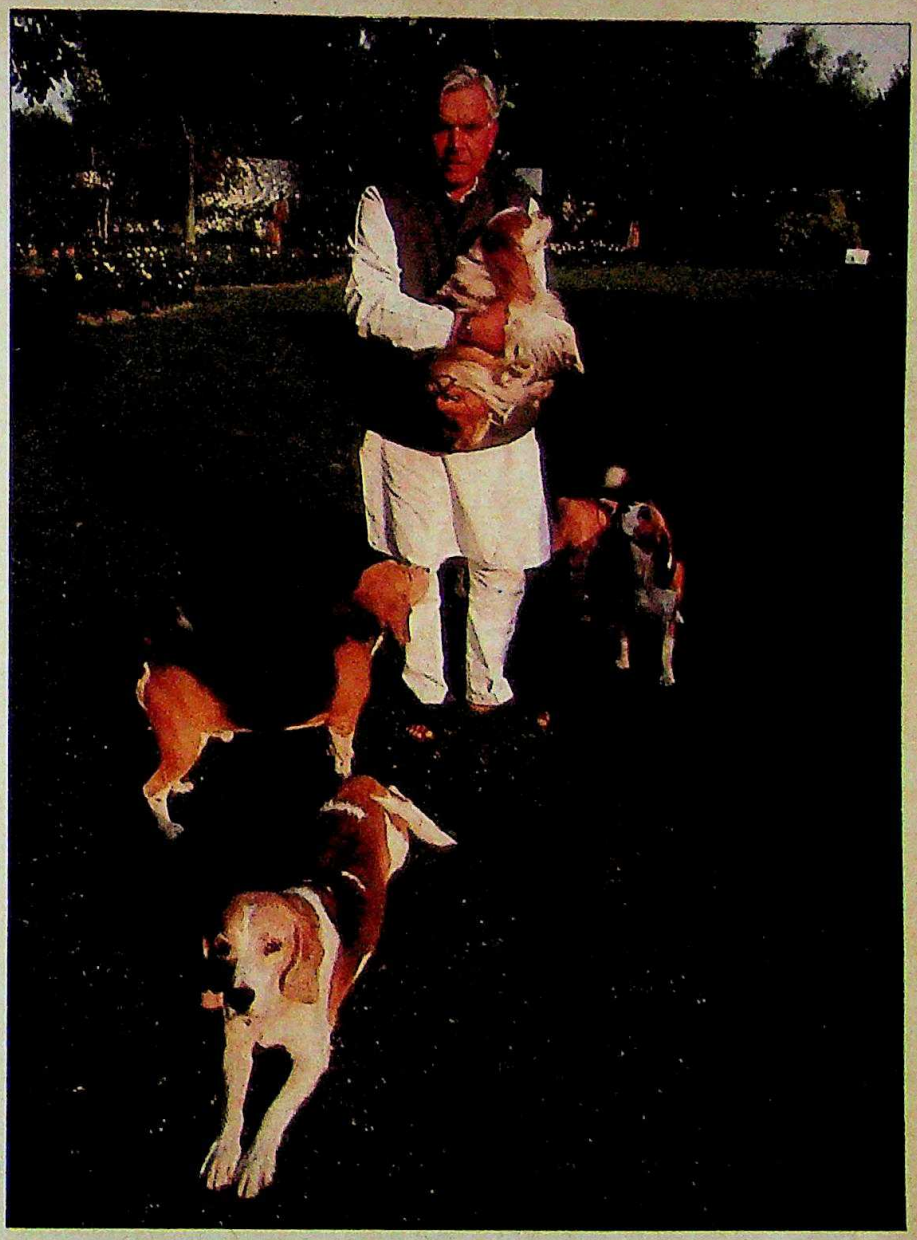
Rajiv's day still begins at 6.30 a.m., but the study contains no files to flip through. No papers to sign. Substitutes now are: a walk in the garden, or a few hundred pedals on the exercise bike. The phone still rings. But gone are the RAX and the PABX. The sing-song female voice, "Good morning, Mr Rajiv Gandhi's residence", has been replaced by a male's, "Yes, 3014481". Those privy to his personal number now hear daughter Priyanka answer the phone. And Rajiv has time to take December 9 off to celebrate Sonia's birthday.

Certain practices persist. Two to 4 p.m. is a two-hour break when he returns home to spend time with his wife and the children. But as usual he is late in leaving. The bearer arrives with the lunch: the usual tomato soup. Meetings run on till one in the night. Says an aide: "The PM seems to need only 90 minutes of sleep. The man is so full of energy."

There is irony here. The energy has little chance of escape. Confined as it is within the walls of his fortress. The bouquets are still opened. And the visitors are still frisked. Rows of policemen still line the roads when he moves out. And high on the hit list, Rajiv had stepped out only three times in the first week of December.

December this year is different in more ways than one. Traditionally, it has been a month for holidaying. But this year there are problems of security, the weight of defeat. He is yet to visit his farm house in Mehrauli, if only to see how the plants are doing or for a swim in the pool. His eyes, say aides, are now set on the assembly elections due in March.

It is the swing of the pendulum, demanding an equilibrium. Rajiv Gandhi, once the high-flying, hyper-active prime minister, circumambulating the country and world tirelessly seems suddenly circumscribed by the barricaded boundaries of 7, Race Course Road.



K. NATWAR SINGH

No withdrawal symptoms as books keep him occupied

TILL the other day, Natwar Singh, savvy diplomat turned suave minister for external affairs, had his hands full meeting foreign dignitaries in India or abroad. Now, suddenly he finds himself unemployed for the first time in 37 years. Call it chance, call it what you will, but Singh has retirement thrust upon him at what is considered just the right age—his 58th year.

"At the moment there are no withdrawal symptoms," claims Singh, relaxing comfortably on his ornate sofa. But then, as he reflects, he was never a routine-minded person, "not even when I was in the Government."

Pointing to Han Suyin's, *A Share of*

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Loving, lying at his feet, he says: "I am busy reviewing this book. Travel, reading and writing have always been an obsession with me."

And that's what they will remain for some time. Singh's currently working on his book, *Diplomacy, Old and New*, while chalking out an itinerary for lectures abroad. Then there are the book reviews for the *Financial Times*, London.

His new role will be that of a full-time columnist. Says he: "Historic events are taking place in eastern Europe. I plan to base myself there for a while and send in articles to different publications."

Now that there are no delegations to occupy him, no files to peruse, he is also looking forward to his game of tennis. In the last 10 months, Singh, who is president of the All India Tennis Federation and a former Delhi University champion, says he hasn't had the time to hold a tennis racket. And that's a matter of regret for a man who's shared a game with Davis Cup captains Sumant Mishra, Narendra Nath and Prem Pandey.

So it will be Gymkhana Club in the evenings for a game of his favourite sport. And in the mornings, it will be yoga and a walk in the garden with his five dogs. And as for his family—wife, a son and a daughter—"I've just had no time for them or for myself for that matter," he says with obvious unhappiness. But he has taken a decision: "From now on I'm going to practise the French saying, *Etre bien, avec soi* (Be on good terms with yourself)."

He's not overly concerned about the withdrawal of personal staff, cars, security guards. "At least I can now walk into a book shop and not feel like a criminal being taken to jail," he laughs. All he needs now is to hire a stenographer to type out his articles. The retinue of servants has always been there.

Singh owns a palatial house in Delhi's affluent Vasant Vihar locality. Says he with a smile: "I had tenants there, but fortunately the lease expires on December 31." The cars—a Toyota and a Maruti Gypsy—are there too. "Not a bad existence, after all, is it?" he asks.

But he pontificates: "An austere existence is very good for the soul, body and mind. Power comes and goes. I am not one to moan and groan. I get a lot of kick out of life."

As for the kick out of politics, he has taken it in his stride. "It's quite an experience to be at the receiving end," he says, as he prepares to set off to the hills. For a long overdue holiday to Dochi and Chail (in Himachal Pradesh) with the family.

PRASHANT PANJIAR

SHEILA DIKSHIT

She is now back to being a "fastidious housewife" and enjoys it

SHIELA Dikshit, the all-important minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office, known to be often barking orders into two telephones at the same time, now finds herself in the role of a "fastidious housewife".

Says she: "I'd become a lady at large in the last three years." There was the chauffeur to drive her around. Just a buzz and the personal assistant would get any number she'd want. The typist who'd have letters ready in a jiffy.

Soon to be stripped of all personal staff, Dikshit is looking forward to driving her own Maruti, dialling the telephone. Even typing herself. "I manage with one finger," she says. The mornings seem brighter. With fewer telephone calls to disturb her, she can sleep on for an extra half hour.

> "I was so surrounded by officialdom, I'd become less of a human being."

Warming her hands in front of the heater in her ethnically decorated room, she says: "I like changes. Being out of

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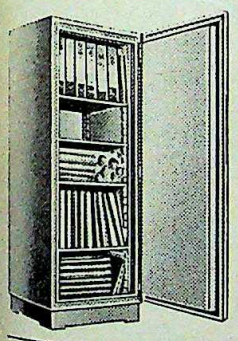
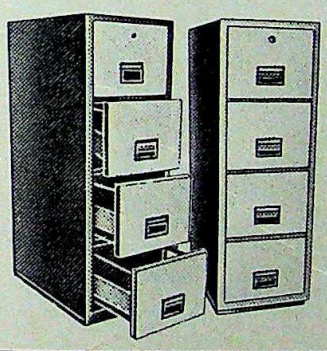
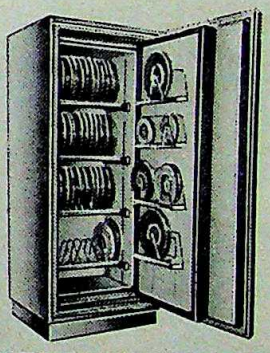


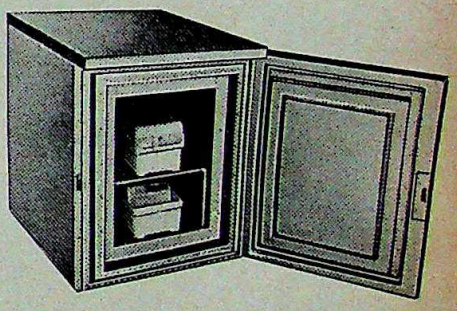
Firebrand Fire-Resisting Filing Cabinet



Dataguard-Fire-Protection Computer Data Cabinet



Micro Cabinet for storage of floppy disks



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power is a professional hazard. But I'm no ten-to-five office person. And I certainly don't miss files. I want to be myself. And now's the time." There's certainly time to weed the garden, to listen to music.

"I was so surrounded by officialdom, I'd become less of a human being. Security guards following me all around, I didn't even enjoy my shopping. I'd go to the vegetable market, once in a while, just to get back to earth," says Dikshit, almost heaving a sigh of relief.

Soon, the politician in her surfaces. Says she: "There's so much party work to do. It's been two weeks since I've washed my hair. I still haven't had a Sunday off."

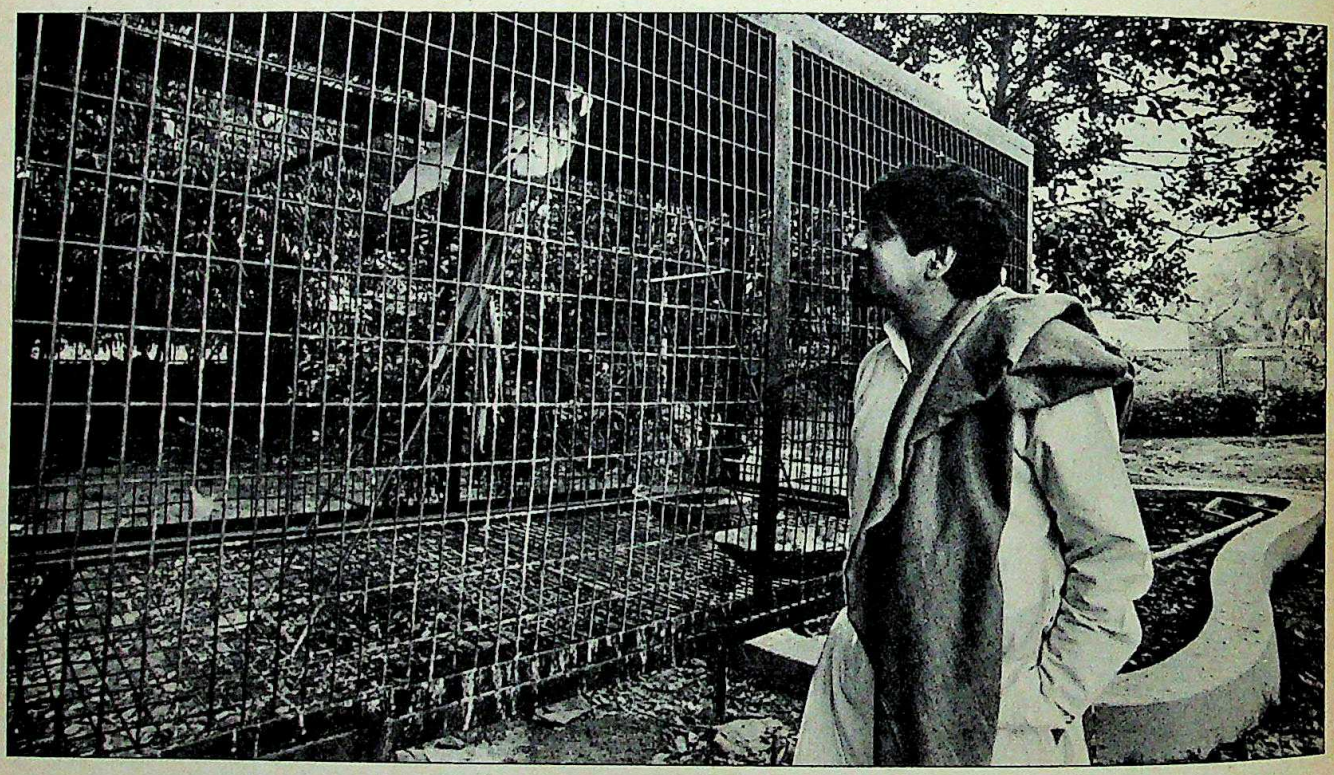
Her house, she admits, is coming back to being what she calls "a normal house". Earlier, there were scores of visitors. One person was constantly making tea.

Now it'll just be her, daughter Latika and father-in-law (Uma Shankar Dikshit). "There'll be much less expenditure. We'll manage on the pension, Rs 500 mine and Rs 2,300, my husband's." As an afterthought, she adds: "We won't be poverty-stricken."

Its the thought of shifting from a spacious bungalow to a cooped-up flat that is giving Dikshit sleepless nights. "I may not even have a garden," she exclaims. Her brow creased with worry, she elaborates: "Married to an IAS officer, I've lived in a government house all my life. Imagine, I sold my own flat just a year ago. I'm negotiating for another house in Nizamuddin, but the deal hasn't come through yet." And that is the reason why her daughter has applied for hostel accommodation in the Delhi School of Social Work where she is doing her masters.

Yet, in her own way, Dikshit is preparing herself for the upheaval. "I want to see what it feels like to live in a flat. And when I'm bored I hope we (the Congress-I) are back," she says. And smiles.

A holiday to take her away from her worries? "Holiday, my god, I have so much packing to do," she sighs. And smiles again.



JAGDISH TYTLER

Shocked by his defeat, he spends time with the birds

FROM Youth Congress(I) vice-president to minister for food processing—it has been 18 years in politics for Jagdish Tytler. And being in power was a feeling of constant high. Out of it, he's extremely uneasy. Still bewildered, he says: "I never thought I'd lose the election. I'd put in so much of work..."

Unable to accept his defeat, Tytler was back in the field soon after the results were announced, asking the people: "Why didn't you vote for me."

The electoral dust hasn't settled yet. Not for Tytler at least. One evening he was at the *jhuggi jhopdi* colony in his constituency, sharing the inmates' dinner. The next day he was at Nehru Vihar—an area where the votes went against him even though he had granted them a plot worth Rs 500 lakh for just Rs 2 lakh. And, he is coming alive to the reality around him.

> "My own house is not secure. I will ask them to let me retain this accommodation."

The fear of the bullet is eating into him. The Black Cat commandos still stand guard. Visitors are still frisked at the gate, but he's worried they'll be withdrawn.

Being high on the hit list ever since two public bodies accused him of an active role in the November '84 riots, does Tytler fear reprisal from the present government? "God knows, I'm not guilty," he says. Sikhs are his brothers, he adds. But to buy security, he plans to visit each Sikh home in his constituency.

Out of Parliament, Tytler will have to leave the safe confines of his ministerial bungalow and move to his Karol Bagh house. "That house is not safe for me. I'm going to meet the home minister and request him to allow me to retain this accommodation," he says.

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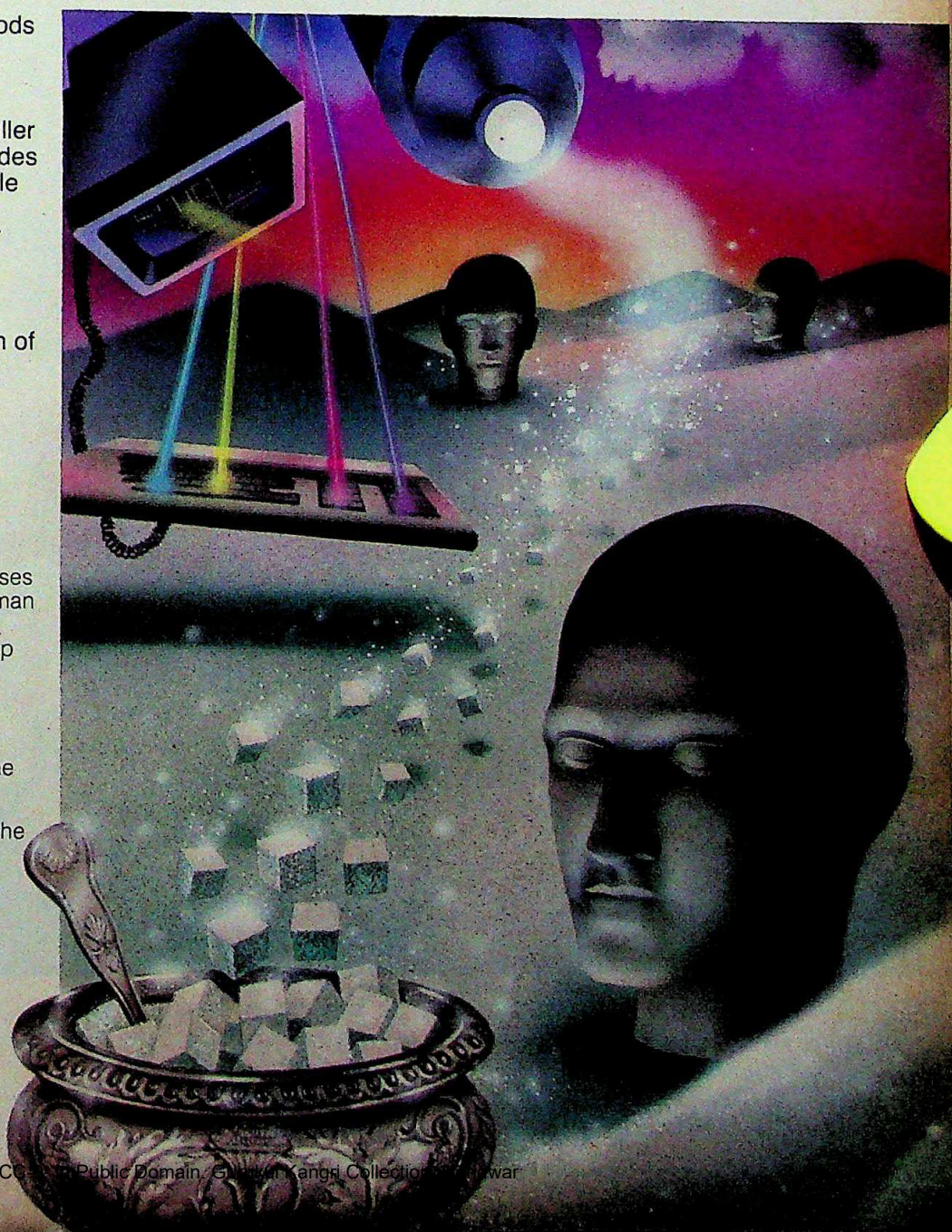

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In his free time, Tytler now accommodates his 10-year-old son, Siddharth. "He's practically grown up without me," he says, relaxing for the first time.

What's his day like? "Oh, I get up in the morning and spend time talking to my birds." Tytler's a bird lover and he has two macaws and an Australian bird in a huge cage in his lawns.

It's also back to reading for Tytler, who earlier didn't have the time to even glance through a book. "I'm reading about Napoleon's life," he says smiling.

Earnings? "I've never been financially weak," he says. About Rs 10,000 comes in from two houses that he has given on rent. Then he has shares in two companies. "Not Reliance," he smiles. "My son has shares in Reliance, not me."

The personal assistant comes in and Tytler gets up. "I've got people waiting in the other room." From one room to another. Tytler seems like one of his caged macaws as he disappears behind the curtain.

RAJESH PILOT

Swimming, horse-riding and quiet evenings with old friends

A huge crowd, jostling to get past security. A dozen vehicles parked outside. It was a familiar sight at the 3, Safdarjang Road residence of Rajesh Pilot, former minister for surface transport. Till recently.

The crowds are still there, but the number has come down by at least as much as half. Earlier the crowds came with sheafs of applications. For truck and scooter licences. Now they come to sympathise.

But even this is taken well. "Fortunately, the people are still coming," says Pilot with a laugh. The defeat, at the hands of Vishwinder Singh, a 27-year-old first-timer, has certainly restored Pilot's sense of humour.

And his style. The *bandgala* coat and dhoti have been discarded. And clad in casual shirt, trousers and a pull-over, Pilot looks very much the squadron leader he was until he left the Indian Air Force in 1979.

And it's yesterday once more. Quiet evenings, once in a while, with old friends at the air force mess or the Defence Service Officers Institute. The clinking of glasses and the munching out of bowls of peanuts.

Then there's the swimming at the Gymkhana Club with children Sachin and Sarika. There's also time now to go horse-riding in the President's Estate and what the children look forward to most—dinner at Ashok Hotel's Frontier restaurant once a month—a promise he could never manage to keep as a minister.

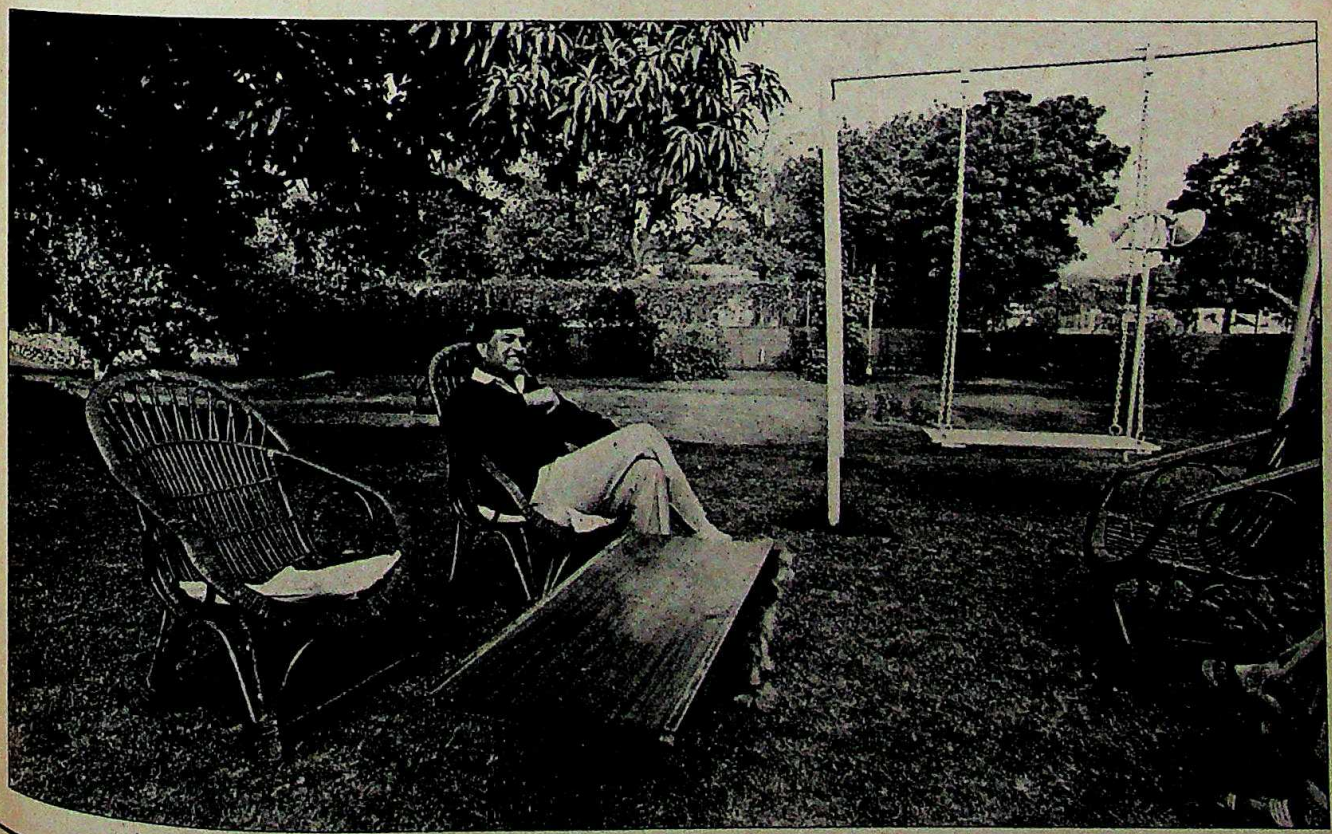
> "I have a lot of goodwill. The people still come. I'll survive."

If there's a worry, it's about a roof over his head. He has two houses, but in Dehra Dun and Ghaziabad. Coming to his rescue are friends who have won seats in the south. "Touch wood, I have a lot of goodwill. A lot of them have offered me their MP accommodation," says Pilot. So it'll be out of 3, Safdarjang Road to another government house. "Till the children are through with their examinations," he says.

The goodwill seems to have come in good measure. Pilot was pleasantly surprised when a group of farmers, who recently came to see him, told him that the panchayat of Miragpur village (Muzaffarnagar district) had decided to bear his monthly expenses as he'd not be earning a monthly salary any longer.

From a salary of Rs 9,000, it's down to a pension of Rs 500. "I'll survive," jokes Pilot. With both his houses given on rent, he gets enough to match his previous salary.

His plans for the future? Well, he wants to keep in touch with the farmers. And for that there's the Jai Jawan Jai Kisan Trust which looks after war widows and coaches farmers' children for competitive exams like that of the IAS,



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the IPS and the NDA.

Says the never-say-die politician: "I will go back to the people and earn their trust. They are my generator."

"And I'll continue to fight the Opposition. Oops, the ruling party," he corrects himself hastily. A welcome change from handling striking transport unions? Or dealing with a Tikait sitting on dharna?

BALRAM JAKHAR

After a holiday, he plans to go back to farming

ORDER, please. Order, order. Silence. Expunged. I'm on my feet. Silence. The honourable prime minister will now make a statement," former Speaker Balram Jakhar would scream in the Lok Sabha, flinging his arms in the air.

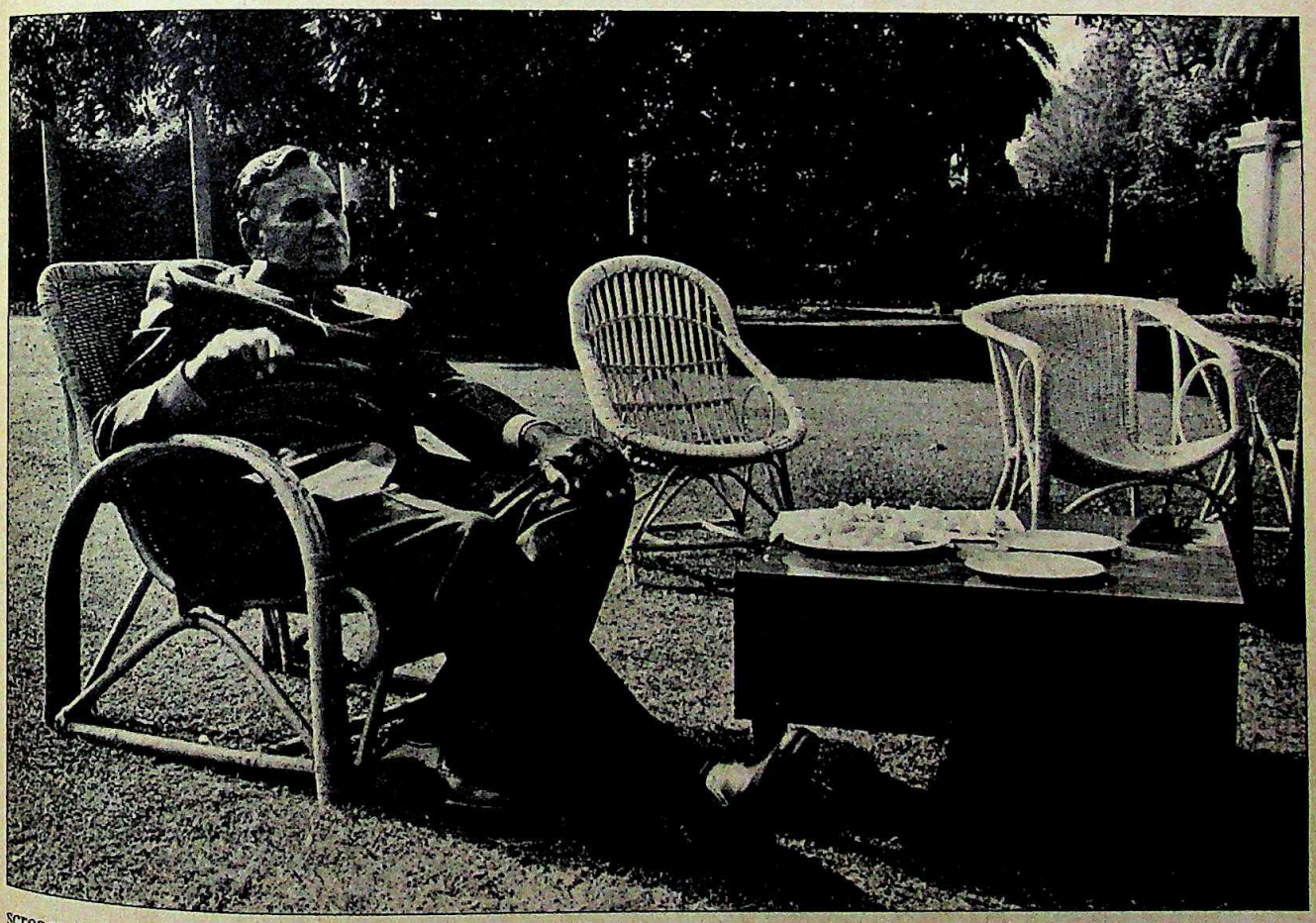
The honourable Speaker is now leading a relaxed life. Sitting in the lawns, chewing leisurely on sugarcane, cut into small pieces by his assistant. "It's good for health. Eat sugarcane, build strength and jump right back into the political battle-field. That's my policy," he says, stretching his legs.

The farmer from Ferozepur, Jakhar now plans to go back to his fields for a while. To the 40 acres of agricultural land where wheat has been sown. To the 200 acres of orchards—peach, malta and grape orchards. "I've been named cotton king and grape king in Punjab," says he proudly.

But before he goes to Ferozepur, he's heading for the snow-capped hills of Manali. "I'm waiting for the snow to get thicker," before he and his family pack their bags.

A father of five and grandfather of nine, the 66-year-old Jakhar has taken defeat in his stride. "So what. It's a part of the game. The skies haven't fallen, *aa jayenge phir vapas* (we'll return)," he says.

> "Eat sugarcane, build strength and jump back into the battle-field. That's my policy."



"I built myself from scratch. *Ab baithen hain aram se* (now I am sitting relaxed)" Jakhar is happy being at home. He wakes up to the rising sun. Takes a walk in the garden. The masseur comes for the morning massage. A tall glass of milk and lots of fruit. And he settles down in the sun with a heap of magazines. "I'm a voracious reader," he says. But he's still catching up with *Time* and *Reader's Digest*. The books will come later.

Lunch-time is family time, when everyone sits together for a meal. "Lots of *lassi, ghar ka makhan* (home-made butter) and ghee with my *daal* and *subzi*," he says. After which, it is only natural for him to take a nap. A recently acquired luxury which he couldn't afford when Parliament was in session.

A house, cars, servants, money? They're not things Jakhar is worried about. "I have a house in NOIDA (bordering Delhi). We'll go there. My sons have cars, they'll give me one." The servants were always there. The agricultural farm provides the money. "*Tankha seh kya banta tha* (The salary was not enough)?"

The placidity conceals any sense of panic over facing harassment by the new government for his involvement in the fodder machine scandal. As for being out of power, there is the attempt at matter-of-fact philosophy: "We were not always in office. We won't remain out of it for ever." Shrugging his shoulders, he begins to tackle another piece of sugarcane. —HARINDER BAWEJA

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CONGRESS(I)

Purges and Plans

The old guard returns as party takes stock of situation

THE analogy between the two situations is compelling. As in 1977, the Congress Party once again finds itself out of power at the Centre. This time too the rejection has come most decisively from what is called the Hindi heartland. The south, in a repeat performance, has stoutly endorsed the party in a seemingly psychic reaction to the north's indictment of Rajiv Gandhi's leadership.

But the parallel, at least on surface, seems to end there. Because unlike the panic that gripped the party in 1977, there is no collective manifestation of a major panic at hand. In fact, the Congress(I) appears to have adopted an aggressive strategy, as evidence its reactions to V.P. Singh's Punjab initiative, and to the Government's statement that its coffers were empty. But this is perhaps because the horror may not have sunk in, yet. Part of the reason for this is that Congressmen still stick to the belief—as an article of faith—that the new Government will collapse in no time under the weight of its own contradictions. And unlike his mother, who had sought to strengthen the party by splitting it, Rajiv is trying to pull everybody along. Says AICC(I) General Secretary V.N. Gadgil: "The party is solidly behind Rajiv and there is not even the remotest possibility of it breaking up."

In the immediate aftermath of the election, that may hold true. But what will seal the fate of the party and its future leadership will be the outcome of polls in 12 states and Union territories. Right now the Congress(I) is in power in 15. But there is the real possibility, in the context of its recent electoral performance, of it losing as many as seven—Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar and the Union Territory of Delhi. This would wipe out the party from the nation's heartland, reducing it to a regional group with pockets of influence beyond the Brahmaputra and below the Vindhyas.

But for now, as the next major political test looms ahead, the party is looking for scapegoats. And the coterie that has surrounded Rajiv is drawing the maximum flak. Senior partymen whose access to the leader was effectively blocked by the caucus are most vocal now. Buta Singh has been singled out for mishandling the Ram Janmabhoomi issue as the Union home minister. "Our fate was sealed on November 9 (the day of the shilanyas for the temple)," says a Congress(I) Rajya Sabha member. Next in the dock are Rajiv's political and media advisers such as M.L. Fotedar, R.K. Dhawan, M.J. Akbar, and his personal buddies like Captain Satish Sharma and Mani Shankar Iyer.

Says party parliamentary board member and Madhya Pradesh PCC(I) chief Arjun Singh: "Certain people who were given authority and responsibility tried to create the impression that they alone matter. The only mistake Rajiv Gandhi committed was that he could not restrain them." In an oblique reference to Rajiv's dependence on bureaucrats another party veteran, Darbara Singh, says: "Your English may be better than mine, but that does not necessarily mean you understand politics better." Partymen have also resented the abrasive style of functioning of Vishwajit Prithivijit Singh and some other close associates of Rajiv who were in charge of the poll logistics.

There is a general feeling among the traditional Congressmen that the computer has been their undoing. Their tendency to vent anger on the 'computer-walas', however, is not always justified. Manorama Singh, defeated party candidate from Bihar, gave vent to her frustration the moment she met S.S. Ahluwalia, party MP who prepared computerised biodata of probable candidates early this year. "I lost the election because of your damned computer," she complained. "My computer," retorted Ahluwalia, "had wanted to deny you the ticket."

Indeed, it was the party policy to persist with most of the sitting MPs, at a time, when the mood was decidedly for a change, that proved a real disaster. Then there were the complaints about distribution of campaign material from the AICC(I). The party has taken a decision that from now on instead of creating a

NEW CHIEF MINISTERS

Rajiv's experiment with a new political ethos has clearly come a full circle with the installation of party veterans as chief ministers in as many as four states.

S.C. Shukla

H. Biswal

Jagannath Mishra

M. Solanki

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THE COTERIE

As the next political test looms ahead, the party is looking for scapegoats. And it is the coterie that has surrounded Rajiv which is drawing the maximum flak.

Vishwajit P. Singh

Satish Sharma

R.K. Dhawan

M.L. Fotedar

Buta Singh

Mani Shankar

central pool the state units will be given charge of poll logistics. There is an overwhelming feeling in the party that it is the yuppies, with their idiosyncrasies and lopsided priorities, who led the party to its second defeat in a general election.

Rajiv, according to party insiders, too has realised the 'mistake' and is trying to distance himself from his cronies. Satish Sharma, who has been held responsible for the rigging fiasco at Amethi, is conspicuously absent at Rajiv's residence these days. Following the debacle, the advice of Buta Singh and P. Shiv Shankar to Rajiv to make an effort to form the Government by engineering defections from the Janata Dal, was repudiated by the party old-guard.

Significantly the Congress(I) Parliamentary Board (CPB)—the forum which was defunct during the past five years—is now holding informal meetings frequently. It is the CPB which took the decision to change chief ministers and PCC(I) presidents in the states where the party was routed. Rajiv is now consulting Darbara Singh, P.V. Narasimha Rao, K. Karunakaran and V.N. Gadgil more than ever before. Undoubtedly, the old-guard is trying to reassert itself at a time when the coterie stands totally discredited.

ALREADY, the reactivated CPB has taken some important decisions. As soon as the change in leadership is over in half-a-dozen states, the party's organisational set-up at the central level will be totally revamped. A new team of AICC(I) office-bearers comprising the seasoned and experienced will takeover. Those who had helped Mrs Gandhi during 1977-80 may once again be recalled. A.R. Antulay and Pranab Mukherjee, once discarded by Rajiv as power-brokers, are poised for a come-back. Mukherjee, recently appointed as the chief of the AICC(I) economic cell, is coming to the party headquarters regularly. Indeed, Rajiv's experiment with a new political ethos has come full circle with the installation of Jagannath Mishra as Bihar chief minister. Further recognition of the veterans has come in the recall of Harideo Joshi from the Assam Raj Bhawan to take over as the Rajasthan chief minister, only a year after his ignominious ouster from that post.

The party is closely watching V.P. Singh's minority government. Its dirty tricks department has already circulated a letter purportedly written by Singh on October 30 to the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid in which he allegedly promised to open the mosques under the supervision of the Archaeological Survey of India for prayer. The intention is clear: drive a wedge between the BJP and the Janata Dal. Since the Government has had a good start, the Congress(I) is planning to make communalism its major slogan in the months before the assembly elections. "The communal divide that the BJP has engineered for purely political objective should be made our only campaign issue," says Arjun Singh. This concern for secularism, however, is hypocritical. While in Punjab it is playing the Hindu card, provoking the BJP to take a stand against the Janata Dal, in Uttar Pradesh it is indulging in another dubious communal game. It is urging the Hindu fundamentalist elements to keep up the clamour for the Ram Janmabhoomi and at the same time pointing out to the Muslims their mistake in voting for the Janata Dal.

Despite his success in thwarting any immediate challenge to his position, Rajiv

THE OLD GUARD

The old guard of the party is now making a determined attempt to reassert itself taking advantage of the fact that the old coterie stands totally discredited.

K. Karunakaran

Darbara Singh

Arjun Singh

V.N. Gadgil

Narasimha Rao

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faces the test again during the assembly elections likely to take place in February. The new chief ministers in Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat will have an uphill task in reversing the trends so soon after the party's rout in the general election. Rajiv naturally will be the major campaigner for his party in these elections. Another failure, and he will find it difficult to prove his relevance for the party. The 68-year-old Joshi, at the time of assuming office for the third time last fortnight, could not hold out any promise. Knowing full well he would have to deal with an apathetic bureaucracy and a faction-ridden party, he prudently said: "I will give top priority to restoring communal amity and peace in the state." That has been interpreted as an indication of the party's line of attack on the BJP, the major opposition party which is sure to make a bid for power in Rajasthan.

In the communally surcharged atmosphere of Bihar, Mishra is now the party's best bet to woo back Muslims. Despite his sullied image, he claims to enjoy the confidence of the minorities. At a time when the Rajputs, Yadavs and Kurmis have rallied behind the Janata Dal, Mishra, the party hopes, will be able to win over the traditional Congress(I) vote-bank comprising the Brahmins, Harijans and Muslims. In a shrewd move he had criticised the state Government's failure to contain the riots in Bhagalpur. But the resentment Mishra faces from within the party manifested itself on the very day he returned to Patna from Delhi to take oath as chief minister. At the airport he was greeted by supporters of outgoing chief minister S.N. Sinha, shouting: "Jagannath Mishra *wapas jao*" (Go back Jagannath Mishra).

FACTIONS owing allegiance to Sinha, Bindeshwari Dubey, Bhagawat Jha Azad and Tariq Anwar have expressed their opposition to Mishra and are unlikely to cooperate with him during the assembly polls. Azad makes no bones about his disapproval. "The Congress(I) in Bihar reminds one of a candle that is burning at both ends," he cynically remarks. And Mishra is complicating matters by rewarding and rehabilitating his own supporters. He has appointed his protege Kamalnath Singh Thakur as the chief whip of the Congress(I) Legislative Council, and has filled his cabinet with the loyalists who remained with him during his six years in wilderness. All this, before the crucial assembly election, is bound to further antagonise rivals. On the positive side, Mishra means business. Says a bureaucrat: "Now one sees that there is a government."

In Orissa, the proverbial mountain did finally move but not before a cyclone had shattered its crest. Indeed J.B. Patnaik, with the blessings of Fotedar and other confidants of Rajiv had straddled Orissa as if he were the state's very destiny. Despite most senior party leaders in the state opposing him, Rajiv, had continued to back J.B. Patnaik. Hence, to Orissa observers, the Congress(I)'s worst electoral performance did not come as a surprise. After taking over the PCC(I) presidentship, Nandini Satpathy has been trying to put up a brave front. "We have to regain the confidence of the people," she says. But there is cynicism about her ability to turn the tables, considering that in the general elections the Congress(I) could manage to outpoll the National Front only in 17 of the 147 assembly segments.

It is evident that unless the Congress(I) improves its performance it is not likely to bag more than 25 seats. Says one of Satpathy's aides: "She is confident but she cannot perform a miracle." Making things more difficult for her is the fact that a large number of the party MLAs are J.B. Patnaik's men. And the truth is that he would see a stint of chief ministership by Biju Patnaik as a lesser danger than the return of Satpathy to power. Apprehending a total sabotage of the

ANDHRA PRADESH

Uphill Task

MARRI Chenna Reddy arrived at the state secretariat last fortnight to a triumphant welcome. But behind the euphoria lay the challenge: of fulfilling the people's expectations.

With his initial moves, Chenna Reddy made it clear he was conscious of the hopes raised by the Congress(I)'s come-back to power after seven years. In his first speech, he detailed his priorities—provide a responsive and quick administration; rework the Rs 2 a kilo rice scheme for the poor; expedite the scheme to build houses for the poor; and explore ways to raise resources to expand irrigation facilities, build power supply stations.

Predictably, he made a cautious start to his ministry-making exercise. While forming a 19-member ministry, Chenna Reddy retained the most important portfolios—including law and order, industries, irrigation, education, home, excise, commercial taxes, health, civil supplies, municipal administration, forests and information.

SHARAD SAXENA

Chenna Reddy: cautious beginning

But trouble surfaced right away. Soon after the swearing-in, supporters of Ratna Kumari, widow of former Congress(I) MLA Vangaveeti Mohan Ranga Rao, killed by Telugu Desam supporters last December, demanded her inclusion in the ministry. Also by inducting five other Reddys in the ministry, he lay himself open to the charge that the Congress(I) was a party of Reddys as opposed to the Telugu Desam led by the Kammas. Regional representation also proved imbalanced. While 10 ministers are from the coastal Andhra region, six are from Telengana and three from Rayalaseema. Says Chenna Reddy: "The expansion, in a couple of months, will take into account all aspirations."

However, various factions will not allow him to call the shots for long. Former chief minister J. Vengala Rao is likely to press him to include his son, Jalagam Prasada Rao, in the ministry. As will former Central ministers P.V. Narasimha Rao and P. Shiv Shankar for their sons, P.V. Ranga Rao and P. Sudhir Kumar. Says a member of the party's state executive: "If we make the mistake of admitting even one of them, the Congress(I) cannot accuse Rama Rao of nepotism."

But it seems inevitable that Chenna Reddy will have to accommodate the factions to ensure his government's stability. And, inevitably so, fail one of the crucial tests posed by the electorate.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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party's chances by the J.B. Patnaik camp, Hemanand Biswal has been selected chief minister as a compromise candidate with the understanding that Satpathy would lead the party at the hustings. Biswal, who as chairman of the Public Undertakings Committee had unearthed the multi-crore mustard oil scandal involving the Patnaik family, had been unceremoniously dropped from the state cabinet three years ago. By selecting Biswal, the state's first tribal chief minister, the party high command essentially wanted to achieve two objectives: keep the strong anti-J.B. Patnaik feelings from translating into a vote against the Congress(I), and appease Harijans and tribals who constitute over 40 per cent of the state's population.

In Madhya Pradesh, the Congress(I) high command has had to execute another tightrope walk. Arjun Singh, despite his intense lobbying, has not been rewarded with the chief ministership. S.C. Shukla has replaced Vora, while Arjun Singh has been made PCC(I) chief. The aim is to ensure the cooperation of all factions in the assembly polls. Says Shukla: "I am sure all Congressmen will work unitedly to ensure the party's victory." But this sounds a bit wishful. In the Lok Sabha elections, the Congress(I) led only in 76 of 312 assembly segments. Besides, the return of Arjun Singh to state politics has left faction leaders like Madhavrao Scindia and Vora grumbling.

The fact is that as soon as Vora tendered his resignation, Scindia staked his claim. The Arjun Singh camp vehemently opposed his candidature. It pointed out that his mother, Vijayaraje Scindia, a BJP vice-president, was already being projected by her party as the future chief minister of the state. Also, Shukla and Arjun Singh have a history of mutual hostility, though they now claim to have buried the hatchet.

THE selection of both, in any case, only goes to confirm that the Congress(I) leadership is once again depending on battle-scarred veterans and political animals rather than novices. Accordingly, the astute Madhavsinh Solanki has replaced Amarsinh Choudhary who had made several administrative blunders as the Gujarat chief minister. Here again, the hope is that the veteran will be able to give a new direction to the party.

The one man who has been able to make a virtue out of this losing scenario is wily Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar. Though four of his nominees lost in the November polls, he has been able to convince Delhi that he alone can now steer the party through the assembly polls in which the BJP-Shiv Sena combine will be making a serious bid for power. Consequently, the central leadership is making PCC(I) chief Pratibha Patil a sacrificial lamb by asking her to resign in view of the party's bad showing. But the prospects of the Congress(I) remain bleak. The apprehension is that dissidence can result in many lower level Congressmen switching to the Shiv Sena. Warns a Congress(I) MLA: "If dissidence is not kept down, the Sena-BJP alliance can walk away with a lot of seats."

The smooth leadership changes in all these states have established that Rajiv's authority in the party has not yet been eroded. Like Mrs Gandhi in 1978 he can consolidate his position by winning some of the state assembly elections. He has already decided to tour the entire country raising the slogan of "secularism in danger".

From next month he will have to plunge into another gruelling poll campaign. Whatever be the profiles of the state leaders, he will be looked upon by the party as its deliverer. Another debacle in February is bound to put a big question mark on his leadership. And then there will be no more scapegoats.

—BHASKAR ROY, UTTAM SENGUPTA and N.K. SINGH with bureau reports

KARNATAKA

Firm Start

VEERENDRA Patil last fortnight celebrated his return to power after 18 years by forming a ministry that revealed an assertive and unorthodox stamp.

It was an exercise that surprised political pundits and outwitted his opponents. The 64-year-old Patil, chose an 11-member ministry out of a legislative party strength of 177, leaving many aspirants disgruntled. Moreover, he ignored accepted norms of regional and caste representations—his team has no members, barring himself, from the sprawling north Karnataka region, which has elected a third of the party MLAs. He also gave short shrift to the dominant communities, while leaning heavily on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Besides, Patil, who declared his family and personal assets soon after taking office, advised his colleagues to do the same; dispensed with every sign of ostentation like police escorts; and dropped the ad hoc system of transfers, the main source of patronage for MLAs. Said a supporter: "The steps will make him unpopular among partymen. But the people will appreciate it."

SHYAM TEKWANI

Patil: asserting himself

Known to be scrupulously upright, Patil is an anachronism in a state ravaged by corruption and indiscipline. Says a colleague: "Patil has an uncompromising nature. He is totally out of tune with the time." Patil admits: "Contemporary politics is difficult for me to swallow. I belong to a generation in which one walked around with a resignation letter in one's pocket."

In the ministry-making exercise, Patil got a free-hand from the party high command. With nearly 35 former ministers present among the ranks of the legislators, his task was a difficult one. While allotting the key finance portfolio to his trusted friend Rajashekhara Murthy, Patil used his current clout with the party high command to sideline detractors such as S. Bangarappa, K.H. Patil, and S.M. Krishnar. Patil also downgraded the status of Veerappa Moily, who was number two in the Gundu Rao cabinet.

Says a ministerial aspirant: "Patil's bravura will not last long. He is asking for trouble." Patil's immediate threat comes from Bangarappa, the fiery ex-minister who believes that he has been gypped out of chief ministership several times. So despite a whopping four-fifths majority, Patil has no joyride before him. The course he has charted for himself could lead into dissidence-infested waters.—CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA

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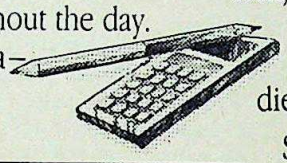

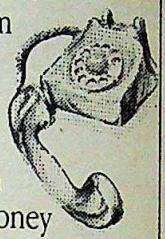

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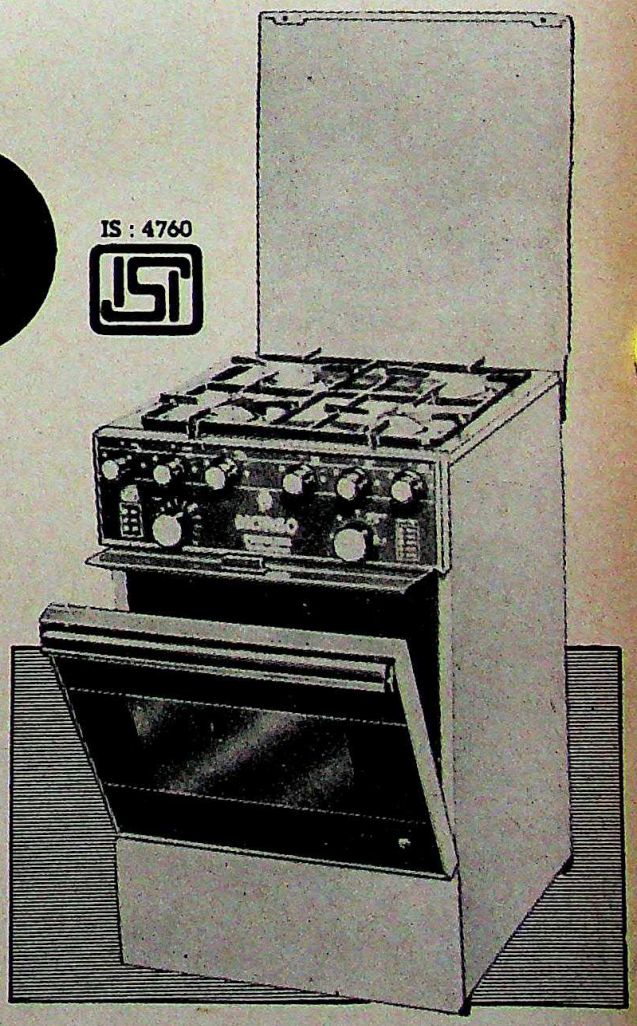

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PUNJAB

Flicker of Hope

V.P. Singh's visit to Punjab has achieved what earlier efforts failed to do—it has generated goodwill and admiration. But the euphoria could be premature. The harsh political realities of Punjab call for long and sustained efforts.

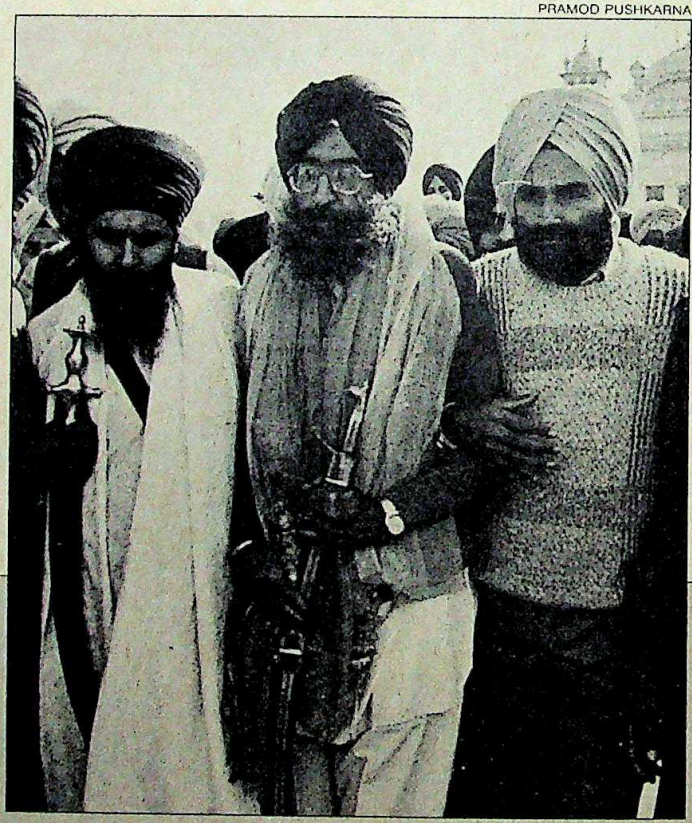
IT was a simple and touching move, and one loaded with hope and expectation. Less than 48 hours after swearing-in the Union Cabinet, Prime Minister V.P. Singh, accompanied by cabinet colleagues Devi Lal, Inder Kumar Gujral and Mufti Mohammed Sayeed visited the Golden Temple for what was described as a religious—not political—visit. In the course of their day-long sojourn, they prayed in the key Sikh and Hindu shrines of Amritsar, mingled freely and joyfully with surcharged crowds and even drove through Amritsar in an open jeep.

But those who tended to read too much into it were shutting their eyes to the political realities of Punjab. For even as the Central leaders trod hallowed ground in Amritsar, several militant factions were emitting signals that augured continuing troubled times.

Yet, even though the visit offered no immediate or long-term political solutions, it generated what earlier efforts could not: goodwill and admiration. V.P. Singh's visit immediately drew comparisons to Mrs Gandhi's in 1984 in the wake of Operation Bluestar. Muttered an elderly Sikh as he watched V.P. Singh wade through the tumultuous crowd in the Golden Temple: "She came to see the damage. He has come to mend it."

Singh's visit attained significance only in the light of the release of Simranjit Singh Mann, the former IPS officer, who has quickly emerged as the new focal point in Akali politics. Mann, incarcerated for waging war against the state, was freed by the outgoing government soon after his landslide win from Tarn Taran. Though he did not meet V.P. Singh during his visit to Punjab, the prime minister's gesture seemed to have gone down well with the entire spectrum of Akali politicians. The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) appointed Jathedar of the Akal Takht, Professor Darshan Singh, declared it was the first time the Central Government had made

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Mann in Golden Temple: widespread welcome

S.S. MANN

"I pray to all to help the Government"

FOR Simranjit Singh Mann, 45, it has been a tumultuous homecoming. And at the end of a week of felicitations, the bespectacled public school-educated former IPS officer still seemed a bit dazzled by his new role as Akali Dal president. He spoke to Principal Correspondent KANWAR SANDHU *during halts on a tour of Punjab villages. Excerpts:*

Q. *Do you propose to bring about unity among the Akali Dal factions?*

A. It depends on my party. There is a strong section against having any truck with the old Akali leaders.

Q. *What place will the Damdami Taksal and the* AISSF *have in your party and government if you come to power?*

A. A very important place. The victory was possible because of their co-operation. In the Vidhan Sabha polls, we will coordinate with both the organisations to set up candidates.

Q. *What relationship will your party have with V.P. Singh's Government?*

A. An amicable one. I pray to all civilised souls to help the Government. The Government must be sincere in resolving the issue.

Q. *How will you remove the insecurity among Hindus and Muslims growing from the Akali Dal's alliance with the* AISSF?

A. There should be no feeling of insecurity. The RSS wants Hindu Rashtra which is the equivalent of Khalistan. If the BJP can take inspiration from the RSS, what is wrong with our getting help from the AISSF?

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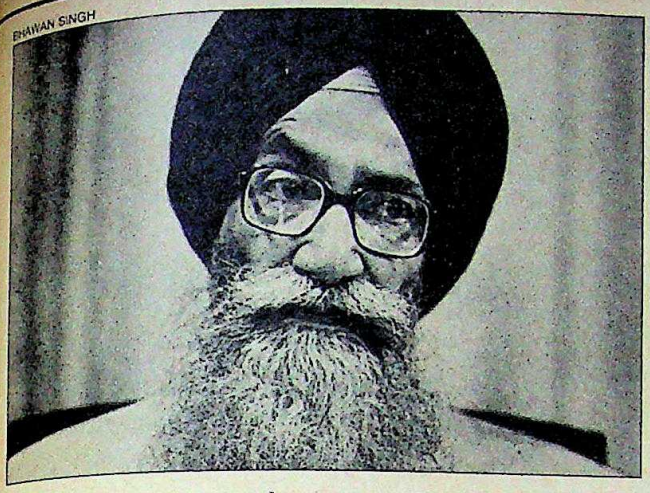
BHAWAN SINGH



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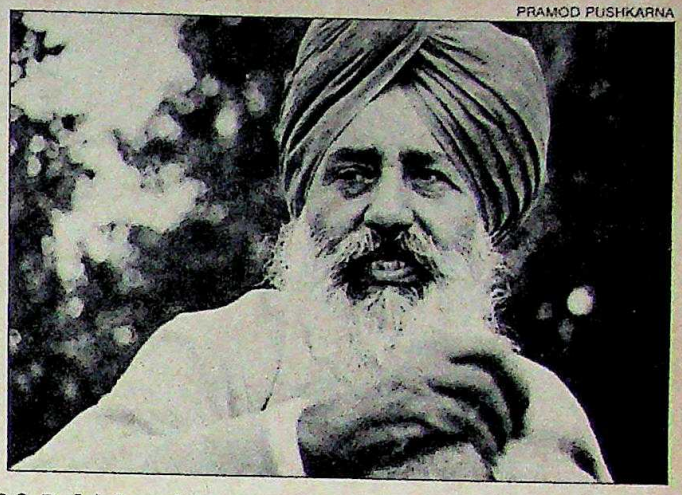

S.S. Barnala (left); and P.S. Badal: hazy future

a genuine effort to provide a healing touch to Punjab. The Mann group, reluctant to publicly applaud the prime minister's visit, because of its tie-up with the All India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF), privately hailed the gesture. "V.P. Singh has acted like a statesman," said one of them.

Mann, by bringing some focus to Akali leadership has come as a harbinger of hope. But as he enters the vortex of Sikh politics, he faces perhaps the most arduous phase of his life. He finds himself surrounded by what has brought several other Akali leaders to grief: defiance and conflicting aspirations. The headline in a local newspaper following his release: *"Takhte ton takht tak"* (from the gallows to the throne) was too much of a simplification. For now, Mann's path seems to be paved with thorns.

Mann faces the difficult task not only of managing the militants but also of tackling the Badal and Barnala factions of the Akali Dal.

Foremost, Mann faces the unenviable task of managing the militants, while at the same time neutralising moderate rivals. For the moment, the AISSF has tried to snatch the initiative by asking the newly-elected MPs of the party not to take oath in Parliament until five pre-conditions are met. These include the Centre seeking forgiveness for Operation Bluestar and punishment for those guilty of the November 1984 riots. Though the Mann group has rejected this directive, the newly-elected MPs have been abstaining from official functions.

On the moderate front, Mann faces the difficult task of tackling the splinter Akali groups of Prakash Singh Badal and Surjit Singh Barnala, besides fringe groups of the families of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and Amrik Singh. The haze in Akali politics thickens, for though Badal—a leader with genuine grassroots support—has been released, the total rout of his faction in the Lok Sabha elections virtually invites his sidelining. Mann admits a section within the party is against any truck with the old Akali leaders. And the Mann faction is wary of dealing with the Centre, particularly Devi Lal, as it feels the avuncular Jat leader will try and foster Badal—an old friend—as either the chief minister or the Akali Dal president. Warns former minister Sucha Singh Chotepur: "The Centre must allow Akali politics to take its own course."

But a section within the Mann group feels an understanding has to be reached with Badal, particularly since his faction controls the SGPC. What also needs to be resolved is the crucial issue of who is the Akal Takht jathedar, the temporal head of the Sikhs. While the Badal group recognises Professor Darshan Singh, the Mann group accepts Jasbir Singh Rode as the jathedar. Mann also faces the delicate task of keeping Baba Joginder Singh (Bhindranwale's father) and Manjit Singh (Amrik Singh's brother) in good humour because they epitomise "supreme sacrifice", a crucial factor for Sikhs. To thrive politically, Mann has to ensure the militant Damdami Taksal's support.

With most militant groups thrown into disarray following the entry of their members into the electoral fray, it is to be seen how many of the 700-odd terrorists (police estimates) choose to remain on extremist ground. Mann is yet to display an ability to take them all under one umbrella. Though he has stated

Q. *What do you think will fulfil Sikh aspirations in Punjab?*

A. Our aim is to have our grievances redressed within the Constitution. I know there is enough room in it to meet our demands. Had the Constitution been honestly implemented by the Congress(I) government, such a situation would not have arisen.

Q. *How about those demanding Khalistan?*

A. After Bluestar, a certain ideology has infected the youth, because some people embraced martyrdom. Now, fake encounters are creating new martyrs.

Q. *But how will you deal with the terrorists?*

A. Sikhs are not terrorists. They are fighting for a cause. They have been forced to take to arms because of the Government's policies. I am going to seek the views of those demanding Khalistan. For a solution, their cooperation is essential.

Q. *Does that mean you appreciate Pakistan's role in providing shelter to the Sikh youth there?*

A. Pakistan has been giving shelter to Afghans on humanitarian grounds. We provided shelter in 1971, when the Pakistan Army committed repression in East Pakistan. Seeking shelter from terror is provided in the UN Charter.

Q. *How were you treated in jail?*

A. In Bharatpur, I was stripped naked. They gave me electric shocks by putting one terminal on my toe nails and the other on my genitals. At Bhagalpur, they put me in a lunatics' cell for four days. In Bombay, I was in a cell whose walls were plastered with faeces. This would have gone on, if my lawyers, Ram Jethmalani and Dr B.L. Wadhera, were not breathing down their necks.

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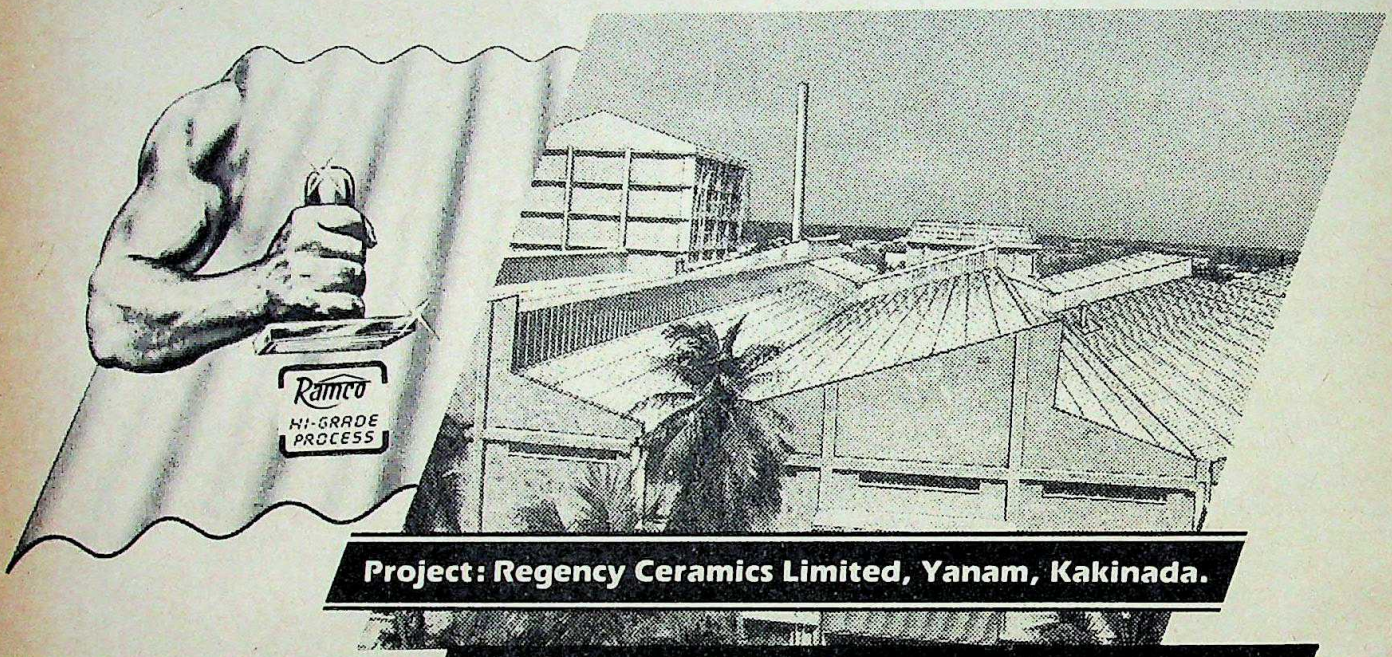

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categorically that he will strive for a solution within the Constitution *(see interview)*, many terrorist organisations continue to voice their commitment to "Khalistan".

The one person who is throwing the spanner into Mann's and the Centre's works is Harminder Singh Sandhu, AISSF general secretary, who was released by the outgoing government just before it handed over power. Sandhu, who had turned approver after Bluestar, has in a surprising volte face been declaring that the goal of the Sikhs remains "Khalistan". The timing of his release and his pronouncements are making political observers refer to him as a saboteur of possible peace initiatives in Punjab.

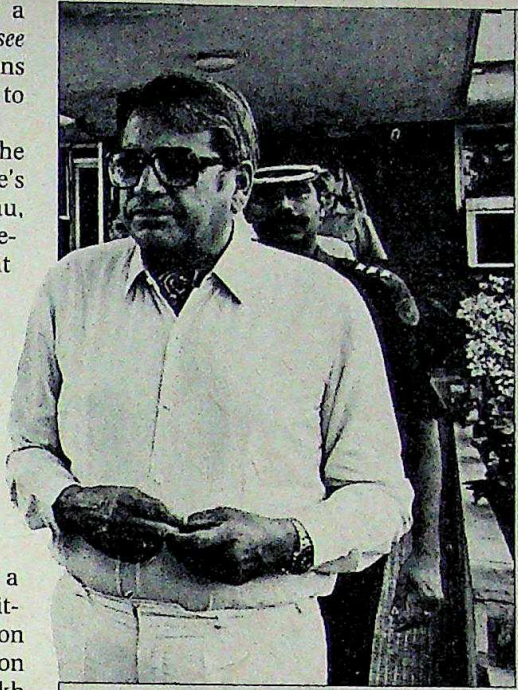
The Mann group, meantime, at a working committee meeting in Amritsar on December 10, passed a resolution defining its political aims. The resolution demanded "an autonomous Sikh region" in the north as an integral part of the Union of India entitled to frame its own internal constitution, and having all powers except foreign relations, defence, currency and general communication. Such a region would include the Sikh inhabited areas of Haryana, Rajasthan, Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh that are contiguous to Punjab. This is a reiteration of the draft by the late ICS officer, Kapur Singh, which later became the basis of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973.

If the militants continue to demand "Khalistan", the Mann group may suffer some splintering. The walk-out by 12 party members, including three MPs, from the Amritsar meeting was the first ominous indication of such an exodus.

Yet, momentarily, a positive atmosphere has been generated. The Government has sent out signals of a fresh policy initiative by packing off Governor S.S. Ray *(see box)*. In view of the proposed all party meet and the appointment of a panel on Punjab, the Centre is likely to review Ray's recommendations about early elections to the state Assembly and to the general house of the SGPC. Sources say the Government would like to reach an understanding with the political groups in Punjab before announcing dates for the Vidhan Sabha polls. The three-year term of President's Rule—the maximum possible—ends on May 11, 1990. Hope is certainly flickering in Punjab again, but it can be as easily snuffed out, as it can be built into a flame of reconciliation and peace.

—KANWAR SANDHU

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Ray: dubious legacy

S.S. RAY

Acrimonious Departure

WHEN he was appointed governor of troubled Punjab in April 1986, he brought a ray of hope. Last fortnight, when Siddhartha Shankar Ray laid down office, it was amid hopes of a different kind—that with him gone, the difficult situation in the state could be retrieved. The response reflected the hardline policy that Ray, the state's sixth governor since 1984, ruthlessly implemented over three years.

It was clear that any Punjab initiative by the new National Front Government would have to begin by removing Ray from office. He obliged by quitting. In his place, Nirmal Kumar Mukherjee, a Punjab cadre ICS officer who retired as cabinet secretary, was appointed.

In fact, soon after V.P. Singh took charge, Ray flashed him four messages in 72 hours seeking immediate directions on dealing with anti-national elements like AISSF General Secretary Harminder Singh Sandhu who had issued a pro-Khalistan statement. In one message, Ray spoke of the "considerable nervousness among the people".

If Ray expected the Centre to pursue a knee-jerk hardline response, he was disappointed. Singh ignored the messages and decided to go and see things for himself. What he found in place of the projected nervousness was unbridled enthusiasm.

At the time of quitting, Ray also said that the state was just three months from a solution. His reckoning seemed to be: if the new Government did bring about a solution, he could take credit for it; if it didn't, he could blame it on the new "soft" policy. Essentially, he was playing a Hindu card, trying to drive a wedge between the BJP and the Janata Dal. The BJP did not swallow the bait—General Secretary Krishan Lal Sharma has, in fact, sought an inquiry into Ray's role during the polls in Punjab.

His actions during his last week in office too have been questioned. He hastily closed the case against former Batala SSP Gobind Ram charged with beating up sarpanches publicly. Then, he recommended elections to the Assembly. And ordered the release of various leaders, including Sandhu. Former chief minister Surjit Singh Barnala termed the recommendation on early assembly elections a "mischief to create an adverse situation for the new Government". V.P. Singh had to finally tell Ray not to announce any new policy decision without consulting him.

What legacy does Ray leave behind? Ray himself is immodest: "What I achieved in three years, people will find difficult to do in three times that time." Few would agree. His policies alienated vast sections of the Sikhs. His reign saw the eclipse of the civil authority with serious complaints about police excesses.

And though a large number of alleged terrorists were killed, they only seemed to multiply. According to official sources, in May 1987 (when Ray took over from Barnala), the number of hardcore terrorists was 90 and that of other terrorists was 225. On the eve of his exit, police records showed 150 hardcore terrorists and 550 other category terrorists.

Four days before he quit, Ray said philosophically: "Let posterity judge me." That it will. And going by the reaction until now, not very generously.

—KANWAR SANDHU

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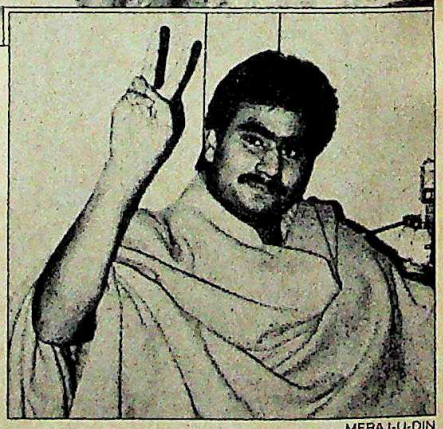
RUBAIYA SAYEED

Abduction Anguish

After five tense days, Kashmiri militants released Rubaiya, daughter of Union Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, in exchange for five colleagues.



MERAJ-U-DIN

Mufti with Rubaiya and her sister; and Abdul Hamid Sheikh: gruelling ordeal

IT was cloudy that Wednesday afternoon and Rajouri Kadal in downtown Srinagar was nearly deserted. At 3.04 p.m., two Ambassador cars halted in the chowk and five dishevelled men emerged. One of them limped, leaning on two of the others. They got into two waiting auto-rickshaws, which disappeared into the bylanes. The only sign of anything unusual was the distant noise of fire-crackers. An hour later, Zafar Meraj, a well-connected journalist, received a telephone call from the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) spokesman, Javed Ahemed Mir. The voice was excited: "We have received our boys. It's good. The girl will be with her parents soon."

On New Delhi's Akbar Road, crowds surged to house number 10. The resident, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, his white locks ruffled, shook every hand and hugged visitors, whispering: "It's all the grace of the Almighty." After six agonising days, his daughter, Rubaiya, 23, had been released by JKLF militants in exchange for five incarcerated colleagues.

As much as being a personal crisis, Rubaiya's kidnapping was the Mufti's first challenge as Union home minister. And an attempt at paralysing the new government. Ironically, the abduction took place even as the Mufti was holding his first meeting with ministry officials. Around 3.25 p.m. on December 8, he was explaining the nuances of the Kashmiri psyche to juniors. At about the same time, his daughter, Rubaiya, stepped out of the Lalded Memorial Women's Hospital on Iqbal Park Road, where she is an intern. She boarded a local transit van, JKF 677—coming from Lal Chowk and headed home for Nawgaon on the city's outskirts. But a routine ride down the main Chanpore Road in the Bagatkalipura area suddenly turned into a nightmare when three men, travelling in the same van, stopped the vehicle, held Rubaiya at gunpoint and packed her into a blue Maruti outside. The operation took 20 to 25 minutes.

The chilling news of Rubaiya's abduction was broken to her family by an unidentified caller about two hours later. The kidnappers' demand: the release of separatist movement kingpin, Abdul Hamid Sheikh; a Pakistan-based militant, Sher Khan; and three other extremists facing charges of anti-national activities, Noor Mohammad Kalwal, Altaf Ahemed and Javed Ahemed Jargar.

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In the capital, it was IB hotlines that broke the news in the evening. As the stoic Mufti received the news at home, visitors began pouring in. Among the first were Prime Minister V.P. Singh, Union Energy Minister Arif Mohammed Khan and Tourism and Commerce Minister Arun Nehru.

The bureaucracy swung into action with Nehru in charge. A cabinet subcommittee, consisting of Nehru, External Affairs Minister I.K. Gujral and Arif Mohammed Khan, directed bureaucrats and assessed the political dimensions of the crisis. The elite National Security Guards was put on stand-by.

Soon after, political parties, Muslim organisations, voluntary groups, and even the Muslim clergy, denounced the abduction. Said Imam Abdullah Bukhari of Delhi's Jama Masjid: "There is no place in Islam for such actions." Even Pakistan, accused of encouraging the JKLF, condemned it.

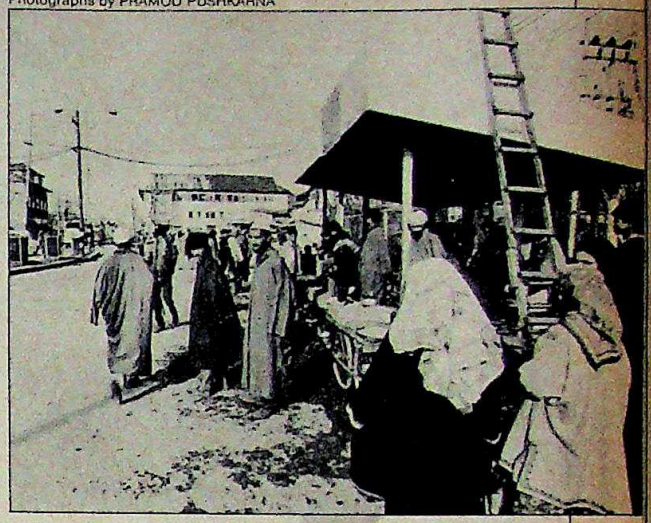
In response, the JKLF issued a press release rebuking critics for not protesting when security forces harassed "the mothers and daughters of Kashmir" during the crackdown on militants and cited the detention of Hamid's old mother in a police station before his arrest.

The abduction also swung the spotlight on Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah. It was evident that after 32 months of incompetent rule, he stood alone. Alienated from his people; condemned by the Centre; and heading a floundering government in a troubled region. Particularly shameful was his government's ineptitude in handling the affair. While Abdullah was away to the US for treatment, the National Conference seemed paralysed with fear. Said the Mufti, who now chairs the cabinet subcommittee on Jammu and Kashmir: "I think the state is in more turmoil than Punjab. We need a fresh beginning immediately" *(see interview)*. And the National Conference Legislature Party, which condemned the abduction on the first day, later remained silent on the issue, apparently because of threats from militants. Srinagar, in fact, seemed completely in the grip of fear.

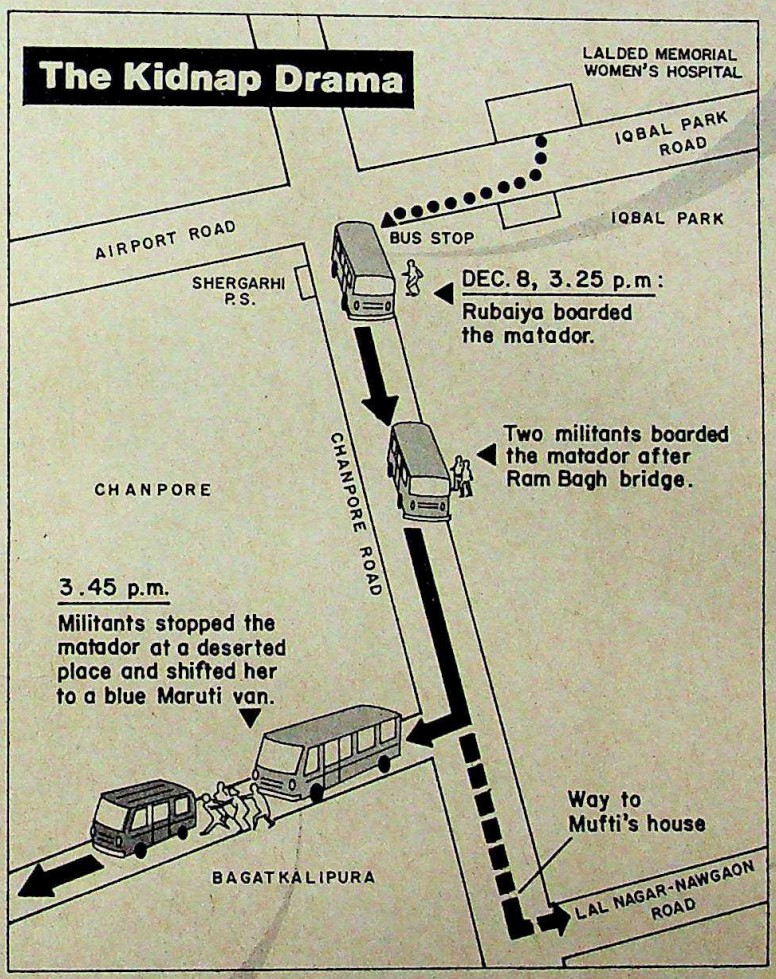
Large crowds raised anti-India slogans, sang and danced in the streets after the militants were released. One slogan: *Jo kare khuda ka khauf, Utha le Kalashnikov.* (All God-fearing men should pick up a Kalashnikov.) As rumours ran rife, the city was overrun by paramilitary forces.

The delay in securing Rubaiya's release can be squarely blamed on the state administration. Its inertia resulted in the loss of crucial hours soon after the abduction, giving the kidnappers time to rally. Then, the intelligence wing of the state police proved so inefficient it could not even suggest the names of some militants to mediate a negotiation. Ultimately, the negotiations were handled by M.L. Bhat, a Allahabad

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

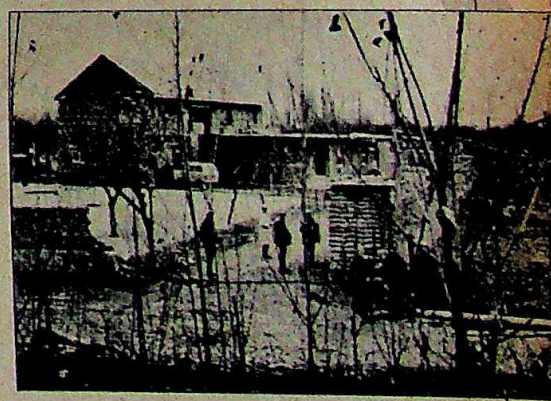


Stop where Rubaiya boarded van



The scene of kidnapping

Mufti's house in Srinagar



More than anything else, the kidnapping highlighted the ineptitude of the Farooq Abdullah Government and its utter alienation from the people.

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High Court judge; Abdul Ahad Guru, the doctor attending on Hamid Sheikh at the Soura Hospital where he was recovering from injuries sustained in an encounter with the police; Mir Mustafa, an independent MLA; and Mirza Abdul Quayum, a local citizen. Bhat showed tremendous courage in offering to be locked with Rubaiya for the two hours before the militants received their colleagues.

When the Abdullah administration finally woke up, it delayed matters in deciding the logistics of the militants' release. Only when Arif—specially flown to Srinagar with Gujral—gave him a dressing down, was the final settlement forged.

The Mufti, expecting trouble, had asked his teenage son, Nikki, to avoid going out alone. On the day of the abduction, the 14-year-old had not ventured out. The family assumed that no harm could befall the women folk.

Information about JKLF activists is scant. Ego clashes among the leaders have left the organisation with no well-defined hierarchy. But it is clear that its chairman is Amanullah Khan, who operates from London, Amsterdam and Rawalpindi. Home Ministry sources feel the kidnappers may have belonged to fringe groups, led by Azim Iqbali and Mushtaq Latram, both working underground in the valley. While Iqbali is described as "an educated and mature" militant who preaches secession, Latram is said to be an impulsive firebrand who is lionised by younger elements in the JKLF.

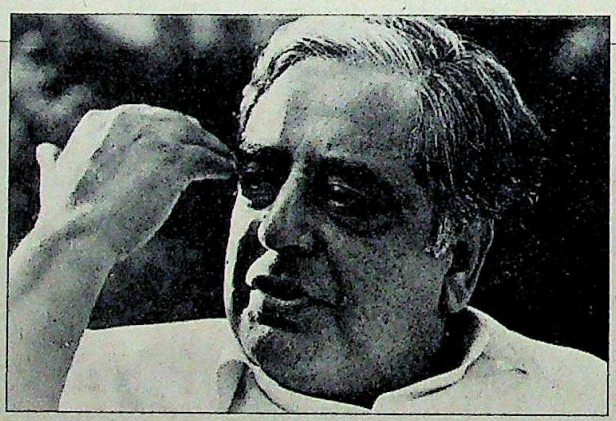
Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR

Abdullah: isolated and floundering

Top officials feel Latram's group was behind the abduction. The fast changing demands seemed to indicate that. The list of men-to-be-released changed many times. First the abductors wanted the release to be in 'Pakistan Occupied Kashmir', then they wanted it to be in Iran—with potential international implications. But consistent throughout was the demand for Hamid's release.

Politically, the episode established the alienation of a section of the valley's youth. The Abdullah administration's tough tactics are creating a reaction which needs to be handled boldly. The kidnapping evoked a chorus of protest which should help the Central Government deal with the Kashmir problem. Says MP Manvendra Singh, the Mufti's associate from his Jan Morcha days: "The massive outcry against the abduction has established the secular credentials of our government. This will help sort out the problem in future." The Centre has to cling to this silver lining while tackling the dark clouds hovering over Kashmir. The hostage drama has, momentarily at least, rallied the country behind V.P. Singh's call of *dilon-ko-jodna-hai* (hearts have to be brought together).

—PANKAJ PACHAURI



MUFTI MOHAMMED SAYEED

"I had the whole nation behind me"

WHILE the nation waited anxiously for news of his daughter's release, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, 53, was both the anguished father and the worried home minister. Hundreds of supporters lined up outside his residence every morning to share his grief. Mounds of files waited in his North Block office. And Mufti played both roles with fortitude. In the end, the man, who resigned from Rajiv Gandhi's cabinet on the issue of communalism, was in no mood for compromises. Soft in speech but tough on issues, he spoke to Senior Correspondent PANKAJ PACHAURI *last fortnight. Excerpts from the interview:*

Q. *How do you view this abduction politically?*

A. The mishandling of the situation by the previous (Centre and state) governments by their alliance politics alienated a large section of the population, which got inspired by the militants. The 1987 assembly elections were rigged and the people lost faith in democratic institutions. The youth of the valley turned to violence. Neglected economic development, unemployment, corrupt administration and the Centre's indifference accelerated the process of the people's disgust towards the authorities.

Q. *But how did it transform into militancy?*

A. Kashmir has always been a hotbed of international intrigue. A section of the people was not agreeable to the accession, but it was always a passive section. The people, seeing no alternative to the present situation, are looking forward to militants. There is a total collapse of administrative machinery and other institutions. The law and order machinery has lost authority. I think it is in more turmoil than Punjab.

Q. *What is your gameplan for this?*

A. We believe that it is not just a question of administrative measures to restore normalcy, but one of restoration of people's faith in democratic institutions. The people who believe that Kashmir is a part of India are scared to air their views. Their hands have to be strengthened. People need good dispensation, good administration and economic measures. Our first priority will be to fight unemployment among the youth and restore the state's authority.

Q. *Will this abduction mean that the low security policy of the new government will be abandoned?*

A. No. We are against ostentatious security. There will be security, but we will not let it become a status symbol.

Q. *The last six days must have been torturous.*

A. I was never alone. I had a whole nation with me. And I am proud of that nation.

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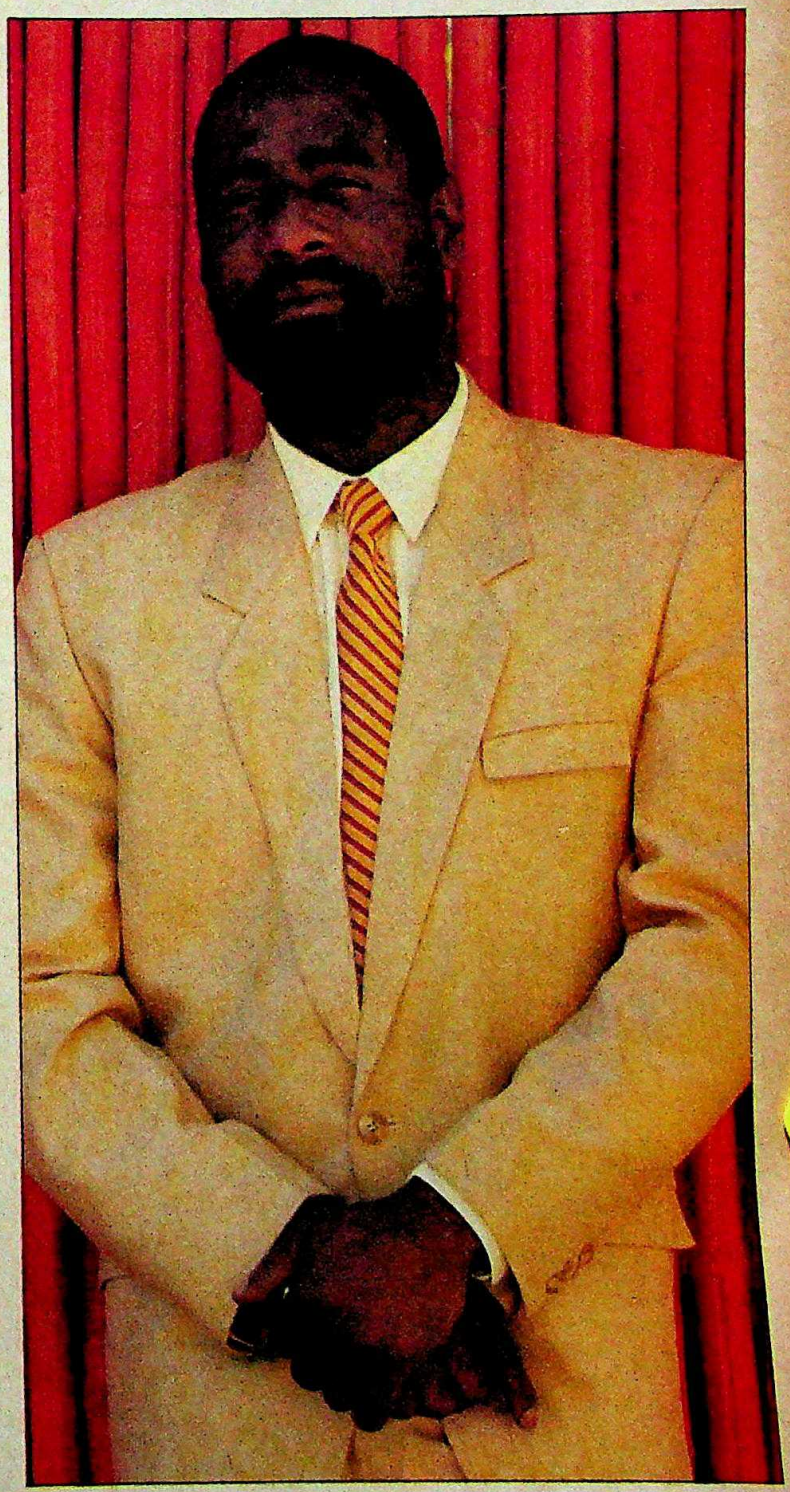

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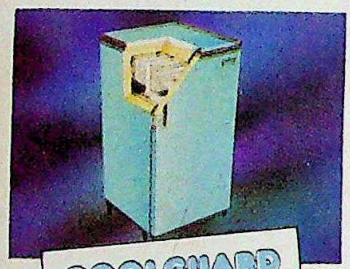

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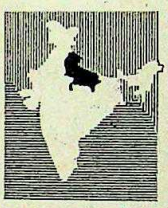
Ajit Singh with Yadav: arch rivals

UTTAR PRADESH

A Bitter Beginning

Yadav wins, but all is not well



FOR years, they maliciously belittled his political abilities. They even had a sarcastic quip for his chief ministerial ambitions: "*Mungeri Lal ke haseen sapne.*" But last fortnight, as he took over as chief minister of India's most populous state, it was Mulayam Singh Yadav's turn to laugh at his opponents.

Still, the path to what is widely regarded as the second most powerful office in the country was not free of bumps. Before he found himself there, Yadav had to engage in several days of hectic lobbying. And even so, he finally had to take on his arch rival, Ajit Singh, in a contest for the leadership of the Janata Dal state Legislature Party.

Initially, there were hopes that Ajit Singh would opt out of the race on V.P. Singh's request. But that was not to be. In fact, Ajit Singh seemed sure that if it came to a showdown, he would triumph. Some time before the legislature party meeting, he told newsmen confidently: "I am looking forward to a situation where there is no contest. But if it becomes unavoidable, I do not have any problems."

There was reason for Ajit Singh's confidence. He commands a sizeable following in the Assembly, roughly equal to Yadav's. And he believed that, if it came to the crunch, the 30-odd members of the Jan Morcha group would help him tilt the scales.

The day of the contest found thousands of supporters of both groups gatecrashing into the secretariat's Tilak Hall where the legislature party meeting was held. Finally, they agreed to clear out and leave the legislators to begin their meeting, a half hour late.

Each of the party's 204 MLAs and eight MLCs was given a slip of paper on which to indicate his preference. Three central observers—Madhu Dandavate, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed and Chimanbhai Patel—oversaw the proceedings. Though they declined to disclose the details, there were indications that it was a very close contest. Some said Yadav edged home by just 11 votes. After the vote, the central observers announced that the ballot was only to ascertain preferences. The choice, they said, was unanimous. But the show of unity was clearly only a facade.

The contest over, it is time for Yadav to get down to governing Uttar Pradesh—a difficult task at the best of times. And these are not the best of times.

Foremost among the problems which will engage Yadav's attention is the growing communalism. The state has been racked by riots. And the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue that has deeply divided Hindus and Muslims continues to be a potential tinder-box. Worse, with the BJP having 57 members in the Assembly, Yadav can expect to be buffeted by tremendous pressures.

The first challenge for Yadav will come on January 27, if not sooner. That is the day on which the Vishwa Hindu Parishad plans to begin construction of a temple at Ayodhya.

Less than 10 days after the polls, the BJP made it clear that there would be no backtracking on its hardline stand. On December 6, Rajendra Kumar Gupta, the new state chief, and Kalyan Singh, the legislature party leader, reiterated two demands: that Ram Janmabhoomi be handed over to the Hindus, and that the Act making Urdu the second language be withdrawn.

With pressures from the BJP, his own partymen and the bureaucracy, Yadav has a rough path ahead of him.

But if Yadav was perturbed by the BJP's tremendous clout, he showed no signs of it while forming his cabinet. In a bold move, he enlisted Mohammed Azam Khan, convener of the Babri Masjid Action Committee. The action has raised a lot of eyebrows, for Azam was a vocal opponent of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in the previous Assembly.

The BJP apart, Yadav also faces pressures within the party. Ajit Singh may have lost the battle for chief ministership, but his acrimonious war against Yadav continues.

Some of those internal pressures were evident in the constitution of the ministry. Three Ajit Singh supporters figure in it. But significantly, they do not include a single Jat, the dominant community in the Ajit Singh group.

Otherwise, the ministry held no surprises. Most of the new ministers seemed obvious choices. With an expansion around the corner, it is too early to comment on the regional, factional or caste representation. But among the first ministers, the Brahmins were well represented with four members, followed by Muslims with three, and the Scheduled Castes with two. The Thakurs, the Kurmis, the Bhumihars and the Gujars had one each.

All party factions too were repre-

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sented—the erstwhile Lok Dal(B) group had six members, the Ajit Singh group three, and the Jan Morcha group and the Janata Party two each.

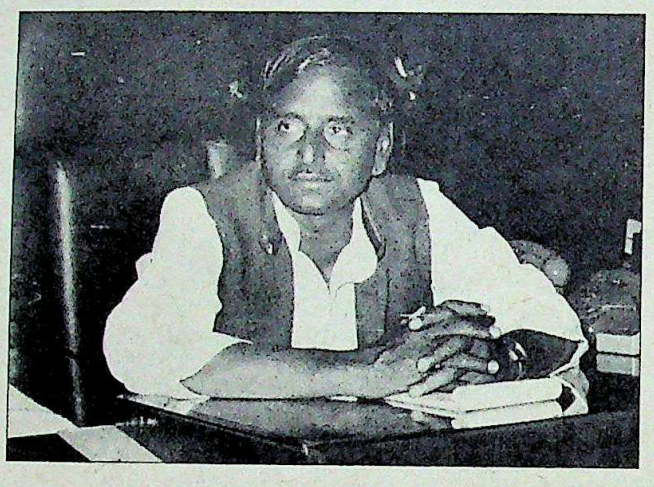
The balancing act won't end with the formation of the ministry. The Janata Dal has 204 MLAs, and with the 14 independents that it claims could not be given the party symbol in time, it has an absolute majority. But just about. If one faction decides to rock the boat, Yadav could be in deep trouble.

He could also face opposition from bureaucrats in the state who are not quite sure what to expect from the new chief minister. Remarked a senior official: "With people like Mulayam Singh Yadav around, you just do not know what kind of orders you are going to get and in what tone."

With pressures from the BJP, his own partymen and possibly the bureaucracy, Yadav has an obstacle-ridden path ahead of him. And the Congress(I) will be waiting for him to trip. As N.D. Tiwari, former chief minister and now leader of the state legislature party, put it: "I wish the new government success. But I would like to tell them that we will observe their functioning like very keen watch-dogs."

And bite if the opportunity arrives.

—DILIP AWASTHI



Yadav: humble origins

MULAYAM SINGH YADAV

"I will not be reduced to a mere clerk"

IT'S easy to see why Mulayam Singh's rivals underestimate him. His restlessly shifting tiny eyes suggest a nervous personality, a little out of place in the rough and tumble of Uttar Pradesh politics. And his disarming smile has a touch of innocence to it. But make no mistake. The man is well-versed in the game of politics. His origins are humble. He has tended cattle and milked cows, a fact he takes great pride in. From there to the chief ministership of Uttar Pradesh has been a rough path. That he has survived—and triumphed—is testimony to his political skills. The 50-year-old stocky politician spoke to Senior Correspondent DILIP AWASTHI *after his swearing-in. Excerpts:*

Q. ***How long will your government last?***

A. The full five-year term. I mean it. Have you seen the public support which the Janata Dal had in today's oath-taking ceremony? People are looking forward to us and we are looking forward to deliver the goods.

Q. ***But given the leadership struggle at the very start, don't you think there will be more controversies in future?***

A. When the leader is decided in New Delhi, you say he has been forced on the MLAs by Delhi. When the MLAs choose their own leader by the most democratic process, you say there is infighting.

Q. ***How do you assess the state's situation?***

A. It is a difficult situation. The treasury is empty, communal feelings are running very high, corruption has touched abysmal depths. And besides, there is price rise, poverty and unemployment.

Q. ***How do you plan to cope with the situation?***

A. Just give us six months and do not ask us bad questions. I will prove to you that we can do it.

Q. ***Do you think the administrative machinery is in tune with the way you want to run this state?***

A. That is another problem area I have to deal with immediately. The administrative machinery is badly entangled in the Congress(I) culture which has been very bureaucratic and anti-people. We will have to bring about a change in the system so that everybody who is part of the administrative machinery feels directly responsible to the people, more than anybody else. The red-tape has to go.

Q. ***How much time will you reserve for the people?***

A. Let me assure you that the Janata Dal chief minister will not be reduced to a mere clerk. I will be available to the people and at the same time I will expect my administrative machinery to deliver the goods.

Q. ***How do you plan to handle the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue?***

A. Give me some more time before going into specifics but I can assure you that we will be able to come out with a solution which will be acceptable to all. Let me settle down first.

Q. ***In your first press conference after being elected leader of the Janata Dal Legislature Party, you had said that corrupt and inefficient officials would be retired compulsorily. Would you elaborate?***

A. We are not going to tolerate inefficiency and corruption at any level. We will work out the details of how we should go about it. But the black sheep in the bureaucracy will definitely be weeded out.

Q. ***What do you feel about the criminalisation of politics?***

A. The Congress(I) was responsible for this in a big way and we are determined to fight the criminals in politics. I had said that all my ministers would have a perfectly clean image. You can see the present set for yourself. In future too, it will be the same.

Q. ***What about your own image, the charge that you were hand-in-glove with criminals and that you were protecting them?***

A. That was a Congress(I) canard against me. They wanted to defame me for obvious reasons while they themselves were inviting criminals in the party. I have never believed in politics backed by criminals. Nobody can cite one example to prove this allegation.

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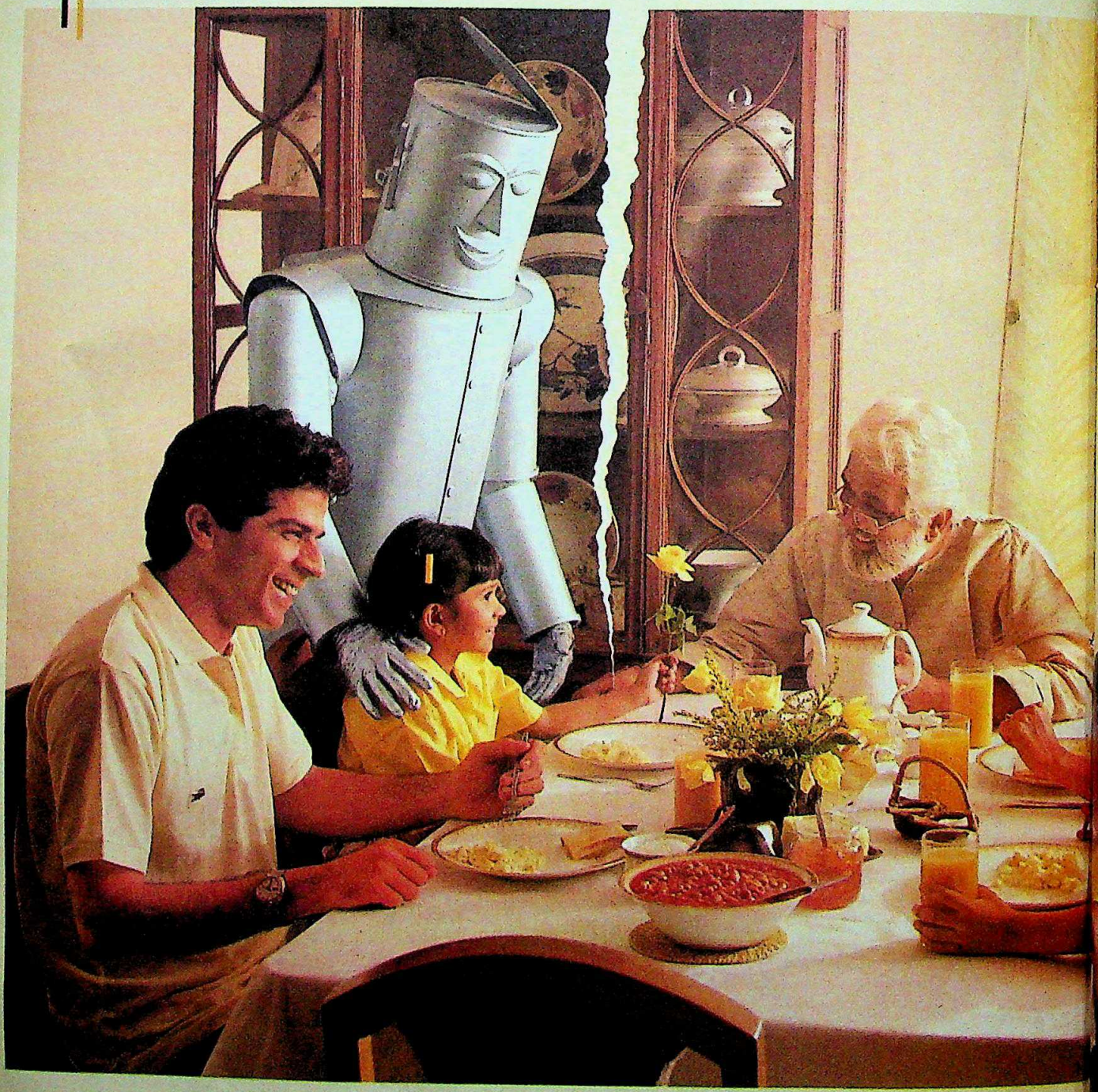

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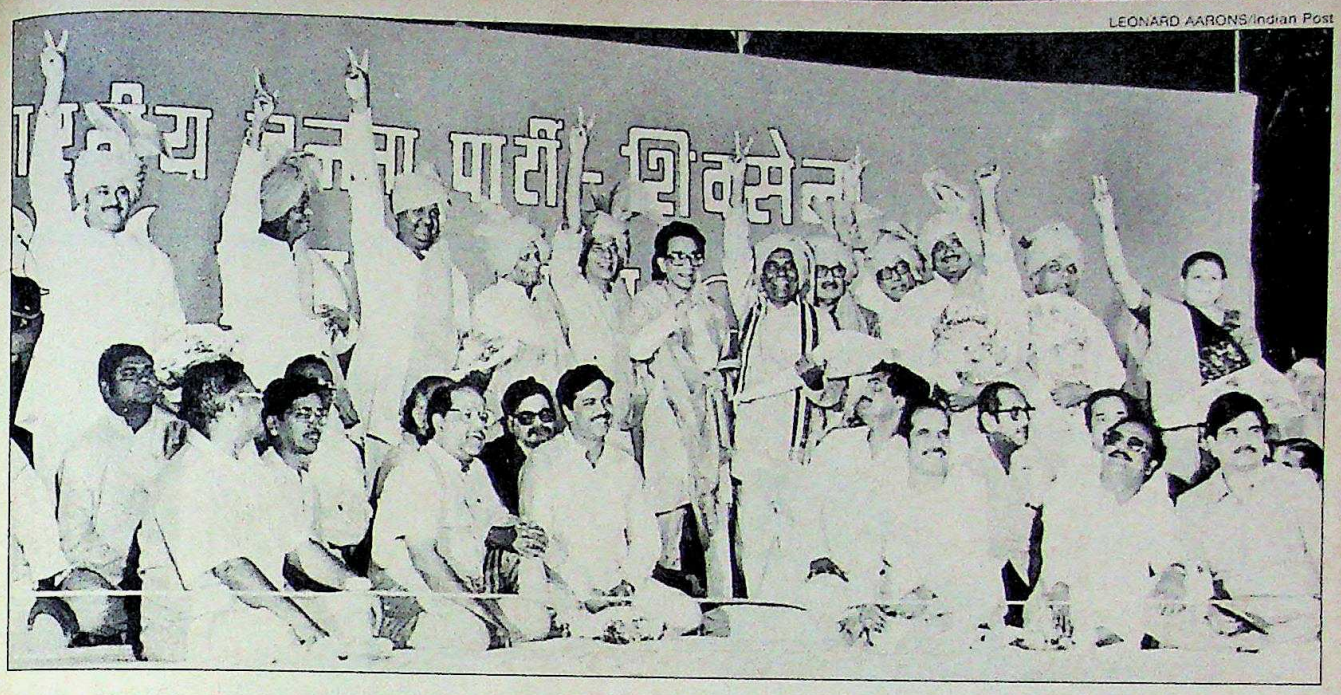
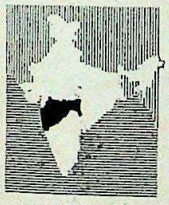


BJP and Shiv Sena MPs with Thackeray: fruitful alliance

MAHARASHTRA

A Saffron Swathe

Sena, BJP throw the gauntlet at Pawar



THE message at the mammoth victory rally at Bombay's historic Shivaji Park last fortnight was clear—the Shiv Sena and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had emerged for the first time as a major political entity in Maharashtra. As a spectacular pyrotechnic display enthralled thousands of jubilant supporters, Sena chief Bal Thackeray and BJP General Secretary Pramod Mahajan appeared on the stage along with 14 newly-elected MPs, all draped in saffron. And from amidst a sea of saffron flags, the gauntlet was flung at Congress(I) Chief Minister Sharad Pawar, who now has to defend his party's bastion in the forthcoming assembly elections against the strong challenge from the rightist Hindu political alliance.

The performance of the Sena and the BJP in the Lok Sabha poll was remarkable by any yardstick. The Sena has never had an MP and has only one MLA in the present Vidhan Sabha, whose term expires next March. The BJP was routed in the 1984 poll—in fact, the last time anyone was elected to the Lok Sabha from Maharashtra carrying the saffron flag was in 1957, when the Jan Sangh won two seats. In the 288-member state assembly, the BJP has only 15 MLAs. Neither party has ever had a significant political presence at the state level. Yet in last month's parliamentary poll, 10 BJP and four Sena candidates were elected.

The Hindu alliance was unaffected even by the fact that in a majority of the constituencies it fought three-cornered contests with the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal or Ambedkar's Republican Party. "We have shown that the Opposition can also win in three-cornered contests. This is the major lesson from the poll," declared BJP's Ram Naik, who humbled Janata Dal leader Mrinal Gore and the Congress(I) in Bombay North.

Furthermore, Sena and BJP candidates came second in another 15 of the state's 48 Lok Sabha constituencies, polling substantial votes and pushing aside other opposition parties to an ignominious third position. In six of the constituencies, where the alliance came second, it lost by narrow margins. Thus, while the Congress(I) polled more than 45 per cent of the votes cast and the Janata Dal got nearly 11 per cent, the alliance grabbed more than 28 per cent—about 24 per cent to the BJP and 4.4 per cent to the Sena.

For the Sena especially, initially reluctant to enter the fray for the Lok Sabha, winning two-thirds of the seats it contested was no mean achievement. Having polled more than 4 per cent of the votes, the Sena will now get recognition from the Election Commission, and exclusive right to its bow-and-arrow symbol in Maharashtra. This will be to its advantage in the assembly poll, which is the Sena's primary target. Said an elated Thackeray: "The Lok Sabha poll was just a stepping-stone. Our ultimate objective is to come to power in the state."

Thackeray's claim can no longer be taken as an empty boast. The BJP-Sena alliance has cut a saffron swathe across the map of Maharashtra, from Bombay and Thane on the Arabian Sea to Bhandara and Chimur in the eastern extremity. Observed Mahajan: "In Madhya Pradesh or Rajasthan, the Hindutva wave was already there, but in Maharashtra it had to be created. The Lok Sabha results have given a great boost to our pro-Hindu line."

For Mahajan, the architect of the right-wing alliance, the Lok Sabha success is a vindication of his political strategy. The BJP leader had lobbied hard for a tie-up with the Sena against strong opposition within his party. Opponents of the alliance argued that unlike the BJP, with its roots in the RSS tradition, the Sena lacked a political ideology and a disciplined cadre. It was a party of riff-raff, and its blatantly anti-minority thrust would alienate large sections of voters. The Sena's only asset was Thackeray's charisma, Mahajan's opponents maintained. But BJP supremo L.K. Advani backed Mahajan, and the alliance was forged shortly before the elections were announced. Said Ram

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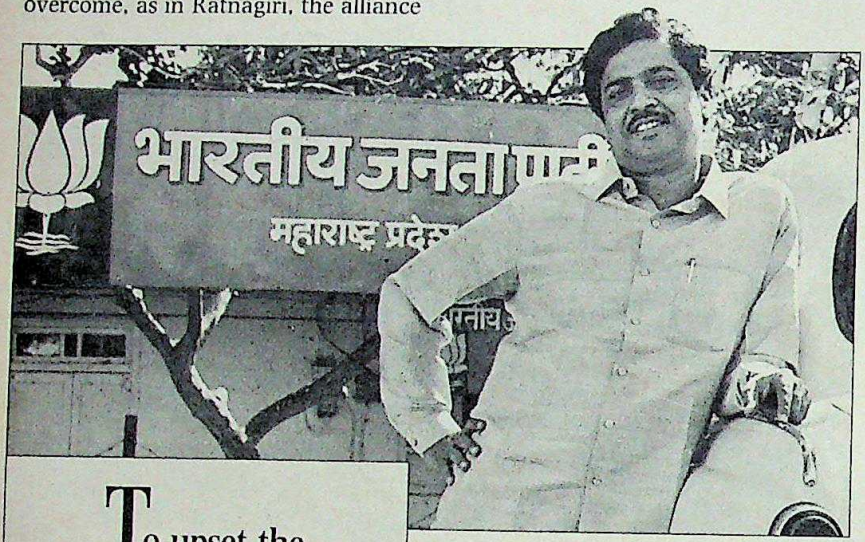
Naik: "Our performance proved Mahajan's strategy was correct. This victory was possible because BJP and Sena volunteers worked as one group. Reservations about the two parties being incompatible because of the difference in political cultures were proved wrong. The alliance went down to the grassroots." In fact, where traditional rivalry between the two parties could not be overcome, as in Ratnagiri, the alliance lost to the Congress(I).

Though a hotly contested claim, the BJP-Sena alliance may have attracted a section of the Muslim and Dalit votes also. Asserted Naik: "Muslims did vote for us, even if not in large numbers. And it's a myth that Dalits voted whole hog for the Janata or the Republican Party." Added Abdul Alim Khan, BJP state general secretary and minority cell chief: "We're still analysing booth-wise figures, but there is enough evidence that our party also got Muslim votes." But Thackeray has obviously written off the Muslim vote, for at the victory rally he attacked the minority community again, and raised a hornet's nest by declaring that Muslims would be banned from praying on streets or using loudspeakers in mosques. Nevertheless, the BJP has to contend with criticism that it has only ridden the Sena tiger to victory, and that the results do not demonstrate its own organisational strength in the state. On the contrary, as happened earlier to the Praja Socialist Party, the BJP faces the danger of losing its cadres to the more militant Sena.

TILL the BJP national convention in Bombay in October, BJP and RSS leaders assiduously avoided Thackeray, who often mocked them in public. Even now, Thackeray remains irrepressible. After the poll, he jeered at Atal Behari Vajpayee for suggesting a government of "national reconciliation" and attacked the RSS for its pro-Brahmin focus. Said he: "The RSS and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad have worked hard, but I brought militancy to Hinduism. I don't believe in tufts and sacred threads."



Mahajan: successful strategy

To upset the Congress(I) applecart, the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance has to garner support in the crucial sugar belt.

But BJP leaders reject the claim that their success is Sena-inspired. Observed Alim Khan: "Our best victories were in Vidarbha where we have worked hard for the last three years among farmers and youth. The Sena is coming up there only now." Bombay is another place where the BJP-Sena alliance staged a major coup, winning four prestigious seats. A city which in the past has been with the Congress(I) or the Left, now appears to be turning to the saffron Right. "In Bombay we have demonstrated that it is the BJP and not the Janata Dal which is the natural heir of the old Janata Party," declared Naik.

Even though the BJP-Sena alliance performed spectacularly across the state, it failed completely in one crucial region. It did not win a single seat in the rich sugar districts of western Maharashtra, home to the ruling Maratha clans and the bedrock of Congress(I) supremacy in the state. Said Thackeray: "We didn't have enough time. If I had held meetings there, the picture would have been different. The sugar belt soil is fertile, and we will exploit it for the Vidhan Sabha poll." According to the Sena chief, many Congress(I) sugar barons are unhappy, and will play a major role in upsetting the ruling party's fortunes. But for now, the only prominent Maratha from the Congress(I) who has sided publicly with Thackeray is the former chief minister Babasaheb Bhosale, who does not have a base anywhere in the state.

Support in western Maharashtra is crucial if the alliance is to upset the Congress(I) applecart. According to traditional political wisdom, no party can rule Maharashtra without controlling the sugar belt. But ironically it was in this region—the heart of what was once Chhatrapati Shivaji's empire—that the Hindutva wave failed to roll. "The Hindus here constitute a confident ruling elite, and will not be swayed by slogans," confided a BJP leader.

However, there was no denying that elsewhere in the state, especially in Vidarbha and Marathwada, the alliance was helped considerably by the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign and the Shilapujas. Alim Khan, who defied police bans and himself organised pujas at some places, observed: "The campaign reached 17,000 villages in the state. The BJP derived a lot of benefit. We planted the flag in villages where even five years hence we did not have a hope of establishing ourselves."

But even before the BJP and the Sena can consolidate their newly acquired following across the state, negotiations have resumed over the sharing of seats for the Vidhan Sabha poll. Earlier, the Sena wanted to fight from 200 constituencies, leaving the rest to the BJP. But with its spectacular performance in the Lok Sabha poll, the BJP is more assertive. Furthermore, efforts are on by Janata Dal leaders like the newly-elected MP Babanrao Dhakne for greater opposition unity. Said the Dal's Sadanand Varde: "We lost at least eight Lok Sabha seats because there was no seat adjustment. We will have to take a fresh look at the alliance. But if they insist on Hindutva, there is no question of going along."

With Ayodhya far from the state's borders, and the Janata Dal dominant in Delhi, the alliance may decide to soften the pro-Hindu line for the assembly poll. Otherwise, three-cornered contests with a more resourceful Janata Dal and the ruling Congress(I) will become inevitable. And though the BJP-Sena alliance has emerged with flying colours from the latest electoral battle, the Hindu Right may not yet be in a position to come to power in Maharashtra all on its own.

—M. RAHMAN

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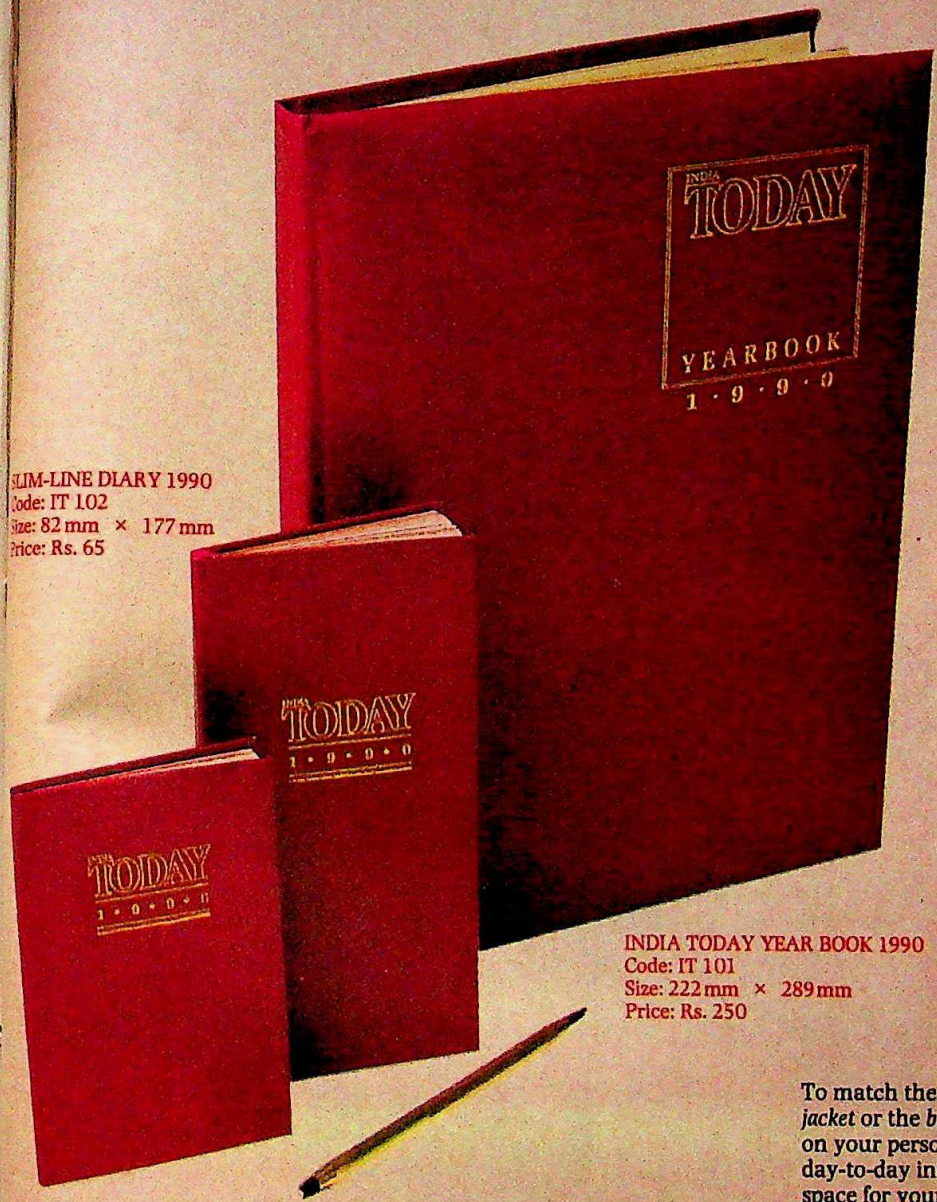

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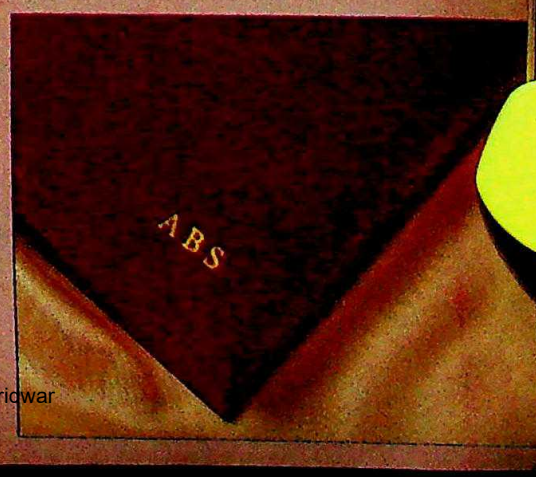

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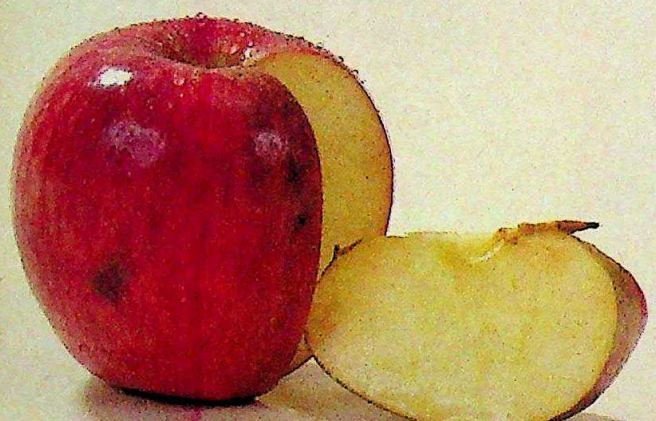

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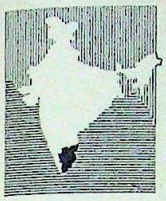
TAMIL NADU

The New Empress

Jayalalitha rides rough shod over partymen



I am the leader of this party and it is my utterances alone that are to be considered, not irresponsible statements made by others in the party.
Jayalalitha at a post-election press conference in Madras.

IF there were any doubts about who wears the pants in the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhgam (AIADMK), they've been laid to rest. It's Jayalalitha. And just in case any in the party haven't yet got the message, Jayalalitha is rubbing it in. Publicly.

Not surprisingly, party leaders aren't delighted. They're wearing long faces, worried about what sort of political future awaits them in the party.

The answer rests in Jayalalitha's hands. A fact she made clear when, in a move that took everyone by surprise, she appointed S.R. Radha as leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly to take her place. Radha, a former minister, is a low-profile political lightweight and seemed a little dazed by the honour. "No," he said. "I did not expect it at all."

But if Radha was dazed, he was also pleased. Not so Thirunavukkarasu, deputy leader of the AIADMK Legislature Party. Logically, he should have succeeded Jayalalitha. But he had committed a sin by violating Jayalalitha's blanket ban on senior party leaders addressing election meetings. That was a privilege she reserved for herself.

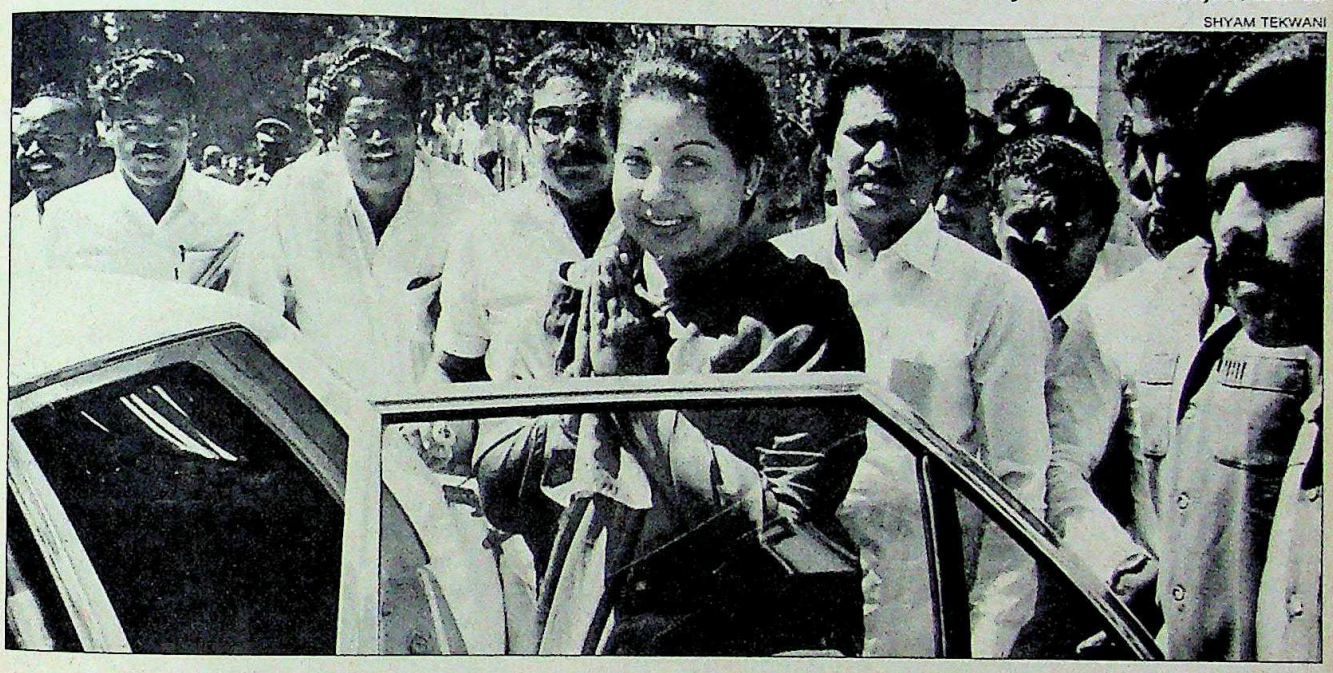
The blanket ban was one example of the sort of absolute rule Jayalalitha has imposed on the party. It was meant to convey to party leaders that so far as the electorate was concerned, only Jayalalitha mattered. And now that the poll results—a complete wash-out of the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhgam (DMK)—have vindicated her, she's hell-bent on riding rough shod over any opposition in the party.

> **Senior leaders complain that Jayalalitha does not consult them while making decisions.**

One notable victim is K. Ramachandran, the party whip in the state Assembly. During the days when the AIADMK was split into two factions, Ramachandran was the target of an acid bulb attack, allegedly masterminded by Tamaraikani, a former AIADMK MLA of the Janaki faction. Now that the two factions have come together, Jayalalitha wants Ramachandran to withdraw his case against Tamaraikani. Ramachandran reportedly refused. The result: he has been totally sidelined. On one occasion, he and Thirunavukkarasu were even reportedly reprimanded in the presence of other leaders.

Thirunavukkarasu and Ramachandran are not the only victims of Jayalalitha's imperiousness. Other senior party leaders complain that she neither consults nor confers with them while making political decisions. Even meeting her is difficult. Appointments are fixed by her aide, Natarajan, and all too often his answer is: "*Amma oorile ille*" (she's not in town).

SHYAM TEKWANI



Still, an open revolt is not on the cards. The last assembly and Lok Sabha elections have clearly shown that she is the only vote-catcher in the party.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi is pulling up his socks. He has reshuffled his ministry and the administration. He's also created a new department for backward classes. And on the foodgrains front, the Centre has bailed him out—by increasing the monthly allocation of rice. Whether that will be sufficient to stop the onward march of Jayalalitha is not yet clear.

Jayalalitha faces a different problem. With a National Front Government at the Centre, it's unlikely that the DMK Government will be dismissed. So she will need to demonstrate her staying capacities and keep the party in one piece while the spoils of power are out of reach. Her recent actions, however, don't point in that direction.

—KAVITHA SHETTY

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HARYANA

Land of the Rising Son

Chautala succeeds father

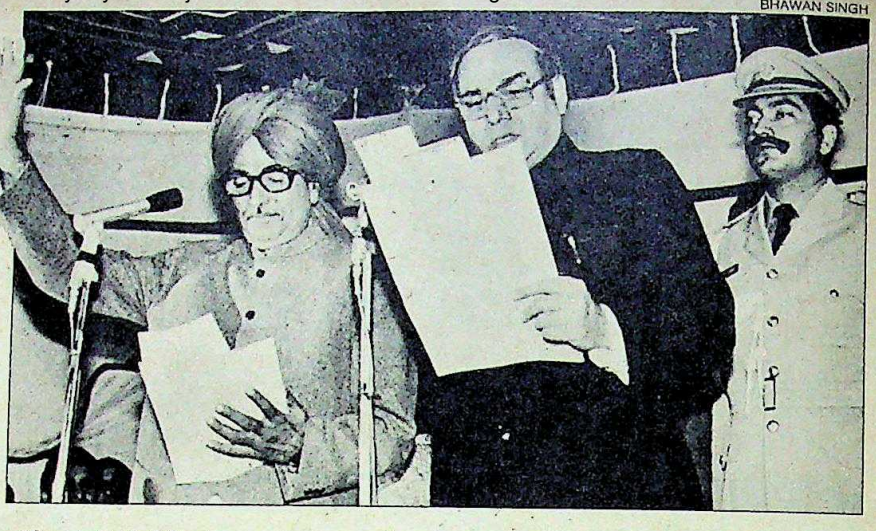
WHEN he came onto the stage for the swearing-in ceremony at the capital's Haryana Bhawan, he was wearing a triumphant smile. And he had every reason to do so. For in the tradition of dynastic rule, Om Prakash Chautala, the son of Haryana strongman Devi Lal, had just 'inherited' the chief minister's *gaddi* after six hours of high drama. So sudden was the transfer of power from father to son, that even the central leaders of the Janata Dal party and the BJP—a partner in the state Government—were taken aback.

The drama began early in the morning. Three hours before Devi Lal was sworn in as deputy prime minister, he and his son requested state Governor H.R. Barari to fly up to Delhi the same afternoon. There was a sense of urgency in the operation: wireless messages were sent to district SSPs and district collectors, asking them to track down legislators so that they could all reach Delhi by 2 p.m. Devi Lal's Political Secretary, Deepak Kumar, sat glued to the telephone in Delhi as he tried to get through to the 60 Janata Dal MLAs.

Soon after, Devi Lal was sworn in as deputy prime minister—though he still held the post of chief minister. After the swearing-in ceremony, he returned to Haryana Bhawan to tackle Ranjit Singh, his politically ambitious younger son, and the one man who could have upset his plans to anoint Chautala as chief minister. To ask Ranjit to support Chautala was a particularly difficult task because Ranjit Singh commanded the majority support amongst the MLAs.

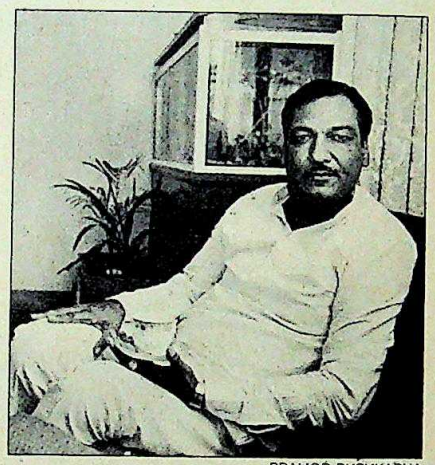
Devi Lal wanted his younger son to propose Chautala's name and Irrigation and Power Minister, Veerender Singh (also Ranjit's man), to second it. An unwilling Ranjit Singh accepted his father's diktat to ensure the unanimous election of Chautala, but refused to propose his name. Finally, in a meeting presided over by Devi Lal himself, Chautala's name was proposed by Kishan Singh Sangwan, the party's state secretary, and seconded by Rao Narbir Singh. After which, Devi Lal, in a tone of finality, informed Ranjit: "Chautala will be sworn in at 5:30 p.m."

BHAWAN SINGH



Chautala (left) being sworn in; and Ranjit Singh: uneasy truce

> Unhappy over the blatant perpetuation of dynastic rule, the BJP has refused to continue to be a partner in the Haryana Government.



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

But Chautala's problems were far from over. A sulking Ranjit Singh preferred to sit on the Haryana Bhawan terrace rather than attend the swearing-in ceremony. Worse, the BJP, now refused to continue to be a partner in Chautala's government. Though it declined to share power, it did promise to lend support from outside.

Chautala, however, after having achieved his long-nurtured ambition of becoming top dog in the state, was now not to be deprived. He made an all-out attempt to cross all hurdles. Faced with the uneasy task of constituting the Cabinet, he made a surprising, but politically astute move: he retained the existing team of ministers, most of whom were Ranjit Singh's men. That fetched him a certain amount of goodwill. Remarked a minister: "He has made a sincere beginning."

Most taken aback by Chautala's political sagacity were the state MLAs and the state administration with whom he has long had the reputation of being tyrannical, a *"danda* administrator". The IAS and IPS officers had, in fact, been apprehensive that with Chautala formally in power, the situation could only get worse. However, the new chief minister made overt attempts to allay their fears, by actively propagating "free and frank discussion" in an address to the officials.

But behind the promising beginning lay rumblings of discontent. The most alarming signals came from the BJP. Though disarmed by Chautala's personal invitation to BJP President L.K. Advani for the swearing-in ceremony, the party decided not to continue as a partner in the Government. While Atal Behari Vajpayee attended the ceremony, the party was resolute about not sharing power—a major decision considering the fact that six of its 17 members were ministers in Devi Lal's government.

Advani's excuse: "We want to concentrate on organisational work and strengthen our base in Haryana." The fact is that the BJP was unhappy over the blatant perpetuation of dynastic rule—the very slogan that Devi Lal had acrimoniously used against the Congress(I) during his election campaign. The party was also sore with Devi Lal over the loss of both its parliamentary seats from the

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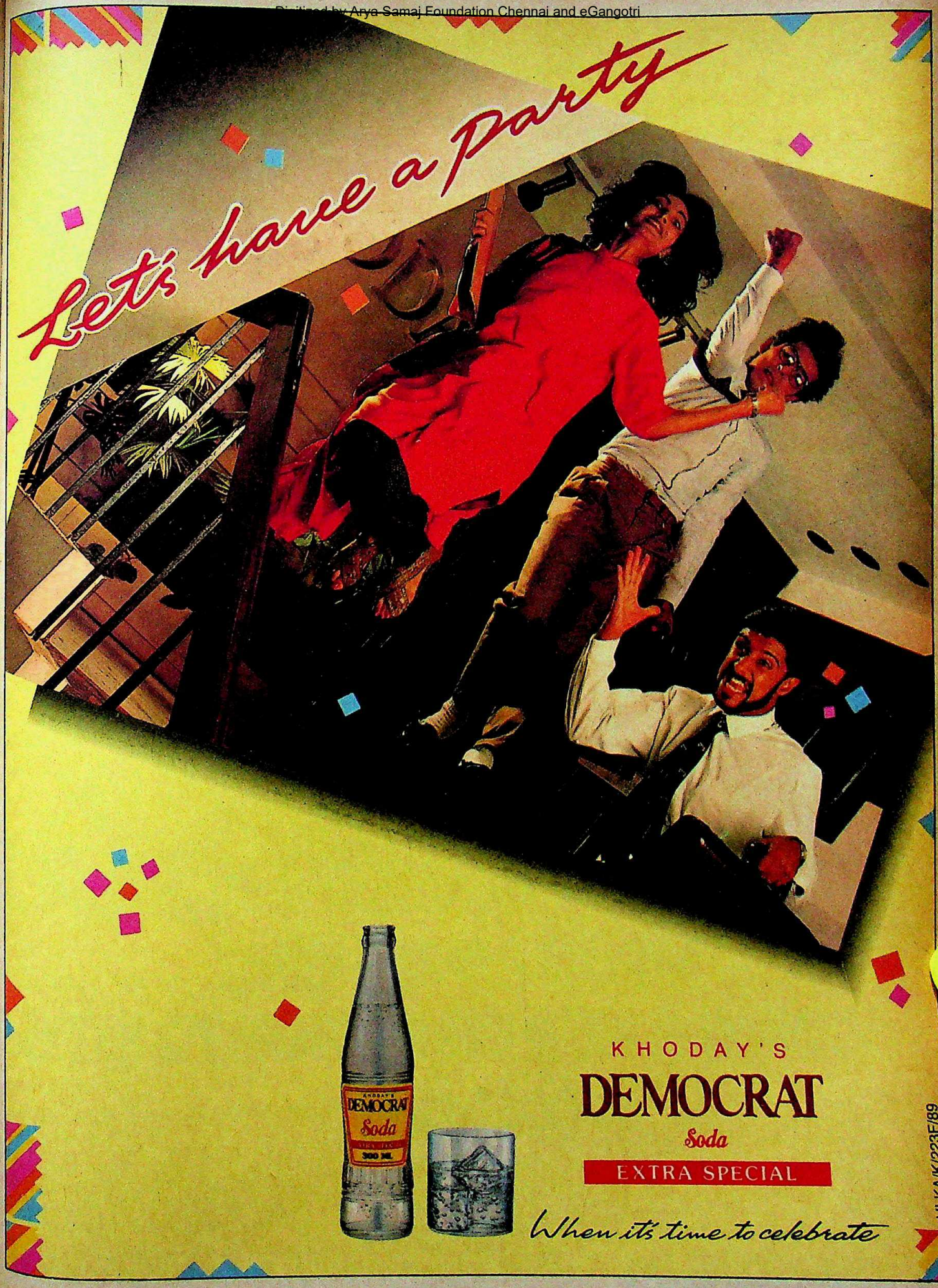

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state. The Janata Dal-BJP alliance trailed in 40 out of the 90 assembly segments, which the BJP now ascribes to the "corrupt and pro-Jat" image of the Devi Lal government.

This is the image that Chautala has to shed. And this may prove a fairly formidable task, for he has to establish himself as a popular leader and shrug off the pro-Jat label before the assembly elections are held. Making the going more difficult will be dissidents Kirpa Ram Punia and eight other MLAs, who have recently been sacked for anti-party activities. Punia is more than a distinct threat. As the one-time right-hand man of Devi Lal, he can stake his claim to be leader of the Opposition if he manages to win the support of two more MLAs. Chautala, of course, is trying his best to prevent such a possibility. He has even offered to take back the erring MLAs, if they send in an apology.

Chautala justifies his elevation to the number one post in the state, by declaring: "I am proud that I have Devi Lal's blood in my veins. But I am a politician in my own right—I have put in 36 years in this line." Fortunately for him, the other one who could make similar claims and upset his apple-cart has for the moment declared peace. Says Ranjit Singh, somewhat falsely: "There is no dispute in our family." Even so, Chautala—hemmed in by an adamant BJP and a rejuvenated state Congress(I)—has a tightrope walk ahead.

—HARINDER BAWEJA

BOTTOMLINE BY D. BUNKER

Force of Habit

OLD habits are hard to kill. The trappings of power acquired over five years of ruling 800 million people can become pretty addictive—the bullet-proof Mercedes; the three-ring security circus; the obeisance; the fate of political bosses in your hands; and, above all, the comfort of advisers that allows others to do your thinking for you. Rajiv Gandhi can, thus, be cheerfully forgiven for being made to believe that he is still the prime minister taking a short break. Here's the post-election scene at Race Course Road.

Mani Iyer: Sir, there are people waiting outside to congratulate you on your victory.

Rajiv (puzzled): Victory?

Mani: In Amethi.

Rajiv: Oh, that one.

Mani: And the moral one, sir. You are still the prime choice for prime minister. These opposition chaps are not like limpets. They will never be able to cling on to their seats. We..., I mean you, will be back in South Block in no time.

Satish Sharma: Yes. Just think of this as a short holiday. We can always fly in a couple of dolphins from Lakshadweep to play with in my swimming pool. It even has Italian tiles.

Mani: Just look at the crowds. There must be 50,000 people there at least.

Rajiv: Which means 10,000. By George, that's still a lot.

George: Not by me, sir. By H.K.L. Bhagat.

Satish: Actually 2,000 are security guards, but that's still a lot.

Rajiv: Two thousand? But I only had 1,000 when I was prime minister.

Mani: It's like this, sir. V.P. Singh has 1,000. We asked for double. After all, your life is even more valuable now. Without you, how can we, I mean you, come back to power? In any case, we have to give the impression that we are still in charge. We must cling to the aura of power like...never mind.

Rajiv: You're right. I'm going out to meet the people.

Satish: I suggest you greet them from the roof. We must give the impression that we are on top of the situation.

Mani: George. Tell Doordarshan to get a camera crew here at once.

George: They say that Rajiv is not news any more.

Rajiv: *Hum nani yaad dila denge.*

Mani: That's the spirit. Remember the Doon School motto. Never Bend Over. You must keep up the appearance of still being the prime minister. It's all a matter of psychology.

Satish: That's right. Get in that chap Prannoy Roy.

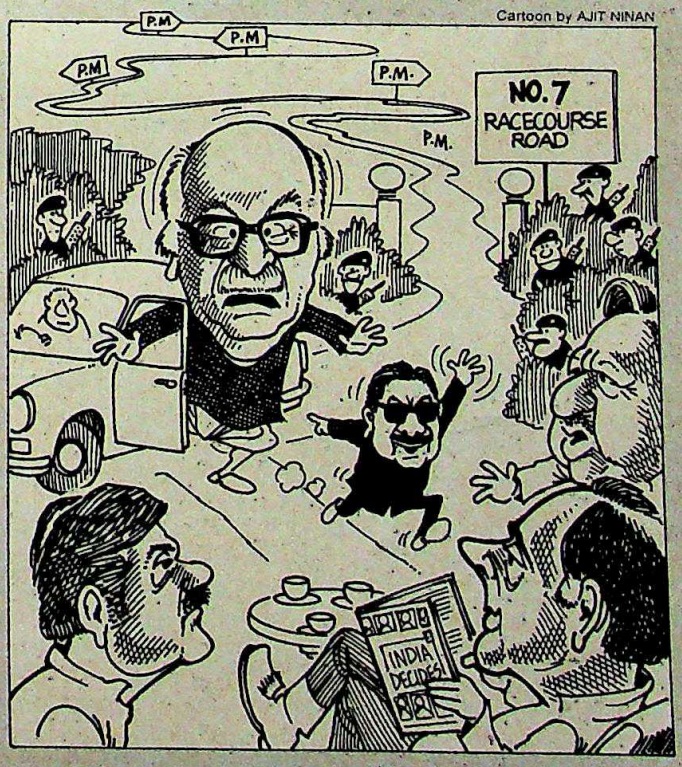
Mani (patiently): That's psephology.

Satish: Whatever. We, I mean you, must keep acting like you are PM.

Rajiv: How?

Mani: There are six chief ministers waiting to see you for the last week. They are waiting for you to appoint their successors.

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



Rajiv: Really. Why wasn't I told?

Satish: As Mani said, it's all a question of psephology. You kept them waiting when you were PM, so you must continue to act like one now.

Rajiv: You're right. Keep them waiting another week. By George, I'm really beginning to feel like the prime minister again. What would I do without you chaps?

R.K. Dhawan (sotto voce): You would still be prime minister.

George (excitedly): Sir, Mr L.K. Advani is at the gate. His driver says he wants to see the prime minister.

Rajiv: Then it's really true. I'm still the prime minister!

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MAHARASHTRA

High-Tech Paradise

● EVEN if there is a big question mark over the fate of the Reliance Industries empire, work goes on apace at the 12-storey mansion in Colaba—which Dhirubhai Ambani's family is to occupy.

For more than a year after it was sold by the Tatas, reportedly for Rs 9 crore, Sea Wind has been under extensive and expensive renovation. The finest granite, marble and teak are trucked daily to the unoccupied building as craftsmen convert it into a palace fit for one of India's richest business families.

While the Ambanis insist they have purchased the brand new building for housing company officers, the fabulous renovation fools nobody. According to the Bombay grapevine, Sea Wind will house the entire Ambani clan—two floors each for Dhirubhai and sons Mukesh and Anil, one floor each for the two daughters when they are in Bombay, a floor for family guests, and the remaining for various R & D facilities.

If the massive satellite dish which was recently installed on the building is any indication, Sea Wind, when fully renovated, should be a high-tech paradise.

The Sea Wind Building

GUJARAT

Winning Verdict

● JUDICIAL servicemen across the country had cause for cheer last fortnight. Reason: the inquiry report in the case of the police assault on Nadiad chief judicial magistrate N.L. Patel had vindicated their stand.

The 140-page report by Justice R.M. Sahay of the Allahabad High Court, appointed by the Supreme Court, is as much an indictment of the Nadiad police as of the state Government "for its failure to protect the freedom of the judiciary and for shielding errant police officers in the case."

Patel: vindicated

While expressing grave fears about the fate of the common man when even a magistrate was insecure, Sahay recommended that: the cases against Patel be withdrawn; the high court be directed to allow Patel to resume his duties in Nadiad; the state Government be asked to pay suitable compensation for the torture and humiliation caused to him.

More important, Sahay urged that the district superintendent of police, the medical superintendent of the government hospital and two government officials involved in the incident be stripped of their administrative duties and that their department be asked to take appropriate action against them.

Finally, castigating the state Government and administration for their inaction, Sahay said that the Supreme Court may consider taking appropriate action against the Director-General of Police, Keki Dadabhoy.

Says the report: "Crime is contagious. But if the Government becomes a law-breaker, it breeds contempt of law." For the judicial profession, it was a winning verdict.

TAMIL NADU

Language Blues

● IT was business as usual in the shops of the sleepy town of Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu. Until a recent government order decided to take up the cause of Tamil in the state. The Labour Department ordered that all non-Tamil names of shops were to be replaced by new names in *Thooya* or pure Tamil. The purpose: to perpetuate better Tamil among the masses.

Understandably, there is considerable consternation—pure Tamil is a far cry from colloquial Tamil and not commonly understood either. The word shop itself will be replaced by the words, *kadais* or *angaadis*.

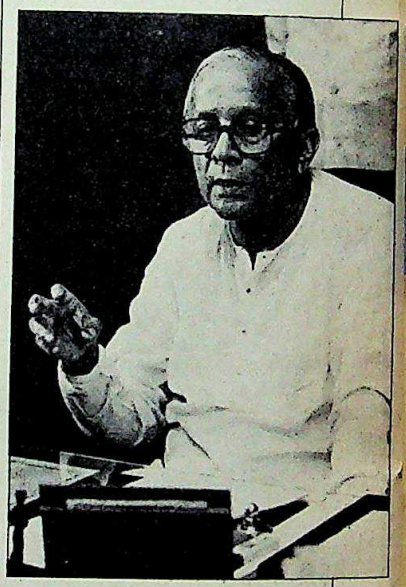
While the circular has drawn flak from some secular citizens and political parties, who are objecting to this sudden display of chauvinism, some shopkeepers are also complaining. Reason: they cannot remember the new names of their shops.

WEST BENGAL

Saffron Threat

● THE saffron wave now seems to be threatening to swamp the reds in West Bengal. Emboldened by its impressive showing in the north, the BJP last fortnight threatened to launch a statewide agitation for the resignation of Chief Minister Jyoti Basu. The party, which set up a committee to prepare a charge-sheet against the Left Government, also demanded the scrapping of the Bakreshwar project.

Claiming that the people were disillusioned with the "Marxist misrule", the BJP predicted a CPI(M) wipe-out in the 1992 assembly polls. Said state BJP chief Sukumar Banerjee:



Basu: under pressure

"With its defeat in Kerala and Tripura, the CPI(M) has been reduced to a regional party. Communism is dying everywhere in the world."

Though the BJP failed to secure a single Lok Sabha seat in the state, it registered a 1.3 per cent increase in the votes polled from 0.4 per cent in the last election. For the CPI(M), it symbolises the inroads being made by communalism.

While the Left Government can find comfort in the fact that the electorate voted for continuity rather than change, it clearly cannot afford to ignore the challenge.

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ITORY WARNING: CIGARETTE SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

"For us, energy is not an abstract ideal. It is a target for today and tomorrow."

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Mr A D Baijal, Divisional Manager, Planning. His comment is in fact a commentary on the philosophy behind TISTECH. A unique emphasis on relevance, result and accountability that marks every action at Tata Steel.

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Today, Tata Steel is concentrating on generating captive power. Generating power from washery rejects using Fluidised Bed technique at Jamadoba is merely one example of how Tata Steel is moving towards being a totally self-sufficient and energy-efficient company.

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Using Concast as an alternative route to conventional ingot casting, Tata Steel has eliminated an entire stage of energy consumption. By the end of Phase III—Concast will account for over 60% of total production.

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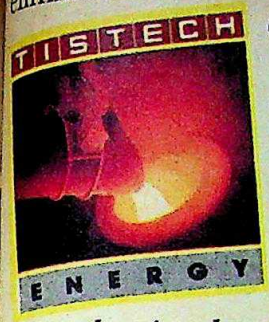

These are targets that convert precepts into practice, ideals into benefits, potential into performance. Because, at Tata Steel, this awareness is felt and shared by everyone. From the miners to the engineers. From the foremen to the executives.

Because TISTECH ENERGY is more than an energy conservation programme in a steel plant. It is a pioneering attempt at evolving a technology that is relevant and an attitude that is contemporary. TISTECH ENERGY is a deep rooted commitment towards meeting the country's needs of today without compromising its tomorrow.

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- **Eliminating an entire stage of energy consumption through Concast**
- **Reducing specific energy consumption to less than 8.75 G cal/t**
- **Introducing KORF in all open hearth furnaces**
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Stamp Charging in Coke Ovens Battery No. 7

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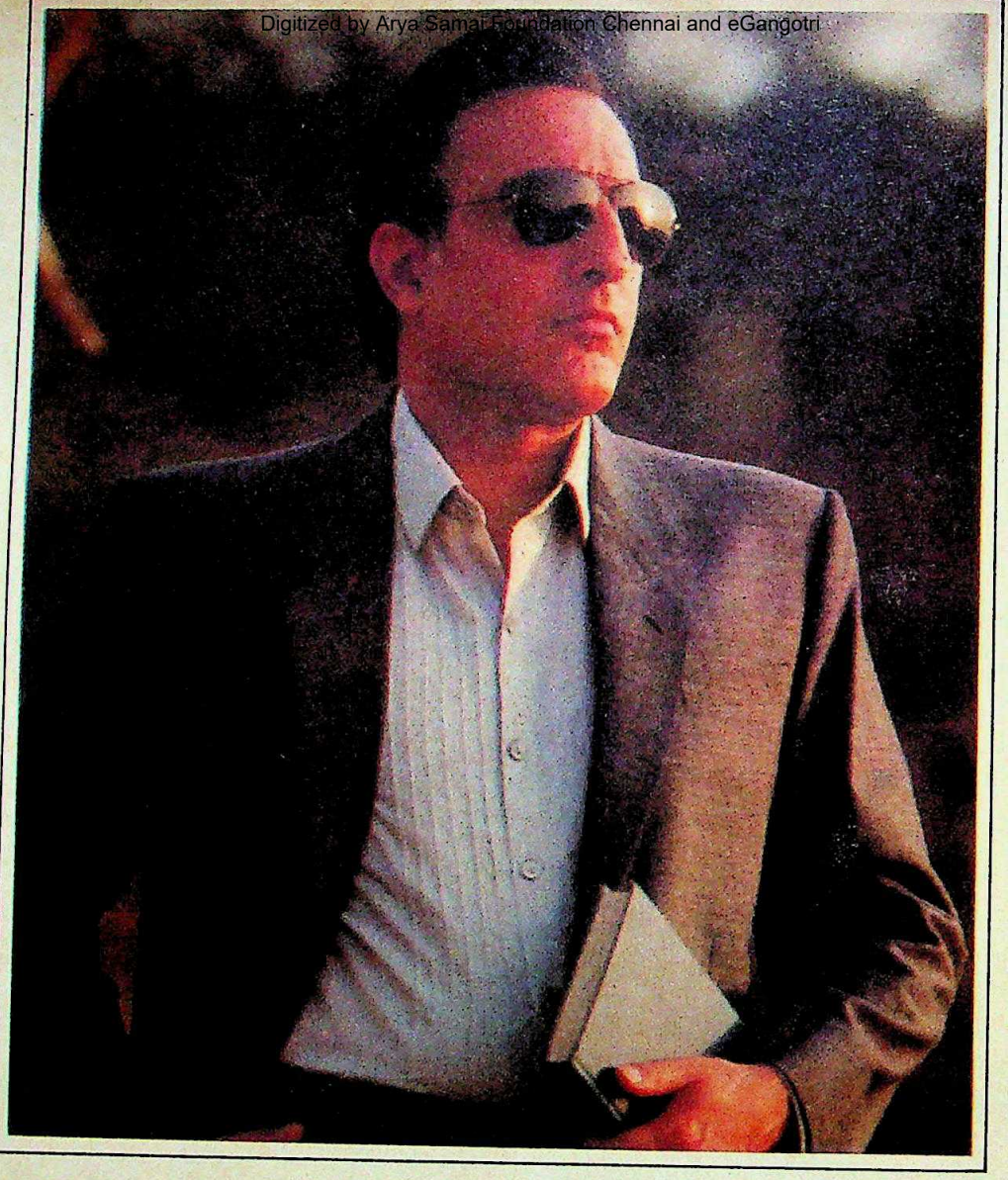

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EXPORT BINGE

THE largest multinational operating in India, Hindustan Lever, is one big corporation which cannot be faulted for being a laggard in exports. While other corporate heavyweights have recently been getting into the act by setting up separate export or trading houses, the soaps and detergents giant already owns nine units producing exclusively for overseas markets. This year's export turnover is expected to exceed Rs 104 crore. Lever has also taken over or leased small, sick enterprises to push exports. The Government recently cleared Lever's bid to take on lease for five years the foodgrains grading and packing unit of the Delhi-based Swadeshi Enterprises which exports basmati rice in small consumer packs. So far, Lever has taken on lease seven garment, castor oil, marine foods and basmati rice units and is considering taking over two more concerns.

WOOING THE RAILWAYS

CROMPTON Greaves Limited is making a concerted attempt to grab a slice of the telecommunications and track renewal businesses farmed out by the Indian Railways. The Rs 320-crore engineering company already produces transformers and switchgear for the railways. It now plans to invest between Rs 50 crore and Rs 60 crore next year on manufacturing solid-state signalling systems, two-way communication equipment—for train guards and station personnel—and shunting locomotives. It also intends revamping existing locomotives and bidding for track renewal contracts. Crompton is busy negotiating with foreign collaborators for transferring technology for these schemes. But there's competition on the tracks. Company sources are expecting tough competition from the state-owned Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited in the area of traction systems and from Siemens India in the area of signalling.

FROM COMPUTERS TO TOURISM

THE Rs 85-crore Madras-based Sterling Computers Limited has been bitten by the diversification bug. Headed by C. Sivasankara (of Siva fame), who scorched the personal computers market, Sterling now has its eyes on new horizons: tourism and real estate. The company has tied up with the public sector ITDC and other hotel chains to market an inexpensive—below US $1,000 (Rs 17,000) per head—package tour for Americans visiting the country. The package includes air fare, hotel and travel expenses and even has a couple of duty-free goodies thrown in. Also on the anvil is a Rs 200-crore residential housing complex in Madras.

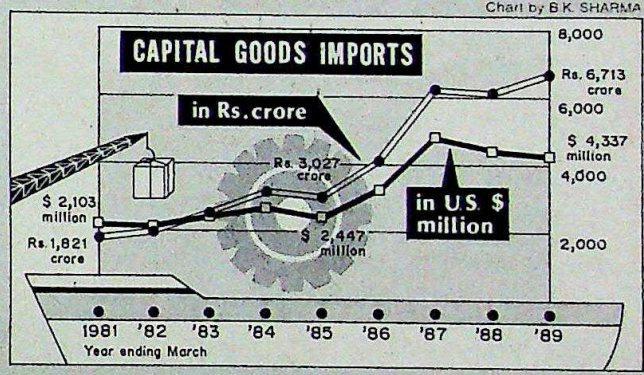
MORE MUTUAL FUNDS

INTERNATIONAL merchant bankers are making a bee-line for India. And mutual funds is the new name of the game. The latest entrant is Citibank India which will launch a seven-year, $25 million-odd (Rs 42 crore) mutual fund for NRIs from the Channel Island of Jersey early next year. Bank sources say the entire amount will be invested in a year, much of it in equities of new companies. Five funds are already in the fray—two floated by Unit Trust with Merrill Lynch and one each by State Bank/Morgan Stanley, Cifco/Hill Samuel and ANZ Grindlays. Two funds have been announced by the S.K. Modi group with Jardine Fleming and by Canara Bank with Bank Indo Suez. Ashok Birla's Zenith Limited is waiting in the wings with two more. Clearly, Indian capital markets have become happy hunting grounds for global fund managers.

CAPITAL ILLUSION

THERE'S been an impression that industrial growth in the last three years had been spurred by imports of capital goods—machinery and plant equipment. But official statistics prove that this is not really the case. A recent Industry Ministry study indicates that imports of capital goods

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



haven't risen. On the contrary, they've slowed down. But you have to look closely to see that. In terms of the fast-depreciating rupee, the value of imports do show an overall rise over the past three years (*see chart*). But convert the figures into US dollars and a different picture emerges. Capital goods imports have come down steadily from $4.8 billion (Rs 6,279 crore) in 1986-87 to $4.4 billion (Rs 6,136 crore) in 1987-88 and $4.3 billion (Rs 6,713 crore) the year after.

THE ISRAELI CONNECTION

INDIA is not supposed to be having formal economic relations with Israel. But it is common knowledge that the burgeoning diamond-polishing industry in the country is dependent a great deal on Israeli firms and their associates based in Europe for the supply of rough diamonds as well as for the marketing of finished gems. The extent of the quasi-legal trade between the two countries was recently documented in a journal of the Israel-Asia Chamber of Commerce. According to the publication, Israel's exports to India jumped by 82 per cent between 1987 and 1988—touching as much as $123 million (Rs 197 crore)—while imports from India more than doubled—from just $40 million (Rs 60 crore) to $86 million (Rs 138 crore) in the same period. And around 95 per cent of this business is in diamonds. But what is interesting is that the chamber expects India to become a "promising market" for a variety of Israeli equipment in the fields of electronics, communication, medicine and agriculture. That's called long-term planning.

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ECONOMIC POLICY

Leaning to the Left

New government inherits serious economic problems

IS the Government broke? In his first address to the nation, Prime Minister V.P. Singh talked of the Rajiv government having left behind an empty treasury. It sounded dramatic. But there was an obvious element of exaggeration. Even Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate conceded that. The economy is not exactly bankrupt. But there are problems galore.

It is not that the previous government's economic policies were uniformly disastrous. On the positive side, liberalisation ushered in competition in many areas of industry. Sectors such as electronics, telecommunications and petrochemicals were modernised; the licensing red tape was considerably loosened; the capital market grew manifold; sales of consumer goods shot up; and foreign capital flowed more freely into the country.

A few days after V.P. Singh talked of the Government's coffers being empty, in North Block, some international bankers were falling over one another and a Finance Ministry bureaucrat, each wanting to loan to India on finer terms.

On the flip side of the coin are the problems of unemployment, inflation, industrial sickness and inequality. Agricultural production is comfortable because of successive good monsoons. But the situation might change with one drought year since rural investment has slowed down. Even economic advisers of the previous government, like Planning Commission member Raja Chelliah, admit: "We have to give up our preoccupation with industry and concentrate on agriculture."

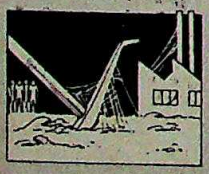
The top priority of the new Government is to contain prices. Till the first week of December, the wholesale price index was obliging. Next comes the need to reduce budget deficits. The bias will be towards employment generation.

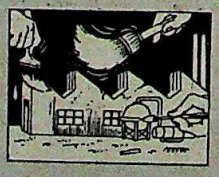
The country's foreign exchange reserves are barely equal to six weeks' imports—as they've been for most of this year. Last year, they were equal to two months' imports and the year before, to three months'. Hard currency will be used to import items like sugar, foodgrains and edible oils should shortages arise.

The levels of internal as well as external debt have touched new heights. The trade deficit has widened despite impressive export growth. Savings rates are stagnant and the public sector shows no signs of picking up despite a creditable performance by infrastructure industries. After four good years which saw industrial production rising each year by more than 8 per cent, large segments of the manufacturing sector have been moving slowly this year *(see box)*. And imports of machinery are down. Says a government economist: "A reduction in imports of capital goods will bring down industrial growth which will affect employment."

It is evident that the new Government has few soft options. For instance, how can it beef up foreign exchange reserves? In the short run, exports of agricultural

ECONOMIC AGENDA OF THE GOVERNMENT

PROBLEMS	OPTIONS
▲ Rising prices of essentials	◄ Use scarce foreign exchange to import sugar, edible oils and foodgrains when world prices are low. Closer monitoring of supplies of tea, kerosene and other items of mass use.
 ▲ Rising unemployment	◄ More investible resources for rural development. Emphasise handlooms. Reservation of production among cottage, small scale and large units. Push labour-intensive technologies.
▲ Foreign exchange crunch	◄ Curb imports of "luxury" goods, including consumer electronic items and automobile components. Step up agricultural exports. Review projects involving hard currency outflow.

PROBLEMS	OPTIONS
▲ High internal debt	◄ Reduce budget deficits by promoting austerity, curbing defence expenditure and government spending on internal security.
▲ Curbing black money growth	◄ Try and prevent government organs, including financial institutions, from becoming instruments of patronage. Step up action against economic offenders without being vindictive.
 ▲ Toning up the public sector	◄ Provide greater autonomy but also have higher accountability. Professionalise the top management and depend less on bureaucrats.

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commodities can be stepped up marginally but then, domestic prices of these items might shoot up.

It is evident that the new Government will try and push exports by large industrial groups. Says Industry Minister Ajit Singh: "Big business houses have received many benefits but unlike small units they have not stepped up exports. If they (large houses) can't fulfil their export commitments, we won't grant them new licences and allow them to expand."

As far as curtailing imports go, the Government's hands are tied. Over 80 per cent of the country's imports—among them, petroleum products and components for imported equipment—can't be reduced without adversely affecting economic growth. So, imports of so-called luxury goods will have to be curbed by imposing high duties. Even Congress sympathisers now admit that unnecessary imports took place. Says S.B. Chavan, former finance minister: "The policies of trade liberalisation have been misutilised and foreign exchange wasted on imports of consumer goods."

THE new Government's attitude towards imports implies that consumer electronics with a high import-content will become more expensive as will the proposed Maruti 1000 car and computers. Despite having spent 17 years marketing computers in the US, Ajit Singh says that given the paucity of jobs, computerisation will have to be "very selective".

The hard currency crunch may also bring about a shift in the approach to foreign investment. Emphasises Dandavate: "As far as possible we will not encourage foreign collaboration."

"Pepsi will be a test case," remarks a western diplomat. Says Food Processing Minister Sharad Yadav: "We will review the policy towards Pepsi." He adds that the Food Processing Ministry won't lay stress on potato chip ventures and "food for the elite". Instead, an ambitious scheme to provide nutritious food to pregnant women is being worked out. Clearly, the stress is on popular programmes.

In the interests of increasing employment opportunities, the industrial policy

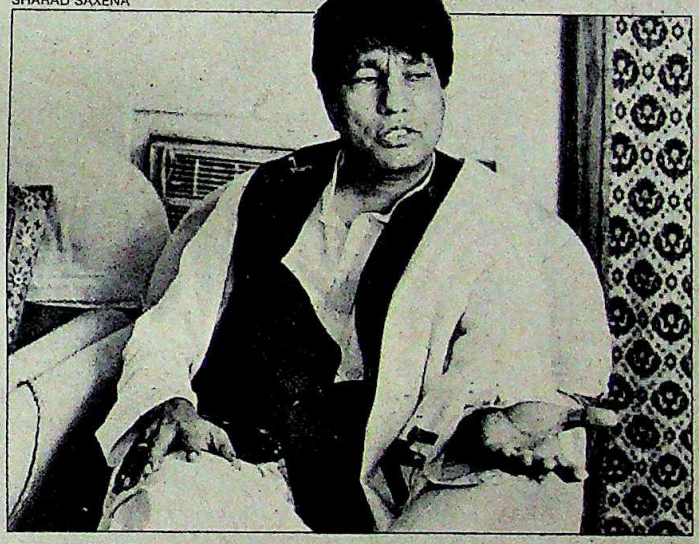
AJIT SINGH

"We are all for liberalisation"

HE looks a decade younger than his 50 years. The 17 years he spent in the US hawking computers have left no trace of a Yankee accent. Ajit Singh, the kisan leader, now Union industry minister, decided to settle down in India in 1987, when his father Chaudhary Charan Singh was ailing.

After his father's death in May 1987, he took over his mantle in the Lok Dal. The party then suffered a split and after the Lok Dal(A) was merged with the Janata Party in May 1988, Ajit Singh replaced Chandra Shekhar as the party's president. He became secretary-general of the Janata Dal when it was formed in October last year. Singh outlined his views on the Indian economy to PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA and SURAJEET DAS GUPTA. *Excerpts:*

SHARAD SAXENA



Q. *What will be your priorities as industry minister?*

A. The rate of growth of industry has to go up. We will continue with liberalisation, but will lay greater emphasis on small and cottage industries.

Q. *How will you strengthen* MRTP *and* FERA *laws?*

A. We are for liberalisation. In fact, V.P. Singh as finance minister was largely responsible for it. Liberalisation does not mean concentration of economic power. But, under the past government's policies, that is what happened. Which is why anti-monopoly legislation is needed. Big business houses have availed of so many incentives, yet have not been able to meet their export obligations. We will not allow this to continue. If they can't fulfil their commitments, we won't grant them new licences. As for FERA, we will encourage investment from abroad, but in the right sectors. In the last few years, there has been a lot of investment in low priority, low technology areas. We want to disperse technology and decentralise its impact.

Q. *What are your prescriptions for the Indian computer industry?*

A. In computerisation, India's strength lies in her people. We have people who are very good at programming and software development. I'm in favour of computerisation in airline and railway reservation. However, here unemployment is a pressing problem, so the spread of computerisation must be very selective.

Q. *How will you tackle the problems of the public sector?*

A. I think the problem is basically managerial. Also it should be made to face greater competition.

Q. *How strictly will you enforce the policy of reservation of production for the small scale sector?*

A. My view is that such reservation is needed. If the Government can provide protection to large industrial houses against international competition, then it can surely protect small units from large ones.

Q. *What is your opinion of Maruti Udyog, particularly its new car project?*

A. I am not very clear on the extent of drain of foreign exchange involved in the new car project. I am also not certain about Maruti's claims of indigenisation. What often goes by the name of PMP (phased manufacturing programme) ends up becoming screwdriver technology, and then label-replacing technology. Personally, I don't think the Government's scarce resources should have been invested in such a venture in the first place. The Rs 500 crore of public money invested in Maruti should have been spent on improving the public transport system.

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too will undergo changes. Production of certain items will be strictly reserved for the small and cottage sectors. "We do not want large industry to encroach on the territory reserved for the small," says Dandavate. Which is not exactly good news for big corporations and multinationals engaged in the manufacture of consumer products like soaps and toothpaste. Yet, Dandavate and Ajit Singh assert that the process of liberalisation won't be reversed. Only the Government's economic priorities will be re-ordered, they insist.

As far as possible we will not encourage foreign collaboration. Only if it is a must, not otherwise.

MADHU DANDAVATE

Thus, to increase jobs in the handloom sector, the textile policy is expected to be recast, says Yadav. Adds Magsaysay Award winner L.C. Jain, who is tipped to become a member of the Planning Commission: "In the last five years, some 18 lakh handloom workers have lost their means of livelihood while the man-made fibres industry has gained to the tune of over Rs 1,000 crore—this has to change."

Winds of change will also blow through the Planning Commission. "In the recent past, Yojana Bhawan has been reduced to a rubber stamp for granting approval to the idiosyncratic wishes of the former prime minister," says Ramakrishna Hegde, former Karnataka chief minister who has now taken over as deputy chairman of the Planning Commission with the rank of a cabinet minister.

For the time being at least, one thing seems apparent: in the annual plan for the next fiscal year, the first of the eighth five year plan, the emphasis will be less on growth as it has been until now, and more on distribution, self-reliance and appropriate technology. "The growth rate of the economy is not so important as planners sometimes make it out to be," says B.S. Minhas, professor at the Indian Statistical Institute. "We have to forget the fetish about a bigger plan being a better plan."

Besides spending more on rural

INDUSTRY

Losing Pace

THE four-year honeymoon is over and Indian industry is slowing down. Production in key sectors like steel, cement, fertilisers, capital goods, sugar and mill-made cloth has decelerated. Says Montek Singh Ahluwalia, economic adviser in the Rajiv government: "The industrial growth rate will be about 6 per cent this year against the projection of 8 per cent." He feels the hike in import duties on capital goods two years ago has had its effect on investment this year.

Industry Ministry sources, meanwhile, point out that the demand for consumer goods is flattening out due to diversion of savings to mega-issues of company stock. Television sales were down 20 per cent, light commercial vehicles by 8.4 per cent in the first half of the financial year. Also:

- Overall industrial growth in the April-August period was only 3.8 per cent this year against 9.4 per cent last year.
- Non-food credit grew by 3.3 per cent between April and June this year compared to 4.5 per cent in 1988.
- Excise revenues till end-October were 2.5 per cent below budget estimates.

So what's the crux of the problem? Explains S.M. Chakravarty, secretary-general, Cement Manufacturers Association: "The Government picked up two million tonnes less of cement than what it was supposed to between April and September." A spokesman for the Confederation of Engineering Industry adds: "Manufacturers of road-building and mining machinery are dependent on government orders which have not materialised." The Government is trying to control the growing budget deficit by curbing developmental expenditure.

Many are questioning the Rajiv government's euphoria about the "record" growth of the manufacturing sector. "Much of the growth between 1985 and 1988 was illusory," argues J.D. Sethi, former Planning Commission member. He claims that, in fact, hidden capacities were legalised in the name of liberalisation, leading to a sudden spurt in industrial growth rates.

Will the slow-down result in recession? Most economists seem to be confident it will not.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

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Santosh Pande
General Manager, The Triveni Group.

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development and employment generation schemes, another crucial element of the Government's game-plan is a tougher stance against big business. Which is in line with what the Left wants. Says CPI(M) leader Prakash Karat: "The previous government only helped the corporate sector. Now we want curbs on large industrialists." Adds Dandavate: "The Government and the financial institutions will not become instruments of patronage to favour a few business groups. We have to cleanse these institutions of extraneous elements of political patronage."

Garibi hatao is again in vogue. But much of the socialist rhetoric of the new rulers is meant for the gallery. Even the Rajiv government's economic policies had taken an apparent turn to the left towards the end of his tenure as he tried to correct his pro-rich image by announcing a plethora of populist programmes like the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana. The tilt to the left is likely to become more pronounced in the weeks ahead, at least in public pronouncements if not in practice.

—PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA
with SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

REACTIONS

Guarded Relief

SCENE one: December 1984. The Congress(I) wins a record 401 seats in the Lok Sabha. Rajiv Gandhi promises a brave new world of reform for industry. It is the best of times. Expectations among businessmen soar skywards with share prices.

Scene two: December 1989. A minority government is at the helm of affairs. The private sector's *bete noire*, and Rajiv's first finance minister, V.P. Singh is the new prime minister. The great expectations of 1984 have vanished. The business community is cautious and wary, reading between the lines to decipher the new economic policies.

And hard questions are now being asked. Will Singh display his old puritanical zeal and again start raids against big business houses? Will Rajiv's policies of liberalisation be drastically diluted, if not junked altogether? The mood in industry is certainly far from upbeat. But at the same time there are no signs of despair either. Says Keshub Mahindra, chairman of Mahindra & Mahindra: "The voters have given the message that they want to be governed not ruled. I welcome an open government and publicly so."

By last fortnight, however, even the diehard Congress(I) supporters among businessmen had done their somersaults. They had issued mandatory statements welcoming the new Government. But for a while, there was fear as they thought that all had been lost, that George Fernandes would be made industry minister. Says the chief executive of a foreign bank cautiously: "We told our head office to keep all prospective collaborators on hold."

But when the ministerial portfolios were finally announced, industrialists heaved large sighs of relief. The managing director of a computer company gives his positive evaluation of the new lot heading the economic ministries: "Madhu Dandavate is upright, Arun Nehru is another good choice as he understands the needs of business and Ajit Singh with his American degree is on our wavelength. It's a perfect team to do business with."

Not surprisingly, all businessmen want an "atmosphere of trust" and "more liberalisation". Says K.K. Nohria, managing director, Crompton Greaves: "Liberalisation was a halting effort. We sincerely hope the new Government will take all decisions quickly and stop tinkering with problems."

The voters' message is they want to be governed, not ruled. I welcome an open government.

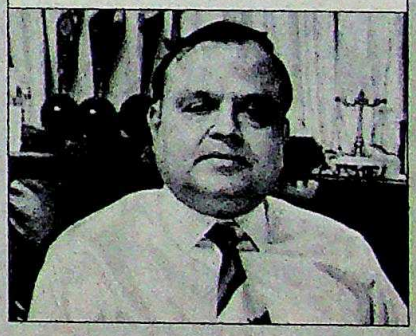
KESHUB MAHINDRA
Chairman, Mahindra & Mahindra

Still, the Janata Dal manifesto does not exactly inspire confidence in industry. The emphasis on agriculture, it is felt, may result in a squeeze on investible resources for industry. Viren Shah, who is chairman of Mukand Iron, president of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry and an active member of the BJP, summed up the contents of the manifestos of various parties before the elections: "They have been written by people who have not created a single paisa of wealth either in agriculture or industry."

But manifestos are not taken seriously and business is more concerned about the signals being sent out and these, by and large, are conciliatory. The consensus seems to be that the new Government has some unpleasant choices. With the soaring trade and budget deficits, the Government has little flexibility. There is a limit to cutting essential and maintenance imports.

The export target for 1989-90 is Rs 40,000 crore. We may expect a trade surplus by 1992.

RAMU DEORA
Chairman, Federation of Indian Export Organisations



Thus, exports have to continue to rise. Says Ramu Deora, chairman of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations: "The export target for 1989-90 is Rs 40,000 crore and at the rate we have been going, we may expect a trade surplus by 1992."

That's a long way off. With two uneasy coalition partners and dissidents within his party to contend with, V.P. Singh's Government is today walking a tightrope. Expectations of businessmen are subdued. They are waiting to be proved wrong.

—S.N. VASUKI

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LARSEN & TOUBRO

Full Circle

The Ambanis face problems

THE wheel has turned full circle. A year ago, Dhirubhai Ambani was calling the shots at Larsen & Toubro (L&T), the private sector engineering behemoth. The Ambanis then seemed invincible. They had marshalled a 12-per cent stake in the Rs 1,100 crore (1989 sales) company and got two seats on the board, courtesy the financial institutions. The acquisition pitchforked Reliance among the top three business houses in the country. There seemed little reason to doubt that L&T was well and truly in the Ambanis' bag.

Last fortnight though, with a new government at the Centre, a big question mark loomed over the acquisition. Suddenly, the financial institutions—Unit Trust of India (UTI), Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) and the General Insurance Corporation (GIC)—which together hold around 39 per cent of L&T's equity, wanted greater representation on the board of directors. The same demand was voiced by the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) and the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI), which have lent money to the company. For corporate observers, the implications of the financial institutions' move were clear: pressure was building on the Ambanis. L&T, it appeared, could be prised out of their grip.

The Ambanis had to face other jolts too. Y.H. Malegam, a partner in S.B. Billimoria & Co, the highly reputed firm of chartered accountants, resigned from L&T's board of directors. Malegam was not available for comment and company officials too declined to speak, saying they would prefer Chairman Dhirubhai Ambani to comment on the issue.

There were also reports that top managers within the company were unhappy with the Ambanis' style of functioning. Last fortnight, there were several changes at the top. B.G.N. Patel who had quit the company to join Reliance for a brief stint, returned as vice-president (finance). Company Secretary Rajadhyaksha and General Manager (Finance) S.N. Shah resigned recently. N. Sethuraman, company secretary at Reliance, is slated to replace Rajadhyaksha. There were also rumours that Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer U. Vasudeva Rao was on his way out though L&T officials deny it. Finally, C.R. Ramakrishnan, who had reached retirement age recently, was appointed joint managing director with a two-year extension. At least some of the appointments seemed to be an effort to soothe ruffled feathers. Said a highly placed company official: "We will run out of designations soon. Any executive who is unhappy has been promoted."

On December 19, the Ambanis were scheduled to face another test—the final Supreme Court hearing of the public interest petition filed by Bombay advocate Harish Jagtiani and chartered accountant S. Mazumdar against L&T and the financial institutions. Until now, the financial institutions and L&T were on the same side. But with the change of government, the financial institutions could change their stance in court.

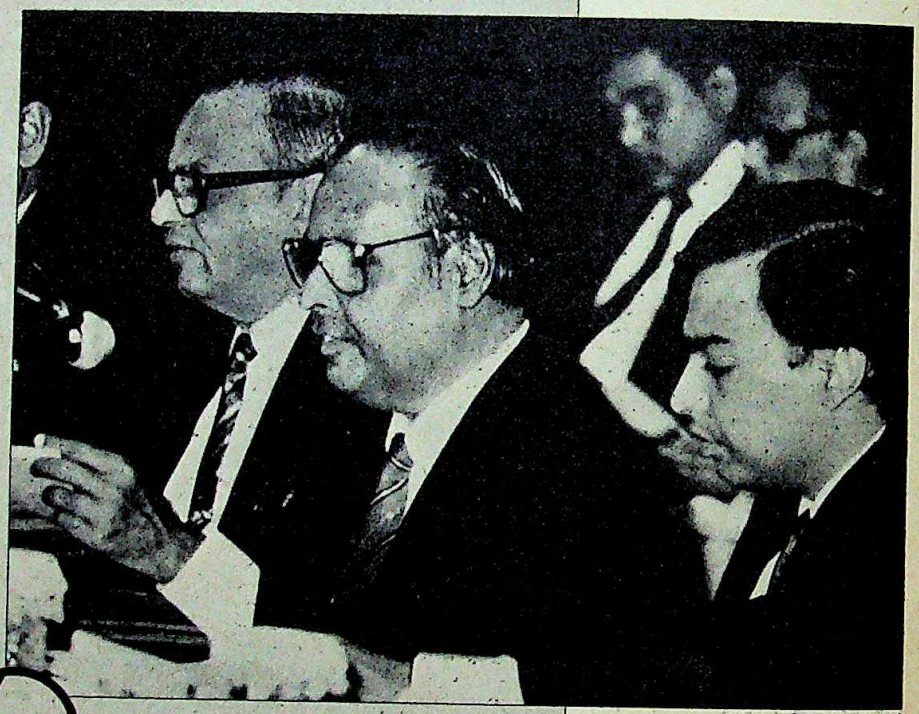
Certainly, their demand for increased representation in L&T pointed to that. Currently, there are 18 members on the company's board of directors. The financial institutions have three nominees. The Ambanis have four: Dhirubhai, his sons Mukesh and Anil, and solicitor M.L. Bhakta. Several whole-time directors too are believed to be close to the Ambanis.

But the balance could change. The institutions' 39 per cent stake (which will reduce to 29 per cent because they haven't subscribed to the recent mega debenture issue) is far larger than the Ambanis' holding. A spokesman for the institutions says that under existing guidelines, they can ask for proportional representation on the board. As a senior manager of a leading institution explained: "Usually the lending institutions—IDBI, ICICI and the Industrial Finance Corporation of India—and the investment institutions—UTI, LIC and GIC—appoint one nominee each. But depending on our stake, we are free to appoint more people. Everything is done on a case-by-case basis." So the institutions' current strength of three could go up to nine.

The institutions hold all the cards. How they are to be played will be decided by the Government. In the process, it will signal which way the wind is blowing for the Ambanis.

—S.N. VASUKI

Rao, Dhirubhai and Mukesh at L&T meeting



With the financial institutions demanding a greater representation on the L&T board, the Ambanis' grip on the company no longer seems so sure.

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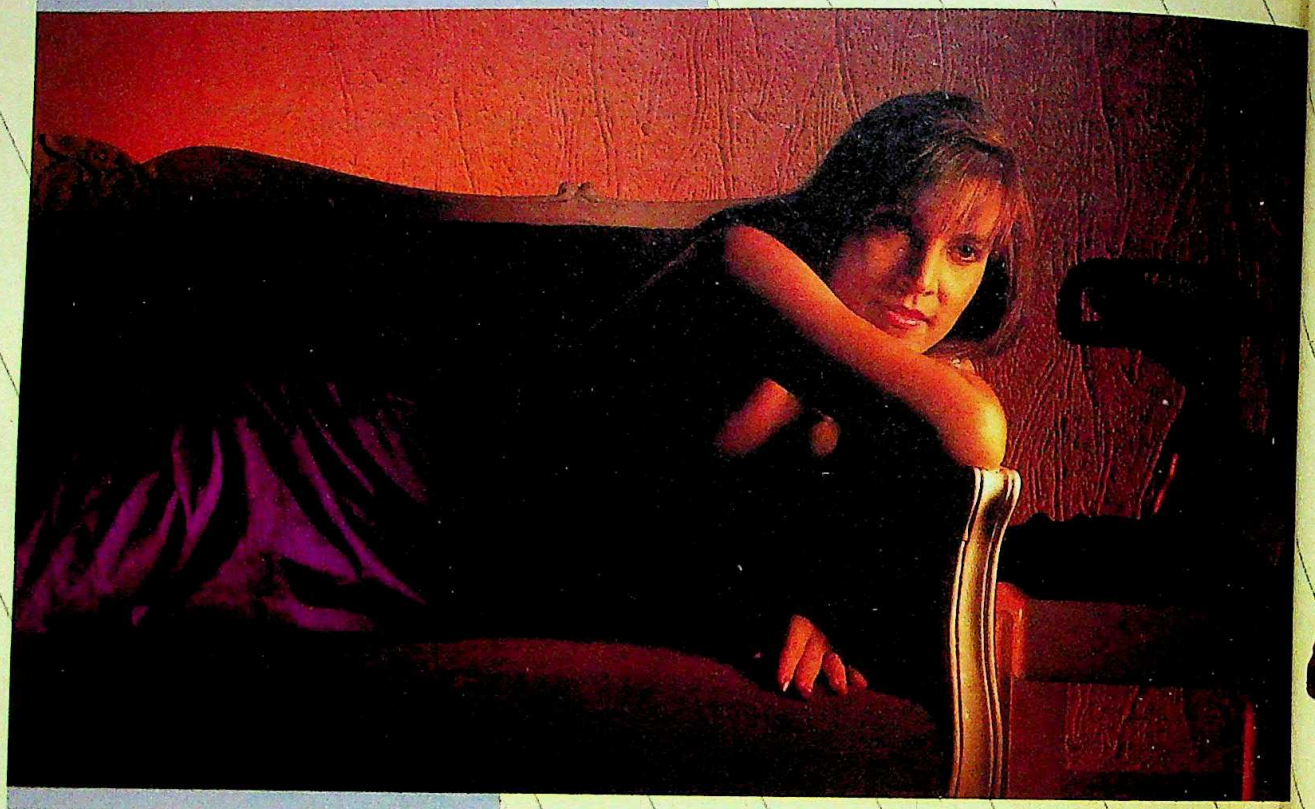

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EUROPE 1992

More Opportunity, Greater Risks

India gears up for an integrated Europe

IT'S chilly in Brussels. The winter winds swirl through the broad boulevards, ruffling tree tops and tossing up leaves. Inside the black-stone multi-storeyed building in the heart of the city, however, the heat is on. Officials at the Commission of the European Communities, the administrative arm of the 12-nation Common Market, frequently go into a huddle and furiously prepare papers on one of the most momentous events on the horizon—Europe 1992, the move to integrate Europe into a single economy.

In India, the move's significance is just dawning on businessmen. Last month, a group of castings manufacturers stopped over in Europe to investigate. Earlier, a Punjab, Haryana, Delhi (PHD) Chamber of Commerce delegation visited five European nations. Says Binay Kumar, chairman of the PHD Chamber's foreign trade committee and a delegation member: "The European Economic Community (EEC) is India's largest market, accounting for 25 per cent of our exports. We can't ignore it."

Several firms too are eyeing Europe:

► The Tatas are thinking of investing in Portugal. Among the possibilities being explored: opening upmarket hotels in Lisbon and Porto; a software development centre in London to be set up with Portuguese firms; importing uppers from India to turn into shoes in Portugal; and putting up a forgings and castings unit and an automobile components plant with Portuguese partners.

► Using the UK as a spring board, Pune-based boiler and pollution control equipment manufacturer Thermax Ltd is planning a big *putsch* into Europe. The Rs 180-crore (15 months' sales) company is negotiating to buy into an undisclosed UK enterprise. Says Chairman Rohinton D. Aga: "We have joined hands with a small but dynamic organisation in the UK to market our products there and later on in other west European countries." Thermax will supply parts to its British partner, which will then buy other parts locally and assemble and hawk a range of Thermax wares.

► Bharat Forge, also based in Pune, is planning to buy a company in Europe. "Yes, we are looking at the possibility," confirms Neelkanth A. Kalyani, chairman of the Rs 234-crore (15 months' sales) company. Bharat Forge has invested about Rs 80 crore to modernise its forgings plant in Pune in a bid to export to a more quality conscious Europe.

Four electrical product manufacturers, including Crompton Greaves, are cobbling together a consortium that will have the financial and marketing clout to sell to the European Market. And the garment industry is readying to improve designs and cut costs by inviting designers from abroad and by pushing for greater mechanisation. Europe accounted for 43 per cent of the industry's total exports of Rs 2,563 crore between January and October 1989.

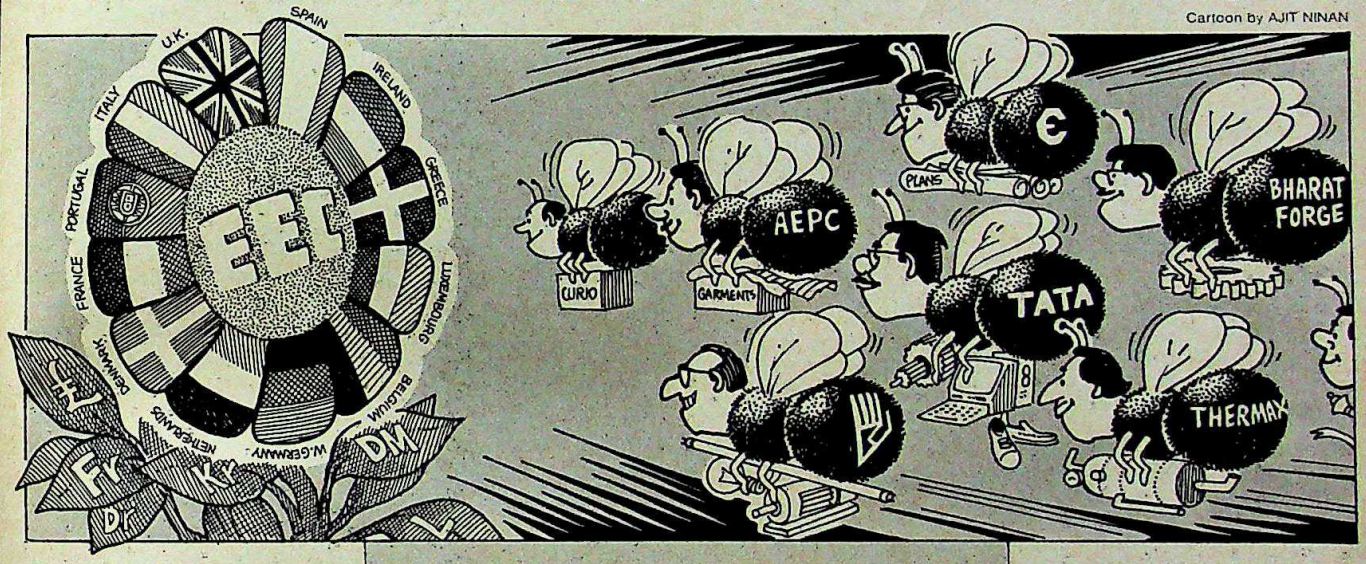
So why is every other businessman suddenly casting an eye on the European market? Quite simply, because Europe 1992 will throw up tremendous business opportunities.

The European unification programme explains why. Set up by the Treaty of Rome of 1957, a principal objective of the EEC—also known as the Common Market—was to create a European economy. Sure, the EEC has a common agricultural policy and a common currency unit. But separate national markets continue to exist, with varying national technical specifications and standards. For example, tractors must have two seats in West Germany but only one in France. So France finds it difficult to sell tractors to West Germany.

With production largely confined to national markets, European companies don't enjoy economies of scale and can't compete on world markets. As a result, the EEC's gross domestic product has chugged along rather slowly. A European Commission study concluded last year that by encouraging competition and economies of scale, an integrated market would save over Rs 3,300 billion in costs and pare consumer prices by about 6 per cent.

Market integration and competition are to be brought about in several ways. Among other things, expenditure on

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



A bevy of Indian firms is flocking to explore export prospects and joint business ventures in Europe.

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research and development is to be pooled; radio and television programmes won't be limited to national boundaries; above all, money, goods and services will be permitted to flow freely throughout the EEC. So European companies will be allowed to set up shop anywhere in the EEC.

To be sure, some glitches can be expected. It may, for instance, take years before the EEC arrives at common technical standards for telecommunication equipment. But as a confidential report on Europe 1992 by Indian ambassadors to five European countries points out: "The European Community is well on the way to becoming a fully integrated single market by end-1992."

Apart from triggering off a wave of mergers in Europe, the coming competition has prompted concerns to look for business overseas. In Paris, Banque Indo-Suez First Vice-President Yves Munich said his bank had been talking to Indian financial institutions about floating an offshore mutual fund. Added Bernard de Montgolfier, executive vice-president of France's JS Telecom, which has tie-ups with Escorts and Blue Star: "We have to have a strategy in the fast developing Asian countries."

As European companies gear up to meet the demands of a market that cuts across frontiers, some Indian companies believe that large orders can pour in from Europe. Some analysts, however, believe that European businessmen will prefer to look towards the changing East Bloc. But some large orders for garments could be placed on India. Garment exports are limited by quotas for each EEC state, negotiated at the European Commission level. What will happen after 1992 is still not clear because the Multi-Fibre Agreement—which governs trade in textiles—comes up for renewal in 1991. But it's likely that India will be able to shift its quotas for some countries (Portugal, Spain) which are largely unutilised to other EEC states.

Indian businessmen are also convinced that they'll either have to set up shop in Europe or buy into European enterprises. One reason: even a small customs levy can price out foreign goods in Europe's competitive market. Others want to preempt protectionist tendencies. Argues Bharat Forge's Kalyani: "A physical presence in Europe will be essential after 1992, as I am sure there will be trade barricades."

Increased European protectionism is the big fear. At the Indian Embassy in Brussels, Ambassador G.V. Ramakrishna warns: "A lot of European industry is sensitive to imports. Let alone growing, even existing imports from India can come to a standstill." The former petroleum secretary cites several recent instances of protectionism. Article 115 of the Treaty of Rome permits EEC countries to ask the European Commission to impose a ban on imports. Last October, Ireland invoked the clause against imports of men's shirts from India. Fears have also been expressed that the new European standards may be stiff, and used to keep Indian products out.

In Europe, however, there's much tut tutting about the protectionism charge. In Paris, French Science and Technology Minister Hubert Curien told visiting Indian journalists: "The idea of a single market is not of constructing a fortress." In Brussels, Marc Pierini, a senior official, added: "The Fortress Europe term was invented in the US. There's nothing in Europe 1992 that implies protectionism."

Curiously, such views are echoed in New Delhi. Commerce Secretary A.N. Verma says: "They can't afford to have protectionist tendencies. If they're big importers, they're also big exporters."

Still, Ramakrishna could be right: the climate is protectionist. In granting permission to set up foreign bank branches after 1992, for instance, the EEC will take into account the market access provided to European banks. And in trade negotiations, it has been pushing for the abolition of phased manufacturing programmes and export obligations.

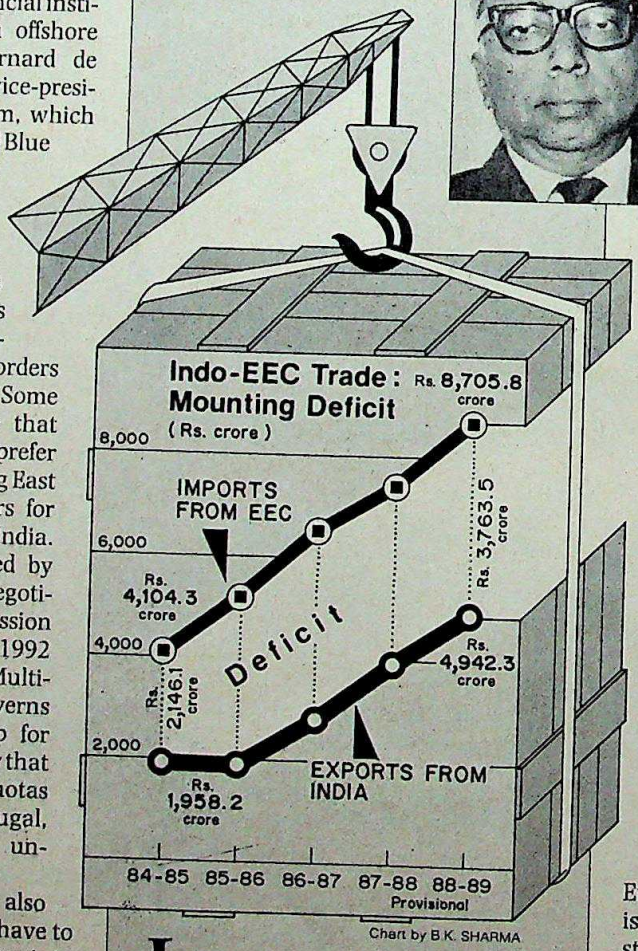
At the local level too, Indian corporations could face problems in investing abroad. The commerce secretary says the Government has taken a policy decision to allow companies to invest overseas if it means higher exports. But what happens if one Indian enterprise floats another one overseas, and this company then launches other companies abroad without bringing funds from India? Will the Government permit this? The Government will also have to decide whether the 30-odd Indian bank branches in Europe should be converted into subsidiaries. These escape the reciprocity clause.

So far, official circles have been slow to react to the challenges of Europe 1992. "Some concrete action is needed. We're still at the talking stage," complains PHD Chamber's Kumar. Fortunately, the Government is expected to formulate a comprehensive policy on the EEC next month. That's late. Too late to miss the European bus?

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI in Paris and Brussels, with bureau reports

"Let alone growing, even existing imports from India can come to a standstill."

G.V. RAMAKRISHNA
Ambassador to the EEC



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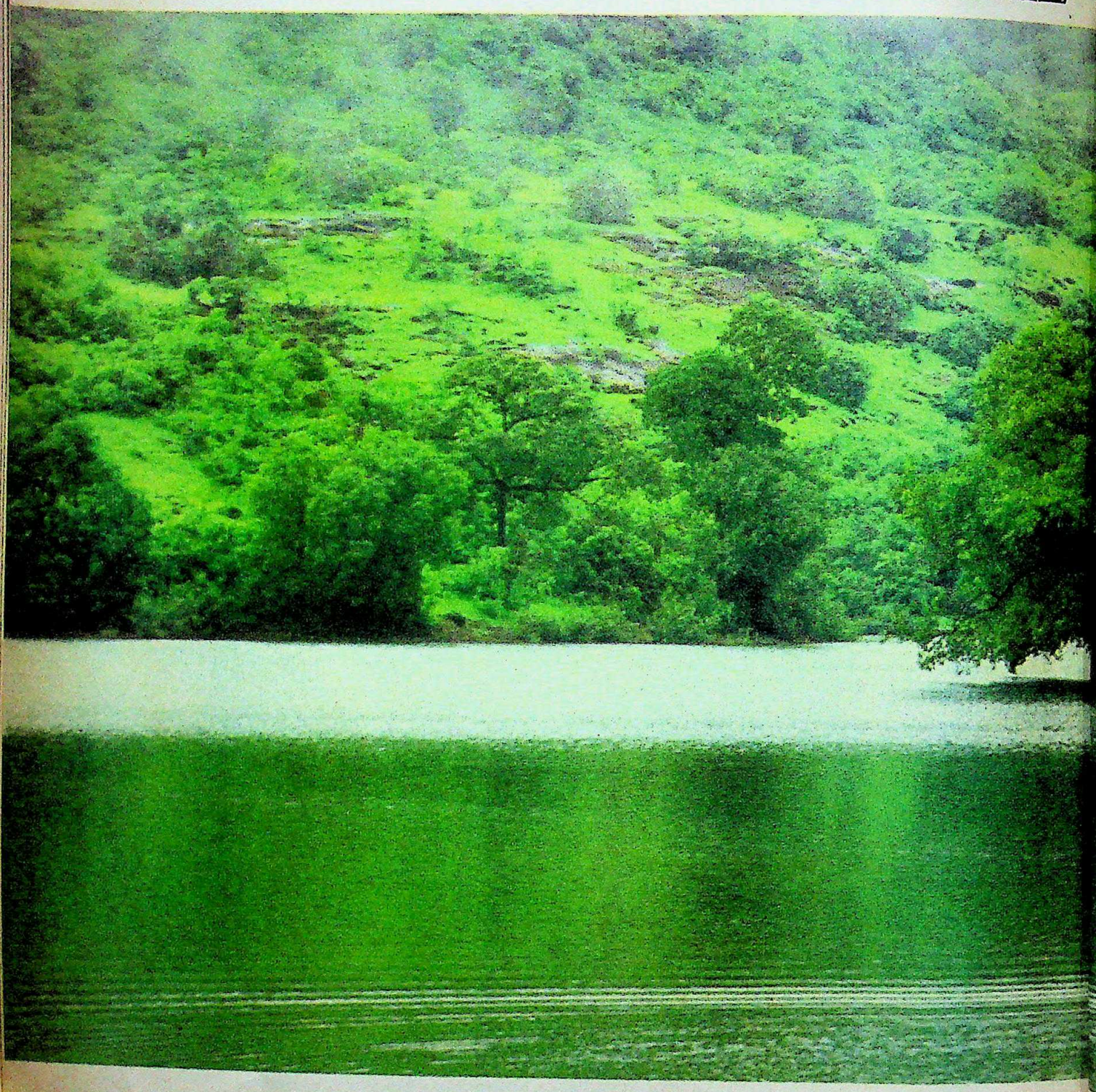

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MAFATLALS

Spreading Out

Hectic expansion planned

ON his 66th birthday in October this year, Arvind Mafatlal received a host of congratulatory messages. Indeed, the patriarch of the Rs 1,059-crore Arvind Mafatlal group of companies had much to celebrate. In the decade since he split from brothers Yogindra and Rasesh, he has quadrupled the turnover of the companies in his fold. And most of them are now poised for a spell of dizzy expansion. But the most heart-warming message of all arrived only in the middle of November in the form of government clearance, and the official letter of intent for the expansion and modernisation of the group's flagship petrochemical company, the Rs 482-crore National Organic Chemical Industries Ltd (NOCIL).

The clearance of its naphtha cracker expansion is crucial for NOCIL's survival. Today, the company with its 75,000 tonnes of ethylene per year naphtha cracker at Thane near Bombay, and the public sector Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd. (IPCL) with a 1.3-lakh tonne naphtha cracker in Vadodara are the only players in a sellers' market.

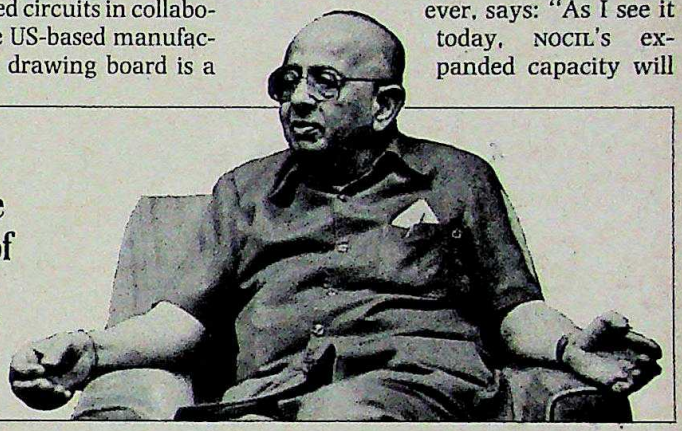
But the situation is in for a dramatic change. IPCL is expanding its Vadodara cracker and building another one at Nagothane in Maharashtra. And the Ambanis' Reliance Industries, Vijay Mallya's UB Group, Rama Prasad Goenka's RPG group and the Gas Authority of India Ltd, among others, are setting up gas and naphtha crackers. All of them will have an ethylene capacity of 3 lakh tonnes a year or more, and so can take advantage of economies of scale. So NOCIL, with its far smaller and therefore uneconomical plant, would have been pushed out of the market.

Now all that has changed. With the increase in the capacity of its naphtha cracker, NOCIL's ethylene production will quadruple from the current 75,000 tonnes to 3,00,000 tonnes. Simultaneously, the company's 28-year-old plant will be modernised and upgraded. The price tag for all this: a staggering Rs 1,800 crore.

Nonetheless, NOCIL's expansion is just one side of the ambitious growth scheme that the Arvind Mafatlal group has on the anvil. The Rs 237-crore Polyolefins Industries Ltd (PIL), manufacturers of chemicals and high density polyethylene (HDPE) used in many plastic products, is planning a Rs 500-crore expansion and diversification programme. The Rs 192-crore Mafatlal Fine Spinning and Manufacturing Company Ltd and the Rs 136-crore Mafatlal Industries Ltd, both of which produce textiles and chemicals, are planning to diversify, within the textile industry and outside. The group is seeking an increased presence in agrochemicals and seeds. It plans to design and eventually manufacture electronic integrated circuits in collaboration with a large US-based manufacturer. Also on the drawing board is a Rs 10-crore venture capital fund—the Indus Venture Fund Management Services Ltd. Finally, the group is launching a major export drive.

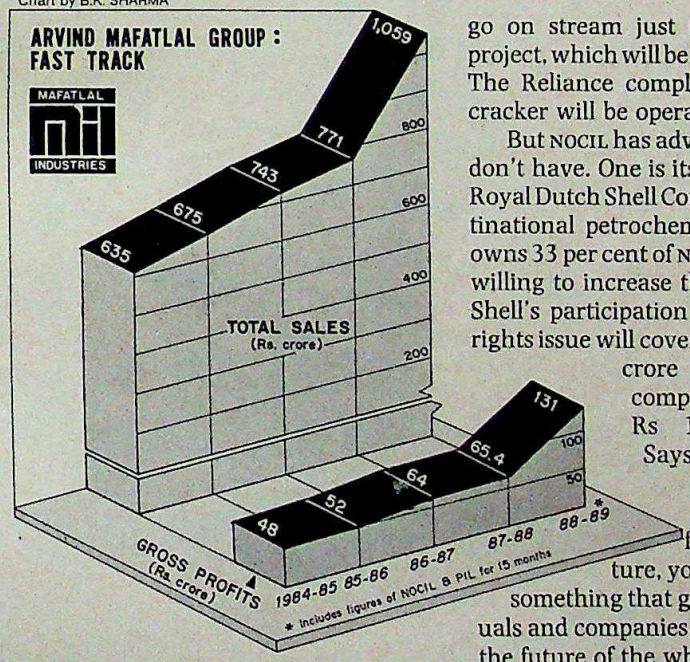
Says a confident Arvind Mafatlal: "By the turn of the century, our group of companies will be known world-wide." The move into the fast track is, of course, being led by the NOCIL expansion, cleared despite strong lobbying by environmentalists. But not everyone is as upbeat as Arvind Mafatlal. One industry analyst points out: "From a pioneer in the field, they are now going to be just one among many with their competitive advantage considerably eroded." Vice-Chairman M.S. Patwardhan, however, argues that not all the projects are going to come up at the same time. And he points out: "NOCIL has some inherent advantages over the other projects."

That's true—to some extent. Explains Patwardhan: "We have trained manpower and existing infrastructure. We will be able to execute the project in a much shorter time, and it will be cheaper." An analyst, however, says: "As I see it today, NOCIL's expanded capacity will go on stream just before the Haldia project, which will be the last to come up. The Reliance complex and IPCL's gas cracker will be operational by then."



"By the turn of the century, our group of companies will be known world-wide."
ARVIND MAFATLAL, *Chairman*

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



But NOCIL has advantages the others don't have. One is its relationship with Royal Dutch Shell Corporation, the multinational petrochemical giant, which owns 33 per cent of NOCIL's equity and is willing to increase this to 40 per cent. Shell's participation in the company's rights issue will cover the entire Rs 400-crore foreign exchange component in the Rs 1,800-crore plan. Says Mafatlal: "When you have international support for a $ 1 billion venture, you are talking about something that goes beyond individuals and companies. It is going to affect the future of the whole country."

In any case, it will affect other companies in the group. PIL's expansion, for instance, is closely dovetailed with NOCIL's. The company intends to raise its HDPE capacity from 50,000 tonnes a year to 1,50,000 tonnes. To do this, it will use 1,50,000 tonnes of ethylene from NOCIL's expanded capacity of 3,00,000 tonnes.

The company also has a series of other expansion plans—to manufacture a whole range of polymers used in

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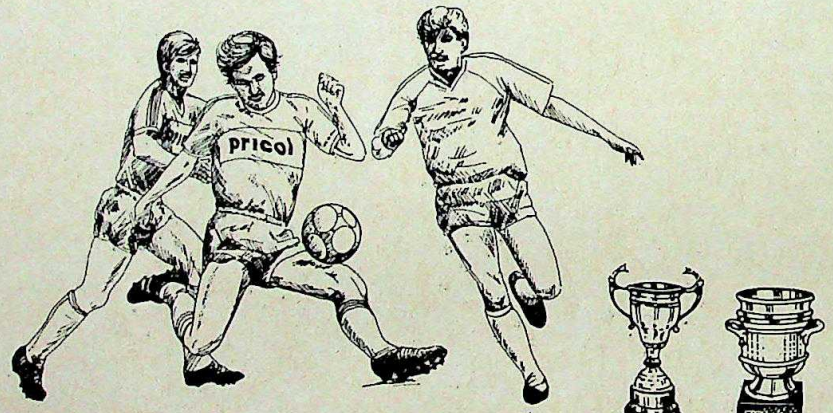

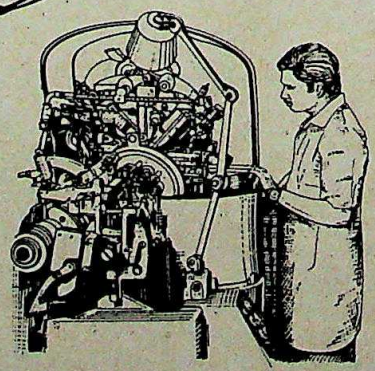

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thermoplastics and rubber and to produce 20,000 tonnes of aniline, a raw material for rubber chemicals. The foreign exchange of Rs 100 crore is likely to come from collaborator Hoechst A.G. of West Germany which owns 31 per cent of PIL's equity.

While both NOCIL and PIL are staying close to the knitting, the group's traditional companies—Mafatlal Industries Ltd and Mafatlal Fine Spinning and Manufacturing Co Ltd—headed by Arvind's second son, Hrishikesh, are venturing into virgin territory. Last year, the 34-year-old heir apparent, in partnership with the Gujarat Government and the Hindustan Oil Exploration Corporation, kicked off a Rs 14-crore project to pipe natural gas from the Oil and Natural Gas Commission's fields to consumers in Baruch and Ankleshwar. In the pipeline is a Rs 25-crore project for Surat. And after that? "We have submitted a proposal for Ahmedabad, and after that it could be for the whole of Gujarat," says Hrishikesh.

Since 1984, the two companies have also invested Rs 100 crore with an eye on stepping up exports. The investment has paid off. From Rs 4 crore in 1984, the value of exports will be Rs 75 crore in 1990. The export thrust is not confined to textiles. For instance, before NOCIL got its clearance for expansion, it had committed itself to annual exports of Rs 100 crore on its expanded capacity. Says Patwardhan: "We are on track. This year, we exported Rs 20 crore worth and have scheduled Rs 35 crore by 1994." PIL plans to export Rs 100-crore worth in the next five years.

The exports will come in handy to finance the foreign exchange component of the expansion plans. For rupee funds, the group will rely on rights issues, a public issue of debentures and also draw on its own resources. Says Arvind: "We have a fair idea where the money is going to come from."

Not everyone, of course, shares that confidence. Sceptics point out, for instance, that Mafatlal Fine is going through a cash crunch after it poured money into the recently shut down Mafatlal Engineering, manufacturers of textile machinery. Others say the Mafatlals are lacking in a vital area—an effective lobby in the Government.

Nevertheless, the group has been reporting steadily higher sales and profits. And now, after a steady period of consolidation, all the companies in the Mafatlal covey seem poised for take-off. The engines have long been warming up. The taxiing has begun.

—SHIV TANEJA

FINANCE COMPANIES

Burgeoning Business

Big houses enter the field

ALL at once, the drab world of financing is agog with excitement. Some of the biggest names in Indian industry—among them, the Tatas, the Birlas, the Goenkas, the Mahindras and the Mafatlals—are jostling to set up one-stop shops offering an array of financial products (interest and currency swaps, Euro-dollar loan syndication, leasing and consumer finance) and perhaps even play a role in takeovers.

Deutsche Bank has reportedly taken up a 30-per cent stake in a financial services company being set up along with the three Unilever associates (Hindustan Lever, Ponds and Brooke Bond) in India. The Goenkas are revamping Samudra Leasing, a group company. It will be rechristened Ceat Financial Services Ltd, its share capital base doubled to Rs 2 crore, and its range of financial products radically expanded. The Tatas and American Express Bank have formed a Rs 2.40-crore company, the Tata Industrial Finance Corporation Ltd. In 1986, Standard Chartered Bank bought 28 per cent of the equity of the Murugappa group's Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Co Ltd, with an equity base of Rs 1.60 crore. The Birlas own a financial company, the Rs 1-crore Birla Growth Fund. So do the Ambanis. And Bennett, Coleman and Co Ltd, publishers of *The Times of India*, is setting up the Times Guaranty Financials Ltd.

The principal target of most of these companies is India's middle class—a market with a potential between Rs 700 crore and Rs 1,200 crore a year.

Others see financial service companies aiming elsewhere. Comments Ram K. Piparaiya, managing director of Aridhi Investment Consultants (P) Ltd: "We are going to witness many more takeovers." The reason: financial service companies can raise up to 10 times their paid-up share capital, so providing big business access to hefty sums of cash.

Right now, only one company could possibly matter in takeover bids—Reliance Credit and Finance Trust, floated by the Ambanis in 1986. It has been sanctioned a share capital of between Rs 100 crore and Rs 125 crore which means it can raise a staggering Rs 1,000 crore.

NAMAS BHOJANI

> "With financial companies able to raise huge sums of money, there are going to be many more takeovers."
>
> RAM K. PIPARAIYA
> *Managing Director, Aridhi Investment Consultants*

Far smaller are the two private forays into venture capital (which involves buying into new enterprises and unloading the shares later at a profit). Last month, the Rs 10-crore Creditcapital Venture Fund was launched, and the Mafatlals are planning another—the Rs 10-crore Indus Venture Capital Fund.

Will the market support so many players? B.S. Shenoy, general manager (financial services) of Times Guaranty Financials, feels there will be a shakeout: "Many of the small one-product shops will find themselves out of business."

The big boys too could find the going tough. Uday Kotak, managing director, Kotak Mahindra Finance Ltd, a company floated in association with the Mahindras of Mahindra Ugine Steel, points out: "This is a customer-based industry. And big bureaucratic set-ups which do not react fast enough to market moves may find themselves without too many customers."

Right now, companies seem too busy rushing into the field to worry about such eventualities.

—SHIV TANEJA

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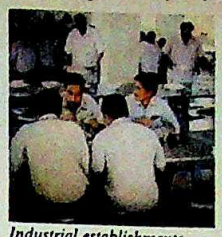
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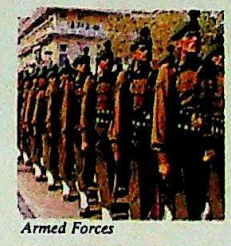
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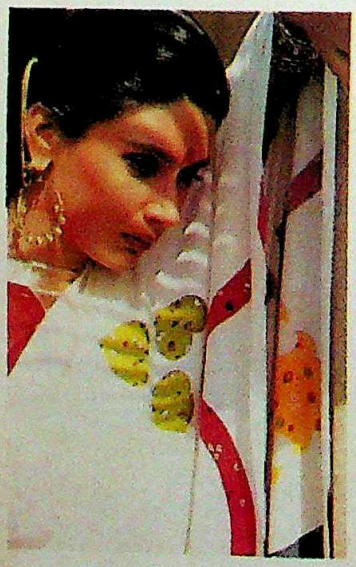

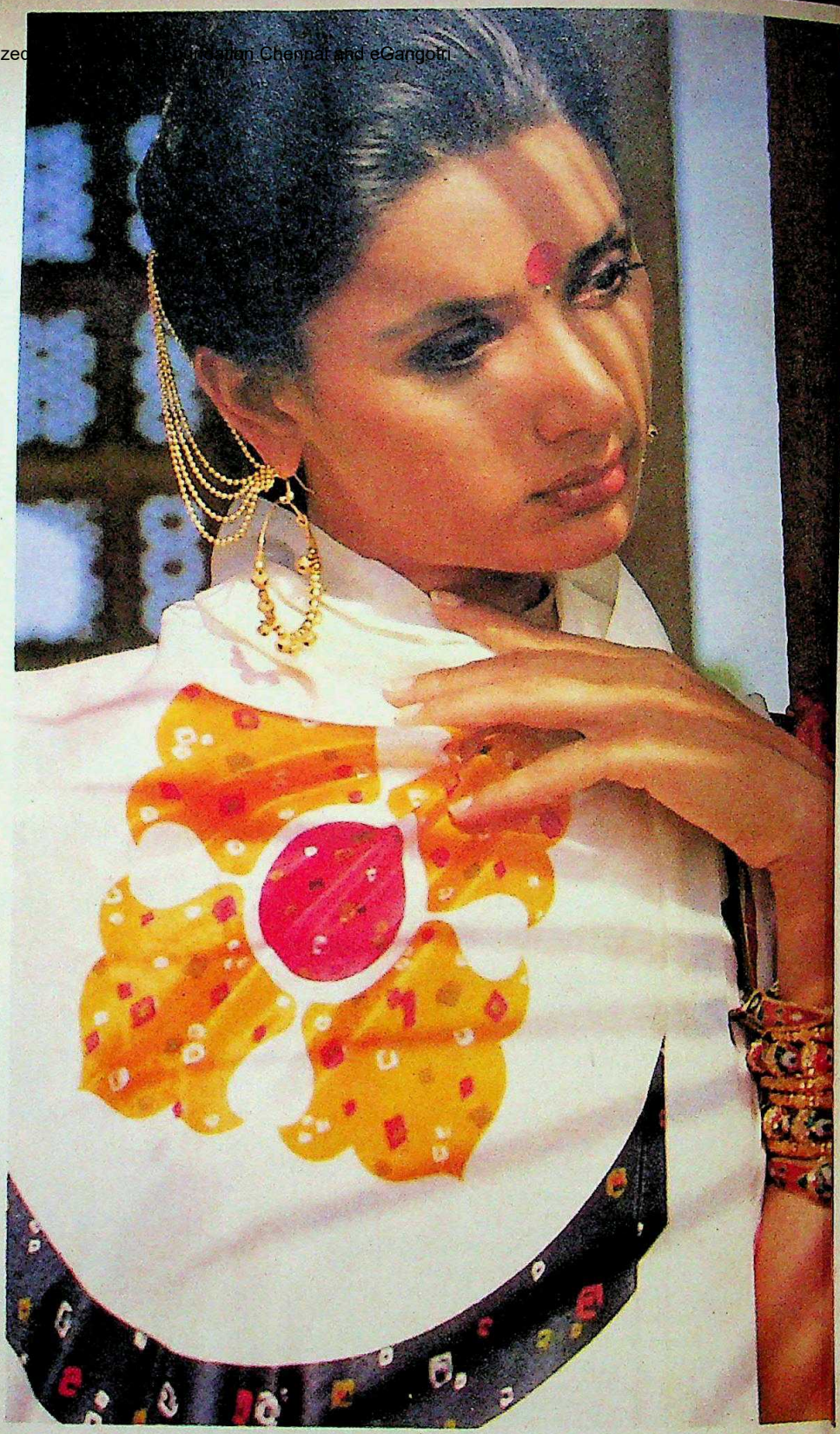

A woman expresses herself in many languages. Vimal is one of them

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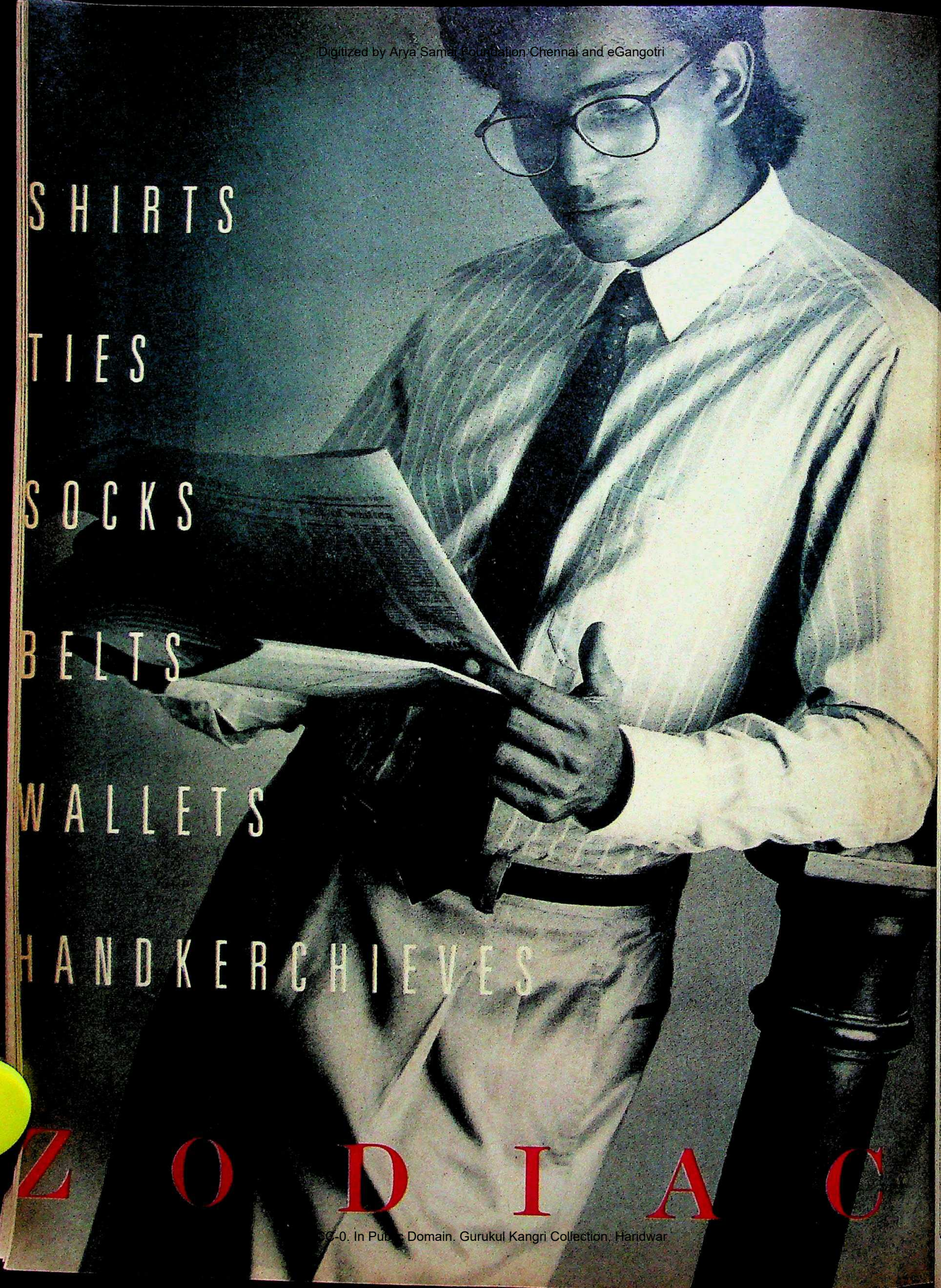

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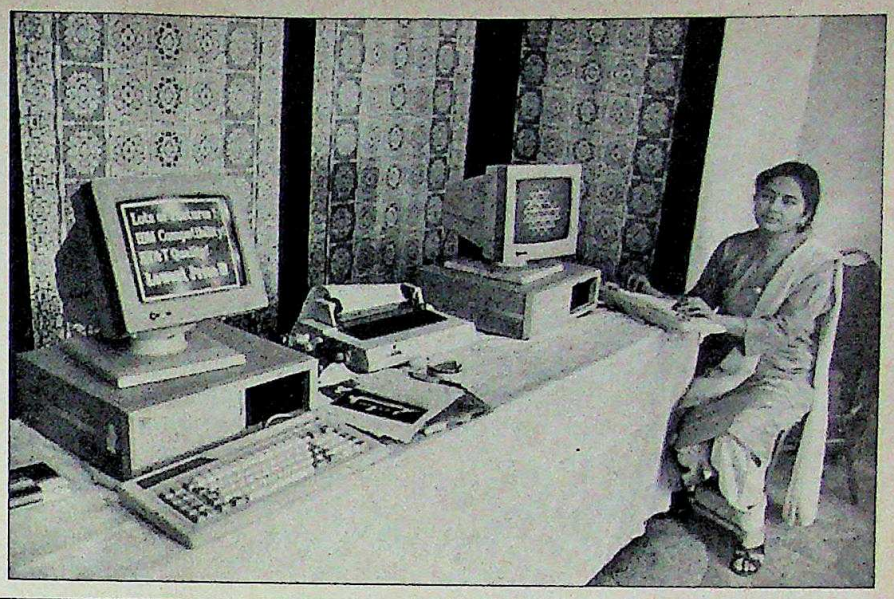
COMPUTERS

Price Friendly

Cheaper PCs storm the market

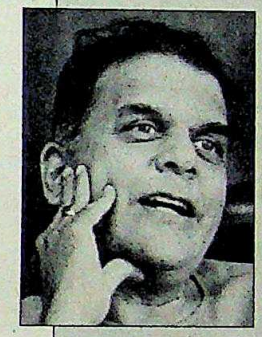


ET&T's new PC range: making waves

SUDDENLY, the rules of the game in the computer industry have been dramatically rewritten—by a public sector electronics company. As a new market segment opens out, manufacturers are either slashing prices or scrambling to introduce cheaper computers.

The company that's turned the world of bits and bytes on its head is the Delhi-based Electronics Trade and Technology Development Corporation (ET&T). Last fortnight, the Rs 104-crore company launched four personal computer models claiming they were the lowest-priced in the country.

In an industry that considers Rs 30,000 cheap, ET&T is hawking a basic model called the "people's computer" priced at Rs 10,800 (without printer and software). And in the PC-XT segment, the workhorse computer for professionals, ET&T's prices are pegged at Rs 22,900—at least Rs 10,000 cheaper than similar computers in the market.



"We are turning the market into a low-price, high-volume business. It's a gamble no Indian computer firm wanted to take."

PRABHU DEODHAR
Chairman, ET&T

ET&T's strategy is what Chairman Prabhu Deodhar describes as "a numbers game". Says he: "What we are doing is turning the market into a low-price, high-volume business. It's a gamble no Indian computer company wanted to take before."

The state-owned enterprise has been able to launch cheap computers by inducing both Indian and foreign manufacturers to supply parts at almost half the market price and by promising to pick up large volumes. For instance, it persuaded Godrej to invest in developing a printer by offering to buy at least 25,000 of them. As a result, Godrej will be selling ET&T a basic printer at around Rs 5,700—versus the market price of over Rs 9,000.

Certainly, ET&T is taking a big gamble. In an industry where barely 50,000 personal computers are sold annually, the state-owned company hopes to hawk one lakh computers a year, mostly to small businessmen and professionals. "Almost eight lakh computer professionals don't have computers at home," says Deodhar. So far, high prices have been a bar to tapping this market. That may no longer be the case. Deodhar says that about 1,500 computers were booked in the first week itself.

Initially, rival companies scoffed at ET&T's plans of introducing a "price friendly" computer, dismissing it as a "floppy dream". But once the computer was launched, anxiety replaced scorn as companies scrambled to keep pace. The first to react was the Rs 170-crore HCL, the country's largest computer company. Just before the launch, the Delhi-based company cut the price of its popular Busybee PC-XT from Rs 50,000 to Rs 41,000, inclusive of a printer.

Other industry heavyweights too are entering the price wars. In Bangalore, the Rs 40-crore Wipro worked overtime over the past two months to build a personal computer that Wipro President Ashok Soota said "will be of a comparable price range and put us in a position to be a major player in this segment". And in Madras, the Rs 85-crore Sterling Computers plans price reductions. Said C. Sivasankaran, it's director: "Our policy is simple: we will match ET&T in price."

Others like the Bombay-based International Computers India Manufacture (ICIM) opted for a wait-and-watch policy. T.K. Joseph, ICIM's senior vice-president (commercial), says: "We are seeing how the market responds. If need be, we will reduce prices." As prices tumbled, many computer manufacturers discovered to their dismay that confirmed orders were slipping away as customers waited for the dust to settle.

Inevitably, rivals busily ran down ET&T's computers. Many dismissed the Rs 10,800 model as good enough only to play video games with. The company's gambit of cutting marketing costs by selling computers directly to users instead of through dealers came under attack. Said HCL Executive Director Ashok Jain: "It is to be seen whether ET&T has cut corners at the expense of reliability and service." Others doubted whether ET&T would be able keep the prices of its computers low for long.

Deodhar is unconcerned by the volley of criticism: "We have got a good product and we are not skimping on quality. Our chief aim is to act as a catalyst and stir the sluggish computer industry into action."

The big question, however, is whether ET&T's gamble will pay off. With everyone busy slashing prices, profit margins will go down. If the market doesn't catch up, many companies may end up badly bruised. And ET&T will be under severe pressure to hold its own.

The victors then will be those who are able to sustain their quality and service, while keeping prices low—and, of course, the consumer.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA and SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

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THE MARKETS

Boom Time

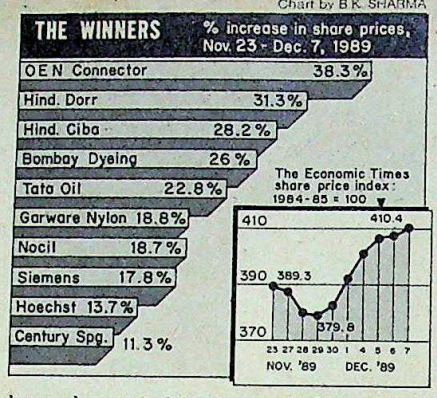
Investors display confidence

FRAILTY, thy name is India's stock-markets. On the eve of elections in the second week of November, and after the poll results were declared late last month, stock-markets had slumped and had to be propped up by heavy purchases by the state-owned financial institutions. Now, investor sentiments are buoyant as a gas balloon.

By December 9, market indices shot up—without institutional support. On December 7, Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate said the new government would not conduct a witch-hunt against business houses. Industry Minister Ajit Singh also assured that the liberalisation process would not be reversed.

There were cheers everywhere. At Bombay's Dalal Street, Delhi's Asaf Ali Road and Calcutta's Lyons Range. The next day, *The Economic Times*(*ET*) share index had jumped to 415.6, a good 15 points above the previous peak of 400.8 touched on October 26. While the index of the Bombay Stock Exchange(BSE) rose by a whopping 24 points in 24 hours, the BSE's 100-scrip national index also went up, by a modest 11 points to 408.02.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



The present boom did not come as a surprise. Four days after V.P. Singh became the new prime minister, on December 4, the all-India *ET* share index had increased to 401.5 from a pre-poll low of 386.6 on November 15.

Still, a question remained unanswered. What led to the dramatic change in the mood of the markets? One view was that Singh's emphasis on "consensus" politics would result in far greater stability than had been presumed. Thus, even as it was conceded that some of the proposed capital-intensive petrochemical projects would be delayed and particular companies, which had recently floated mega share issues, would be disciplined, a feeling gained ground that the new government would not do anything to destabilise the stock-markets. After all, hadn't share prices zoomed during Singh's tenure as finance minister in 1985 and 1986, the pundits asked confidently.

Not surprisingly, the erosion in the Reliance scrip's value continued by Rs 5 during the fortnight ending on December 7. And predictably, the Bombay Dyeing share price gained Rs 38, touching a high of Rs 193 in this period.

After a hectic bout of buying late last month, the institutions took a break last fortnight. But not so SBI capital markets, which was flush with funds after the successful launch of its offshore fund floated in the US. The oversold technical position of the markets in the wake of the elections also helped matters. Those who had embarked on a selling spree in late November, were now anxious to square up their accounts.

All in all, it was a good beginning for the new rulers in Delhi. Investors were clearly reposing their confidence in them. Whether the current spurt in equity values is a flash in the pan will be evident in the next few weeks.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1989 HIGH	1989 LOW	CLOSE 7.12.89	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	93.00	61.00	93.00	4.50 +
Associated Cement	345.00	230.00	329.00	20.00 +
Asian Paints	226.25	165.00	210.00	16.25 +
Atlas Copco	53.00	32.00	43.00	1.00 –
Bajaj Auto	450.00	290.00	367.50	38.75 +
Baroda Rayon	837.50	285.00	695.00	25.00 –
Bata India	89.00	60.00	65.00	2.00 –
Bayer	910.00	580.00	800.00	30.00 +
Bharat Forge	202.50	65.00	82.50	5.00 +
Birla Jute	73.75	41.50	47.00	nil
Bombay Dyeing	193.00	104.00	184.00	38.00 +
Britannia Ind.	150.00	89.00	147.50	25.50 +
Brooke Bond	155.00	75.00	115.00	5.00 +
Century Spinning	2865.00	1230.00	2860.00	290.00 +
Chloride India	88.50	72.00	85.50	1.50 +
Colgate Palmolive	371.25	162.50	192.50	15.00 +
Cyanamid	108.75	55.00	97.50	1.50 –
DCM	85.00	31.00	48.00	1.50 +
Dunlop	95.50	62.80	73.00	10.00 +
E.I. Hotels	68.00	50.00	65.00	1.00 +
Escorts	84.00	58.00	81.00	3.00 +
Finolex Cables	430.00	225.00	260.00	30.00 –
Food Specialities	224.00	100.00	112.50	11.00 +
Garware Nylon	57.00	36.00	57.00	9.00 +
G.E. Shipping	53.00	33.75	49.75	3.00 +
G.S.F.C.	195.00	123.75	193.75	13.75 +
Grasim Ind.	137.00	75.00	121.00	14.00 +
Hind. Aluminium	327.50	155.00	277.50	28.75 +
Hind. Ciba	1270.00	600.00	1250.00	275.00 +
Hind. Cocoa	150.00	98.75	141.25	5.00 –
Hindustan Lever	113.50	69.50	105.50	3.50 +
Hindustan Motors	52.50	22.00	23.00	0.75* +
ICI India Ltd.	68.00	39.00	42.50	3.00 –
Indian Organic	54.50	23.00	47.00	3.25 +
Indian Rayon	106.00	75.75	87.00	1.75 +
Indrol	335.00	175.00	195.00	nil
Ingersoll-Rand	425.00	180.00	235.00	17.50 +
ITC	129.00	46.25	64.00	nil
J.K. Synthetics	92.00	55.00	62.50	1.50* +
Kinetic Engineering	395.00	120.00	140.00	12.25 +
Kirloskar Cummins	88.75	54.50	66.00	1.00 –
KSB Pumps	445.00	185.00	202.50	10.00 +
Larsen & Toubro	128.00	69.00	73.50	2.50 –
Lipton	98.00	65.00	93.00	3.50 –
LML Ltd.	28.00	12.50	20.00	2.50 +
Madura Coats	104.00	92.25	101.00	1.50 +
Mahindra & Mahindra	113.50	76.50	88.50	9.50 –
Milk Food	320.00	180.00	290.00	75.00 +
Motor Industries	850.00	560.00	750.00	15.00 +
Mukand Ltd.	145.00	75.00	139.25	1.75 +
National Organic	1525.00	710.00	1525.00	240.00 +
Nirlon	17.00	8.00	16.00	3.50 +
Orkay Silk Mills	29.00	12.50	15.25	1.25 +
Peico Electronics	30.50	16.50	24.50	3.00 +
Pfizer	80.00	58.00	78.00	7.00 +
Ponds	220.00	151.25	200.00	18.75 +
Premier Auto	68.00	40.00	64.50	2.75 +
Raymond	85.00	60.00	78.00	9.00 +
Reliance Industries	158.00	70.00	73.50	5.00 –
Siemens India	95.00	65.00	86.00	13.00 +
Shaw Wallace	103.25	62.00	88.00	8.00 +
Shriram Fibres	94.00	53.50	63.00	9.00 +
SKF Bearings	3020.00	1140.00	1360.00	90.00 +
SPIC	67.00	39.00	56.00	4.00 +
Tata Steel	158.00	102.50	115.25	9.00 +
Telco	1097.50	657.50	1060.00	33.00 +
Vam Organic	178.00	132.50	138.75	20.25 –
Videocon Int.	200.00	55.00	192.50	2.50 +
Voltas	1000.00	470.00	920.00	15.00 –
Wimco	32.00	15.00	23.25	1.00 +

*Spot delivery

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	13.3823	13.2348
Austria	Schilling	100	135.3517	134.8116
Bahrain	Dinar	1	45.2889	44.7705
Bangladesh	Taka	100	54.1741	52.7872
Canada	Dollar	1	14.6858	14.5307
Denmark	Kroner	1	2.4678	2.4421
Egypt	Pound	1	6.8534	6.7298
France	Franc	1	2.8694	2.7972
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	2.1842	2.1617
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.9603	0.9453
Iran	Rial	100	24.2345	24.1402
Italy	Lira	100	1.3037	1.2885
Japan	Yen	100	12.0048	11.7096
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7882	0.7766
Kuwait	Dinar	1	57.6515	56.9710
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.3056	6.2394
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.1264	1.1113
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.5956	0.5875
Netherlands	Guilder	1	8.4689	8.3748
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.8126	0.7678
Singapore	Dollar	1	8.8145	8.7206
Spain	Peseta	1	0.1484	0.1466
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.7551	0.7441
Sweden	Kroner	1	2.6756	2.6476
Switzerland	Franc	1	10.7427	10.6272
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.1004	0.0938
Thailand	Baht	100	66.9210	64.9688
UK	Pound	1	26.8061	26.6134
USA	Dollar	1	17.0648	16.8919
UAE	Dirham	1	4.6486	4.5977
USSR	Rouble	1	27.5018	27.2011
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	9.7943	9.5511

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 7.12.89.

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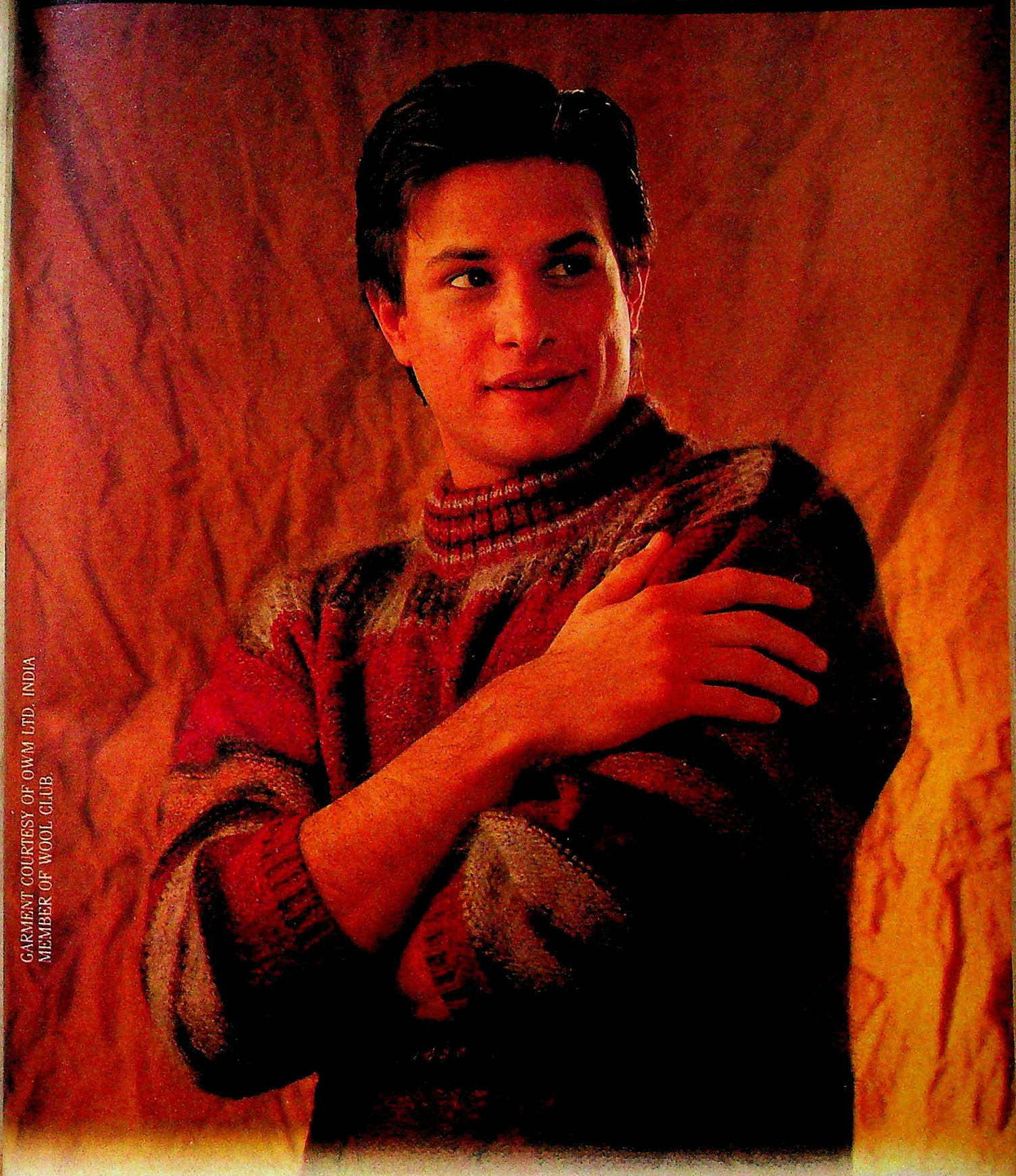

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Pure New Wool Knitwear.
It breathes naturally. Shrugs off creases.
Keeps you snug in cold weather, cool in warm.
Feels smooth on your skin. Drapes like a dream.
And never, never goes out of fashion.
Pure New Wool Knitwear. Wear it.

Woolmark

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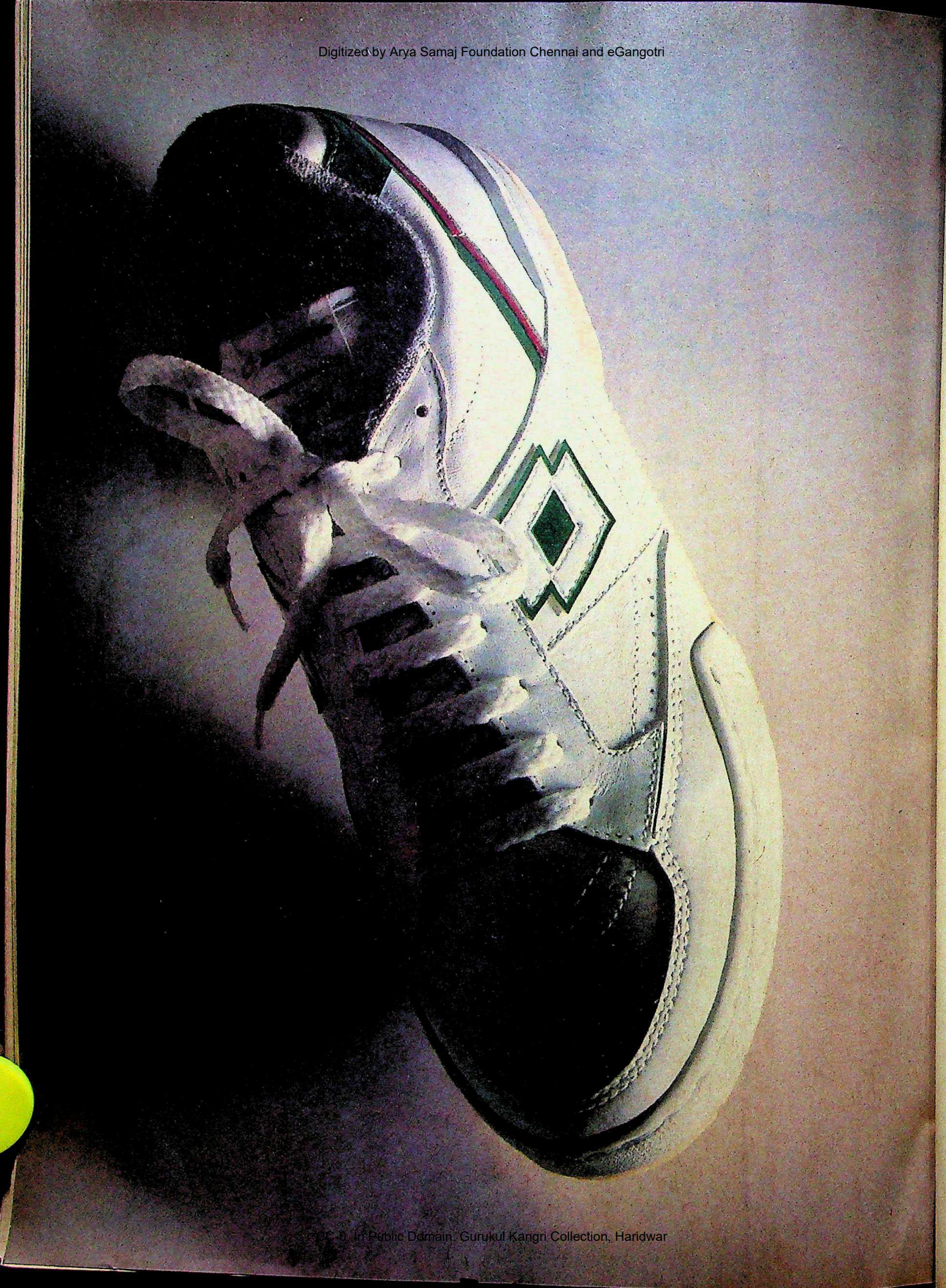

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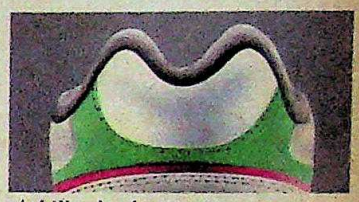
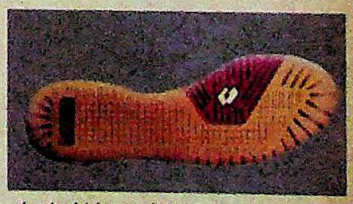
POSITIVELY NO ROCK AND ROLL.

When you buy a Lotto shoe, there's one thing you'll find missing: Uneven grip. Because every Lotto shoe has a unique U-shape Achilles cushion that protects your heel from rolling sideways. And a special non-slip lining that prevents your feet from rocking forward. A system of staggered lacing ensures even distribution of stress on the feet. While fine grain leather uppers ensure better fit. (Leather has the unique ability to adapt to the shape and size of your foot. And unlike synthetic materials, it breathes easily.) And in a truly major step in sports shoes, Lotto offers half sizes in all their models. No matter what your foot size is, you'll find shoes that fit you like a sock.



Achilles heel protector.

WE GOT SOLE. An extra removable insole is mandatory for all Lottos. Its orthopedic design provides additional cushioning and stability. An unwarranted extravagance perhaps, considering many of our shoes have two layers of cushioning in the midsole instead of just one. Besides which, directly below the midsole, there is an extra-tough carbon rubber outsole to prevent wear and tear. And it has a computer-generated anti-skid tread design that provides greater traction.



Anti-skid tread design.

RHYTHM WITHOUT THE BLUES. Years of research into materials have developed a unique compound: Double density EVA. It's remarkably flexible, and has a 'memory'. When your heel strikes the ground, the EVA compresses, taking most of the shock. And the moment you lift your heel, it bounces back to its original shape. Lotto shoes incorporate this revolutionary material into a compact shock absorber at the base of the heel.

If you miss these features in your sports shoe, drop in at your nearest dealer. And step into one of our blue suede shoes.

lotto

Europe's fastest selling sports shoe

A product of collaboration with Lotto S.p.A. of Italy. Manufactured by Consolidated Footwear Ltd. Tanna House, 11-A Nathalal Parekh Marg, Colaba, Bombay-400 039.

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Available as plain and clear sheets from 10 mm to 50 mm thickness.

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GUJPOL-S Quality Acrylic Sheets from GSFC

GSFC—Basic to India's Progress

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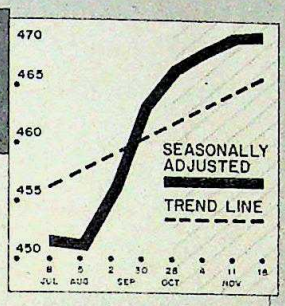
The most disturbing economic concern in the short run is the decline in the industrial output. The consequences could be serious. Unless something is done quickly to boost production, the economy could head for a recession. On the price front too, there was no relief in sight. Prices showed no sign of decelerating their relentless upward climb. Fortunately, the new government has made control of inflation its top priority.

All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.

Wholesale Price Index

1970-71 = 100

Current Trend
5.7% p.a.

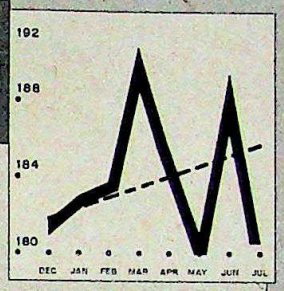


Wholesale prices continued to shoot up last fortnight. The annualised rate of increase worked out to 10 per cent.

Industrial Production Index

1980-81 = 100

Current Trend
3.6% p.a.

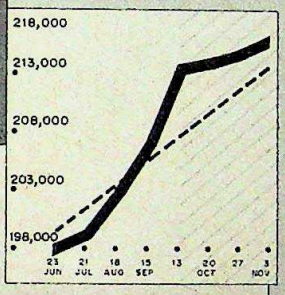


There was another bad drop in industrial production last month giving rise to fears of a coming recession.

Money Supply

Rs Crore

Current Trend
19.0% p.a.

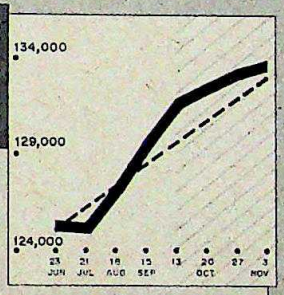


Money supply expanded at an annual rate of over 20 per cent last fortnight—more pressure on future prices.

Commercial Bank Credit

Rs Crore

Current Trend
17.01 p.a.

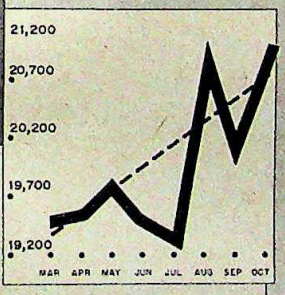


The relaxed commercial credit conditions last fortnight were welcome, given the industrial slow-down.

Electricity Generation

Mill kWh

Current Trend
11.8 p.a.

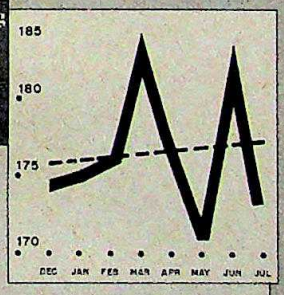


Generation of electricity registered a sharp increase last month. For industry, it was a hopeful sign.

Manufacturing Index

1980-81 = 100

Current Trend
1.5% p.a.

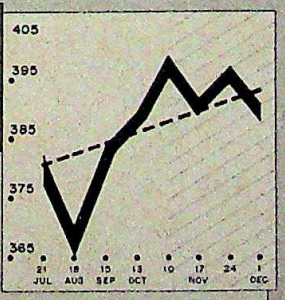


The primary reason for the industrial decline has been the sharp decrease in the output of the manufacturing sector.

Share Price Index

1984-85 = 100

Current Trend
8.6% p.a.

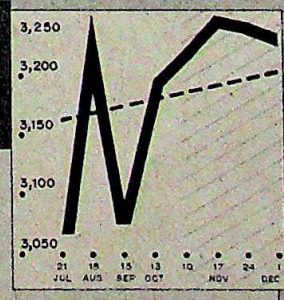


Share prices witnessed wide fluctuations last fortnight. However, the final level reached reflected confidence.

Closing Gold Prices

Rs per 10 gm

Current Trend
3.51% p.a.



The price of gold continued to remain constant. There were a couple of transactions in the bullion market.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 1st fortnight of November 1989

	% Growth
Sugarcane	8.01
Jute Textiles	7.97
Groundnut Seeds	6.88
Cement	6.30
Oranges	5.89
Betel-Nuts	5.36
PVC Compounds	5.27
Silk Raw	5.23
Gur	4.81
Logs Timber Bamboo	4.08
Fish	3.71
Synthetic Fibres	3.11
Art Silk & Artificial Fabrics	2.57
Solvent Extracted Oil	2.44
Cars	2.41
Ghee	2.34
Jute Textile Machinery	2.23
Tapioca	2.21
Rice	1.97
Tobacco Raw	1.83
Groundnut Oilcake	1.71
Milk	1.68
Urad	1.57
Soda Ash	1.55
Cotton Cloth	1.52
Coal	1.11
Polythene Moulding Powder	1.05
Board	1.02
Jowar	1.01
Machine Tools	0.96
Handloom & Powerloom Products	0.92
Nylon/Terene and Mixed Cloth	0.91
Cigarettes	0.89
Tubes	0.85
Furnace Oil	0.84
Dairy Products	0.82
Skelp	0.82
Tractors	0.77
Silk & Artificial Fabrics	0.76
Steel Structurals	0.76
Limestone	0.76
Diesel Oil	0.74
Mustard Oil	0.72
Gingelly Seed	0.71
Woollen Cloth & Woollen Khadi	0.70
Atta	0.69
Pesticides & Insecticides	0.69

Of the 137 series considered, 79 of them with a total weight of 55.481 had a positive growth and 56 of them with a total weight of 29.732 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1989	1988
Coal		
Thousand Tonnes, October	15650	15110
Saleable Steel		
Thousand Tonnes, October	786.4	773.5
Cement		
Thousand Tonnes, October	3667	3688
Fertilisers		
Thousand Tonnes, October	7097	8296
Plant Load Factor		
Per Cent, October	53.9	49.2

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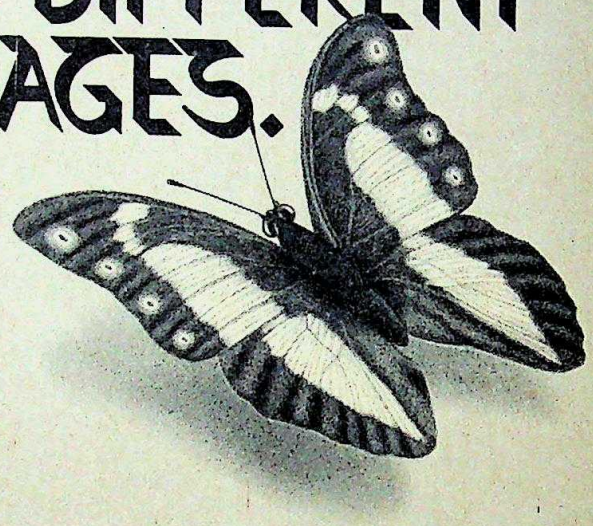
THIS IS THE STORY OF A GOVERNMENT CIRCULAR

THAT SUDDENLY CAME ALIVE IN THIRTEEN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.



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Just about anyone, who wants to make a piece of communication forceful, eyecatching and in different languages, can benefit from using the Quantum Desk Top Publisher, and Linguist—a multilingual DTP Software Package from Blue Star.

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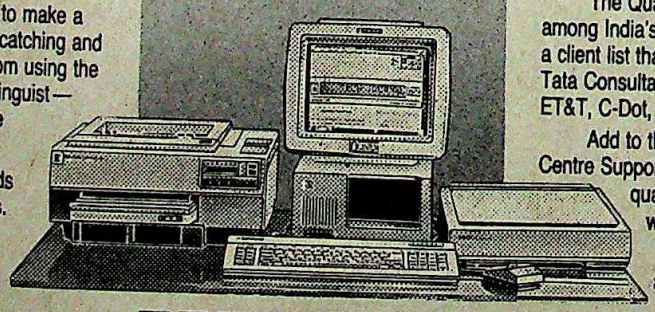

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Hewlett-Packard Division, Blue Star Limited,
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the hi-technology Company

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NINTH LOK SABHA

A Volatile Mix

In sharp contrast to the previous House, the ninth Lok Sabha contains a wide variety of forceful and controversial voices. With fundamentalists, militants and filibusters galore, this House will be as volatile as it is colourful.

THE English parliamentary expert, Walter Bagehot, once said that each parliament evolves a character uniquely its own. The newly-elected ninth Lok Sabha could hardly have been more different from its predecessor. While the norm is for about 60 per cent of any House to be re-elected, less than 30 per cent of the earlier House is back. Obviously, the voter did not take kindly to the shoddy shenanigans of the last two years, and as many as 371 members out of 525 in the new House were not there in the last.

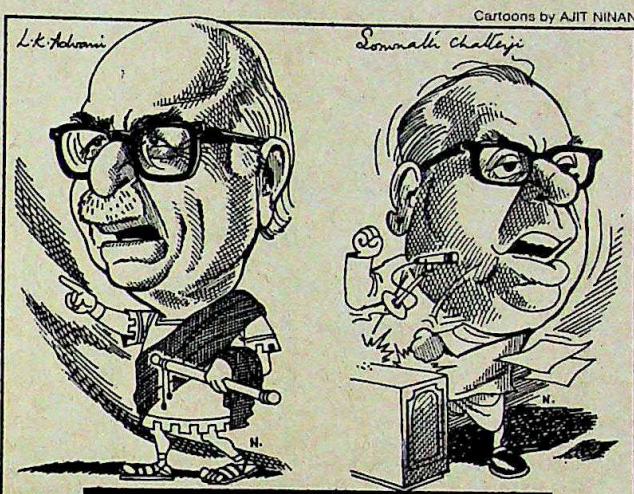
A hung Parliament, it will be a complete contrast to the previous one—which was taken so casually by a government cocooned within its four-fifths majority. No one can take this one for granted, and the Government will be on an ever more tenuous tightrope as session follows uncertain session. And that rope is made of such variegated strands that it can only make the going tauter. Indeed, parliamentary observers expect this to be an even stormier house than the previous one.

In the House are outstanding journalists and police officers, judges and managers, academics and preachers. On the other hand, almost a fifth of the members belong to parties like the Shiv Sena, the Akali Dal (Mann), the Hindu Mahasabha, the BJP and the BSP, with extreme positions on one issue or another. So if the eighth House was marked by a herd tendency, the ninth is likely to hear a wide variety of voices. And if the heat and dust of the last House was generated largely by sensational newspaper revelations, the members of this one are likely to throw up fundamental issues that could strain the sinews of the Constitution itself. Consensus will be as tough to trap as a rat in a grain godown.

In the first place, there has never been such an array of religious zealots in the House. While the dapper Ghulam Mehmood Banatwala and Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait of the Muslim League have almost become permanent fixtures in the Lok Sabha, their voices have generally been modulated. This time, they will be faced by the fiery president of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Mahant Avaidyanath. Those who have seen him in action say it would be no surprise if he were to rise in the House to challenge members with rhetoric about Hindu blood flowing in their veins. Vying with him in zealousness will be four MPs from the saffron-suffused Shiv Sena.

And they might find enthusiastic supporters in some of the

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

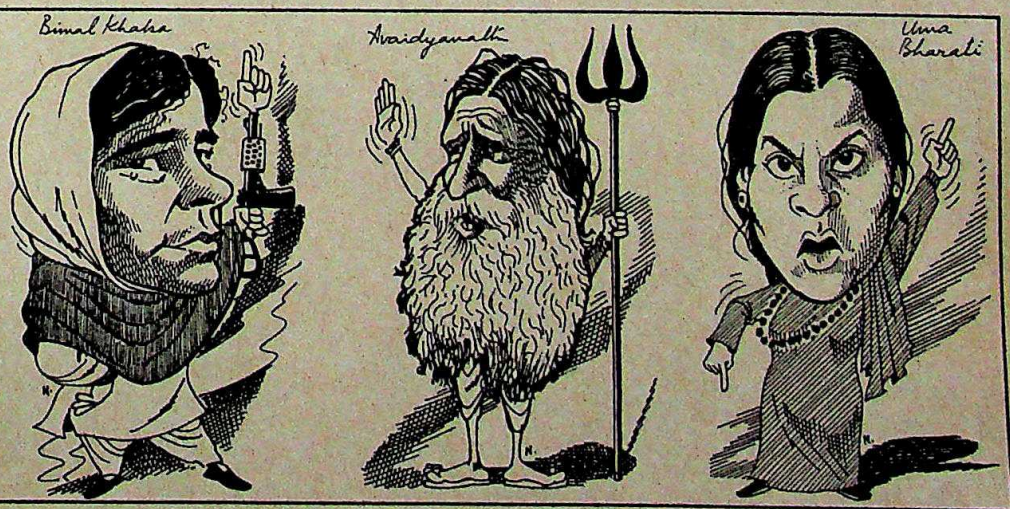


HEAVYWEIGHTS

The large number of stalwarts will both lend weight to the debates, and prove a restraining influence on conduct.

EXTREME VOICES

The unprecedented array of religious zealots in the House is likely to keep the Speaker constantly on edge.



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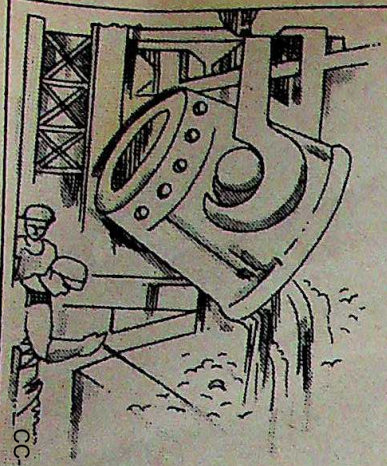

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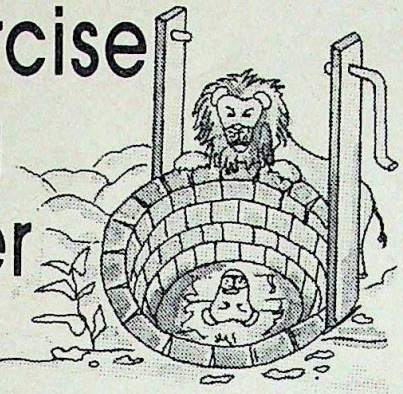

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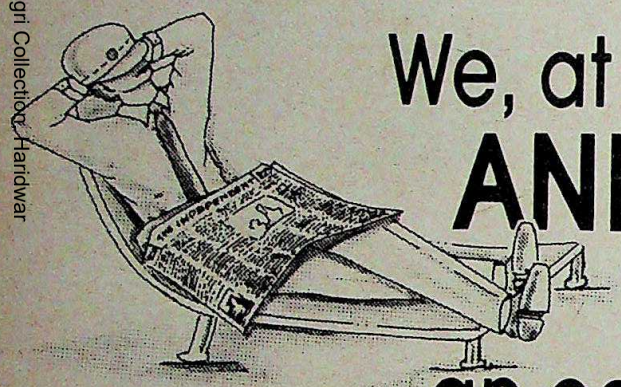

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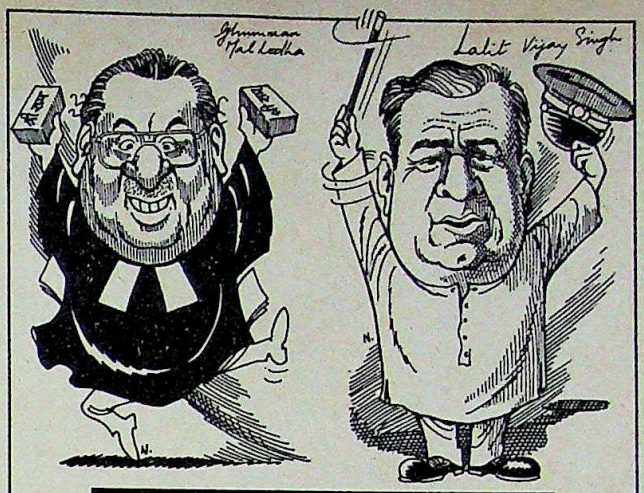
BJP members, among whom are such colourful personalities as the ochre-robed young preacher, Uma Bharati, who won from Khajuraho; Harin Pathak, an unabashed communalist from Ahmedabad; and Yadunath Pandey, of the VHP and Bajrang Dal, from Hazaribagh, who was involved in the recent communal riots there.

Even the urbane BJP President, L.K. Advani, making his first appearance in the Lok Sabha, is likely to strike a strident posture on the communal issue, which the party believes brought it so many seats. The party's deputy leader in the House, Vijayaraje Scindia, will pull no punches on the Ram Janmabhoomi theme either.

Then, there are the seven militant MPs from Punjab. Most interesting will be Bimal Kaur Khalsa's face-off with Rajiv Gandhi. The widow of Beant Singh, Mrs Gandhi's executed assassin, she has often drawn the attention of journalists to her little son, toting a toy pistol "to shoot Rajiv Gandhi". While some Akali Dal (Mann) MPs have sworn by the Constitution, Bimal continues to say that "total freedom and nothing else" is her aim.

The Bahujan Samaj Party for the first time has a voice, in fact three, in the House. How their anti-upper caste stance will manifest itself is anybody's guess. The militant leftist Indian People's Front too has a member for the first time—Rameshwar Prasad, from Arrah in Bihar.

If these extreme voices are enough to keep the sharpest of speakers on edge, there are plenty of filibusters to keep the ears abuzz. Some of the last Parliament's noise machines are thankfully out—among them Mamata Bannerjee (who once presented her bangles to Indrajit Gupta) and K.K. Tewary ("V.P. Singh is the Pamella Bordes of Indian politics"). But Kalpnath Rai, so far in the Rajya Sabha, has descended to the lower House, with rings on his fingers and abuse on his tongue. Rai might meet his match in other new Uttar Pradesh members like Ram Pujan Patel, a staunch V.P. Singh supporter, and Ramlal Rahi, who was not averse to criticising his own Congress(I) partymen during the campaign.



LAWMEN

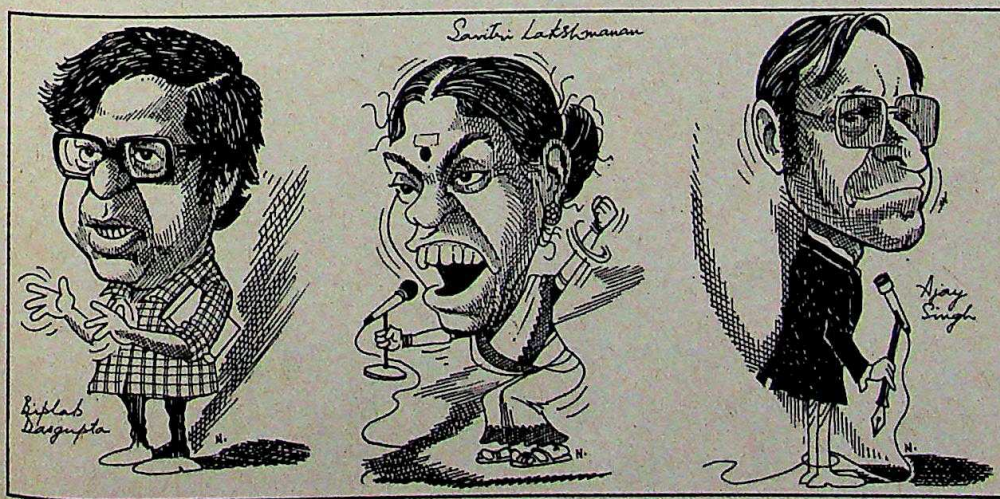
Lodha and Lalit Singh will bring to the law-making body a wealth of experience as executors of the law.

Another member who might exercise his vocal chords to the full is Jai Prakash, the street-smart chief of Devi Lal's green brigade. Lalloo Prasad Yadav is another potential troublemaker, as is K.C. Tyagi of the Sharad Yadav camp and Kalyan Singh Kalvi of Barmer, who vociferously carried his pro-sati campaign from the streets of Jaipur into the Assembly. In the BJP troupe are such aggressive members as Ram Kapse and Ram Naik, both from Bombay.

Fortunately, the House has more than its share of academics, journalists and other professionals to temper the tone and content of debates. Leading the academics is Shakeelur Rehman of the Janata Dal, who has been vice-chancellor of both Bihar University and the L.N. Mishra Mithila University. Then there is Malini Bhattacharya, who won on a CPI(M) ticket. She holds a doctorate from Cambridge and is a professor of English at Jadavpur University. In the BJP benches is S.N. Shrivastava, an articulate leader of teachers' struggles, from Patna.

PROMINENT among the journalists who have been elected are M.J. Akbar, former editor of *The Telegraph* and a strident anti-communalist, and Inder Jit, editor of *Indian News and Features Alliance*, who represents the GNLF. Santosh Bharatiya, founder-editor of the Hindi weekly *Chauthi Duniya*, is a V.P. Singh groupie, while Ajay Singh was editor of Charan Singh's *Asli Bharat*.

From Begusarai in Bihar comes Lalit Vijay Singh, a former director-general of police, with an impeccable police record—he earned kudos for exposing fellow officers in his report on the Bhagalpur blindings. Members like Singh and Ghumman Mal Lodha will bring to the law-making body their experience as executors of the law. Lodha, who won on a BJP ticket from



ACADEMICS & JOURNALISTS

Fortunately, there are enough academics and journalists to temper the tone and content of the debates.

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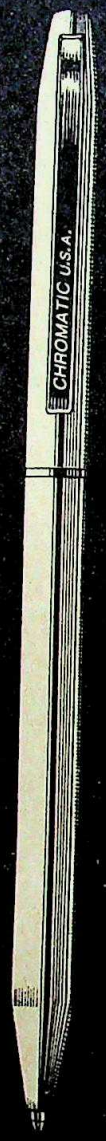
A Twist of Elegance



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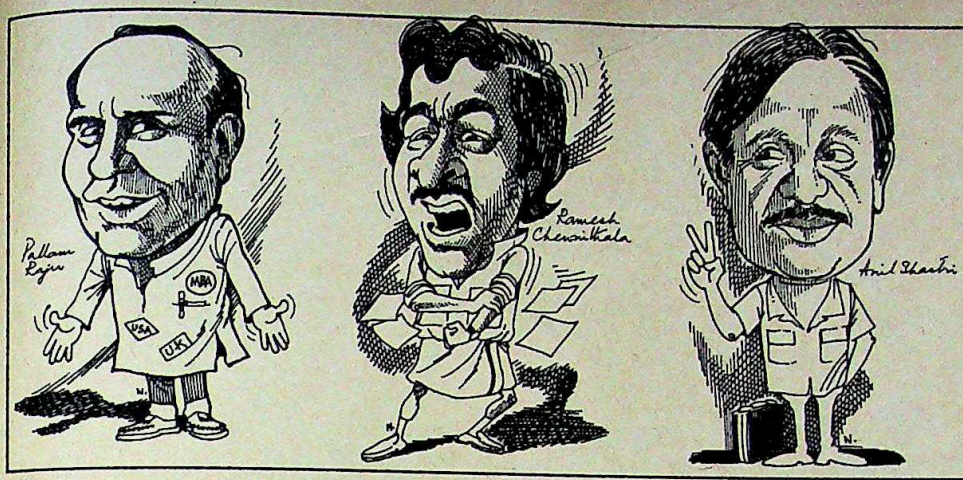


YOUTH PRESENCE

There are some promising young entrants, but it's difficult to predict which of them will shine in their new role.

Rajasthan, retired recently as chief justice of the Guwahati High Court. He will, no doubt, continue to espouse the Hindu cause in Parliament as he has outside.

By the time this Parliament is dissolved, some of these men, who have earned renown in other professions, will have joined the ranks of able legislators beside such stalwarts as Indrajit Gupta (CPI) and Somnath Chatterjee (CPM). Outstanding National Front parliamentarians like Madhu Dandavate and Dinesh Goswami will, as ministers, not be able to spring up with interjections as frequently as they used to. But they will be ably replaced by BJP leaders like L.K. Advani and Jaswant Singh, who have hitherto shone in the Rajya Sabha.

Though the number of women is down to 26, from 44 in the last House, there are some outstanding personalities among them—including the redoubtable Subhashini Ali, who won on a CPI(M) ticket from Kanpur. And along with Vijayaraje Scindia in the BJP ranks is daughter Vasundhara Raje, both in the House for the first time. The BJP contingent contains seven women, most of them firebrand activists who are unlikely to allow Mamata Bannerjee's shrillness to be missed. Worth watching is former Bihar MLA and Janata Dal member, Usha Singh. Another new entrant is Savithri Lakshmanan, a fiery speaker from Kerala.

On the other hand, socialite Uma Gajapati Raju and film actress Jamuna, both Congresswomen from Andhra Pradesh, are likely to join Vyjanthimala Bali in adding glamour to the proceedings.

There are potentially outstanding young entrants. In the Uttar Pradesh contingent are Anil Shastri, the late prime minister's youngest son, and Ram Sajiwan, an outstanding Hindi orator. From Bihar comes a staunch Jayaprakash-ite, Subodh Kant Sahay. Then there is Nitish Kumar, an engineer and a powerful orator.

Equally worth watching in action will be two youth leaders from Kerala. Ramesh Chennithala, 33, is president of the state Youth Congress(I) and his fluent Hindi should find favour with the BJP. Representing the CPI(M) is A. Vijayaraghavan, president of the Students Federation of India. At 27, M.M. Pallam Raju of Andhra is one of the two youngest members but holds far greater promise than the other 27-year-old, Vishwendra Singh of Bharatpur. The son of former deputy minister for electronics, M.S. Sanjeevi Rao, Raju, a management graduate from the US, returned only in October from abroad.

IT isn't easy to predict which of these prodigious talents will shine as legislators. BJP member Jaswant Singh notes that even eminent lawyers have found it difficult to switch from being interpreters of law to being makers of law and that those who have shone in state assemblies often find the demands of Parliament too exacting. Says Singh: "Parliament requires a different mind-set. The issues that a state assembly deal with are easier to grasp."

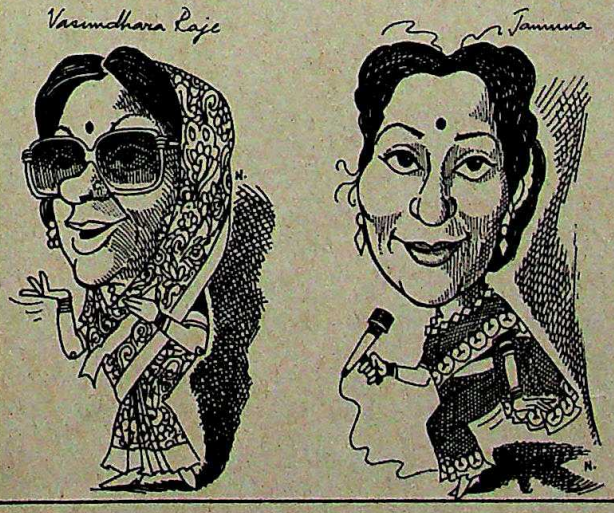
As the new members are addressed by veteran MPs in an orientation workshop in the Parliament House Annexe from December 15 to 17, they will no doubt be thinking of the onerous responsibility that lies ahead of them in the days to come. For it is up to them to restore to the institution the dignity that it has lost during the last two years. As Vishnu Modi, who represented Ajmer in the last House, says: "So far as respect for the institution of the Lok Sabha is concerned, this was the lowest ever." Impossible though it might seem, this House carries the seeds of even greater anarchy.

The balance being so tenuous, it is certain that this House will not be short on action. Says Balkavi Bairagi, another outgoing member: "The benches will not be empty this time, because the pressure to make its presence felt will be heavy on all parties." If public interest in Parliament is already intense, it can only attain a new high in the coming years.

—DAVID DEVADAS with bureau reports

GLAMOROUS FACES

There are fewer women in the House, but they are a mix of outstanding orators and the glamorous.



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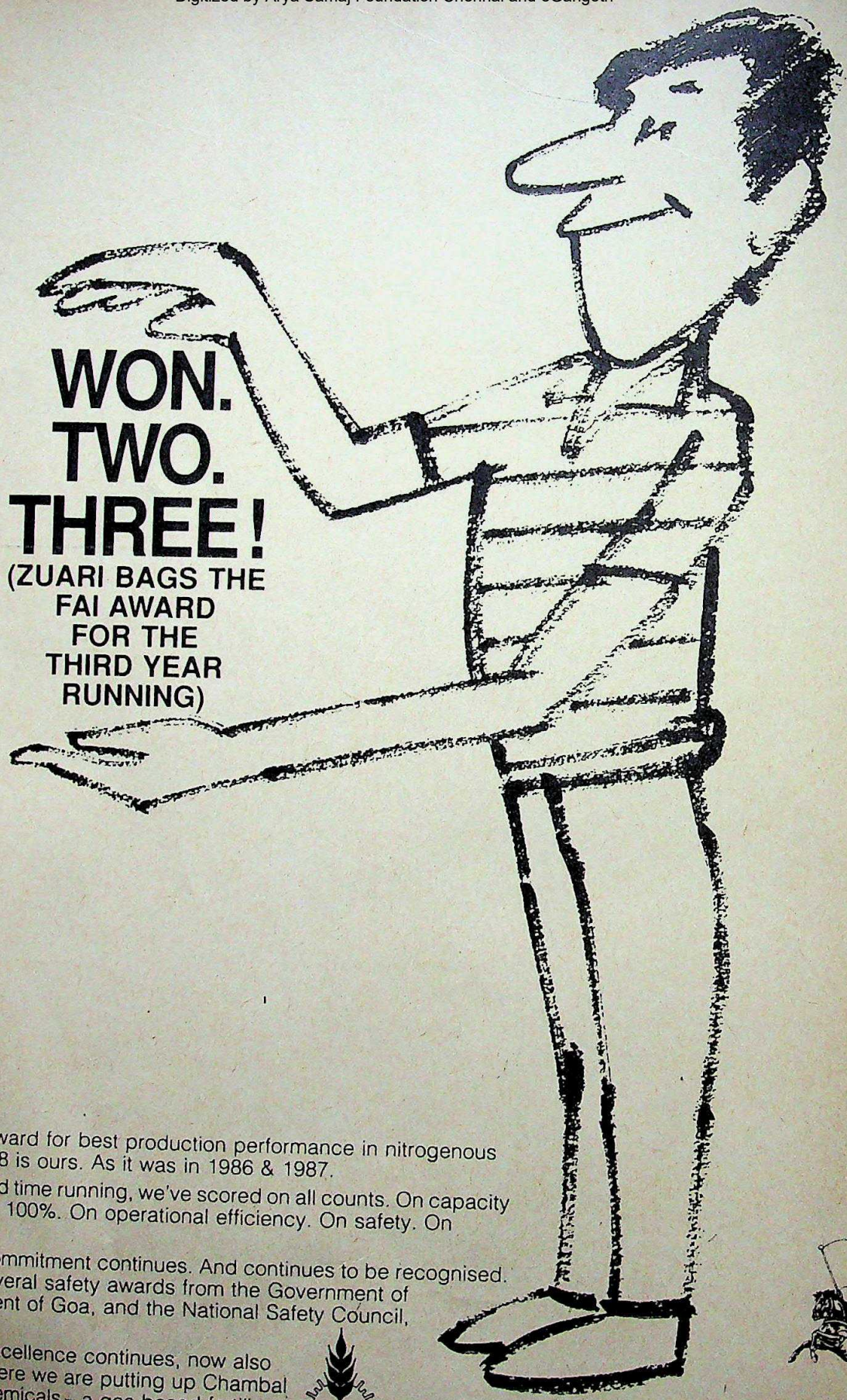

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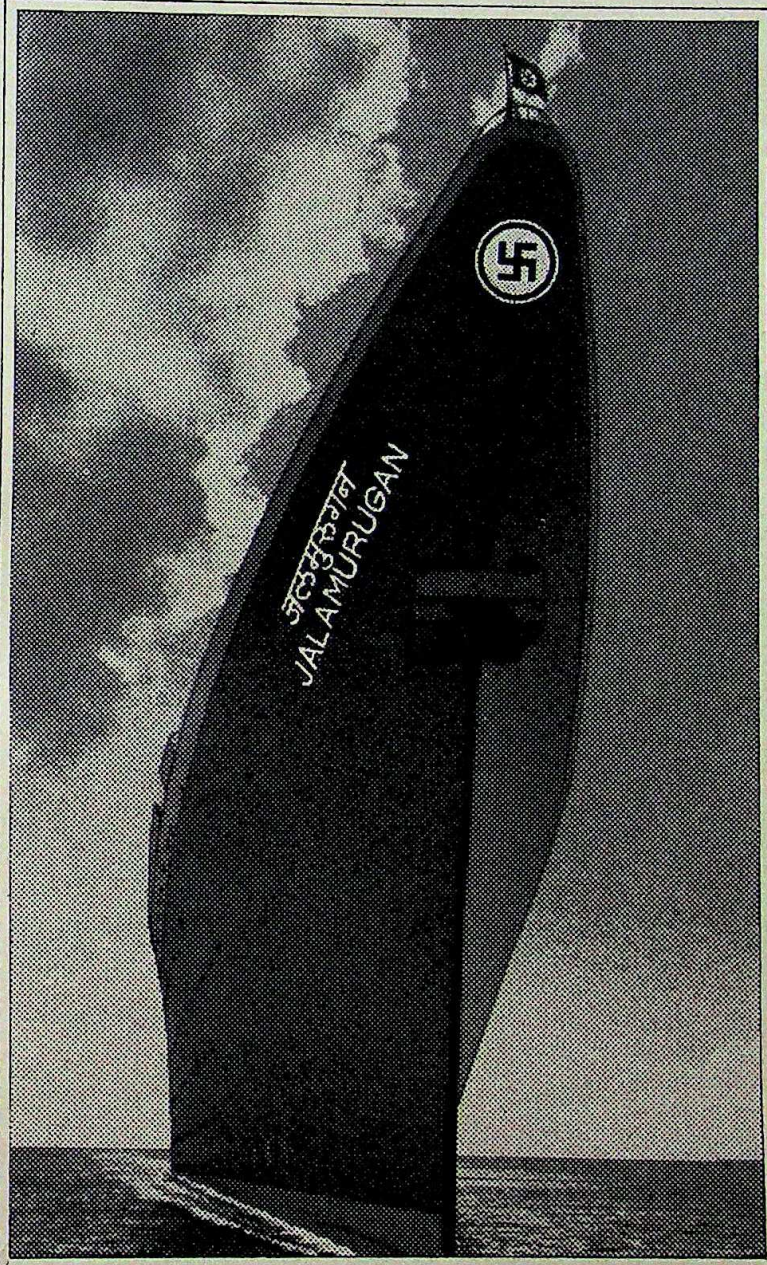

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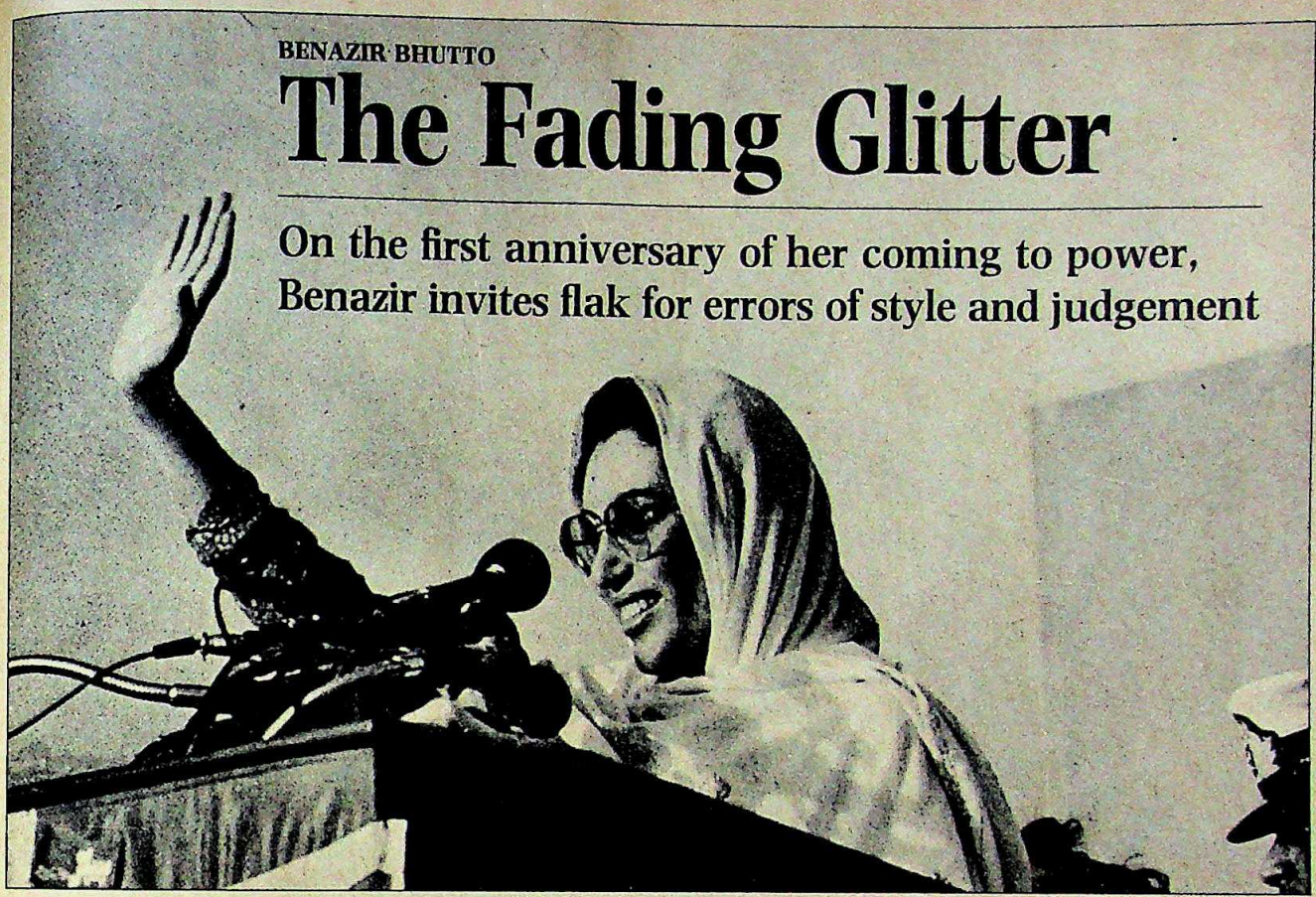
BENAZIR BHUTTO

The Fading Glitter

On the first anniversary of her coming to power, Benazir invites flak for errors of style and judgement



Photographs by ANIS HAMDANI

Benazir: facing the brickbats

Faced with a hung parliament and a federally split nation, the fledgling government has little to be pleased about.

SHE sat facing the cameras, the Pakistani flag by her side, the customary portrait of Jinnah behind her. Her low-key address to the nation was sometimes punctuated with emotion, but more often in the nature of a recital of statistical claims: of waging war against corruption and drug overlords, of enhancing Pakistan's image abroad, of improving rural electrification and winning Chinese approval for a nuclear power plant. The only time her voice perked up was when she talked of the strengthening of the pace of restoration of democracy.

On the first anniversary of her coming to power, defying the machinations of Zia's orphans—as his political legatees are often called—and the challenge of a hung parliament, Benazir, 36, who is expecting her second child soon, did not have much else to be pleased about. A year had been too short a time for her government to show tangible results in the economy. The lack of a majority in the Senate, the Pakistani upper house, ensured that she was not able to bring in any legislation of consequence through the year. The only changes for the better have been in areas where she did not require a majority.

Her travels through the world have brought Pakistan, once in a piquant situation, back into the sphere of respectability—commanding the West's attention as a strategic ally but also inviting contempt for its tradition of dictatorships. She has also helped break the ice with India. To some extent, she has been able to control the depredations of the once all-powerful Inter Services Intelligence in Afghanistan. Domestically, she has made a small beginning on the developmental front by upping the education budget by 68 per cent.

But her greatest achievement has been in the field of democratisation. "We may have differences. But such political battles are now mostly fought in a democratic manner. That is by no means a small achievement for a society so used to following diktats from the military," says Salman Taseer, her party leader in Punjab. There has also been a visible opening up of the media, though not without a taint of controversy—Benazir succumbed to pressure from party loyalists to remove the articulate minister of state for information, Javed Jabbar, who was accused of being too liberal.

Among other fronts that Benazir has had to backtrack on, one is the normalisation of relations with India. Under fundamentalist pressure, she had to issue a public statement on the Mandir-Masjid issue. Then, she had to recall the ambassador to India, Niaz Naik, after just a year in office. Reason: he had served liquor at the Pakistani mission in New Delhi. Naik has been asked to refund the money spent on liquor at official receptions hosted by him. And female newsreaders on television have been instructed to wear a chadar, as they used to under Zia.

So if Benazir cannot look back on the past year with a greater sense of satisfaction, it is partly because of the kind of system she inherited. And partly her errors of judgement and style. "We got a government, not the power," says Bashir Riaz, her official spokesman. The implication is that the bureaucracy was totally dominated by Zia supporters. And to compound that, Benazir is stuck with an army that still seems to be in two minds and a President who is a Zia appointee and more than reluctant to go along with her.

It is to correct these anomalies, her supporters say, that she has had to take

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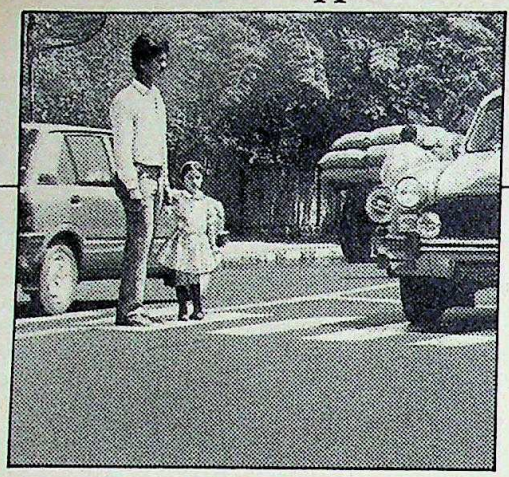

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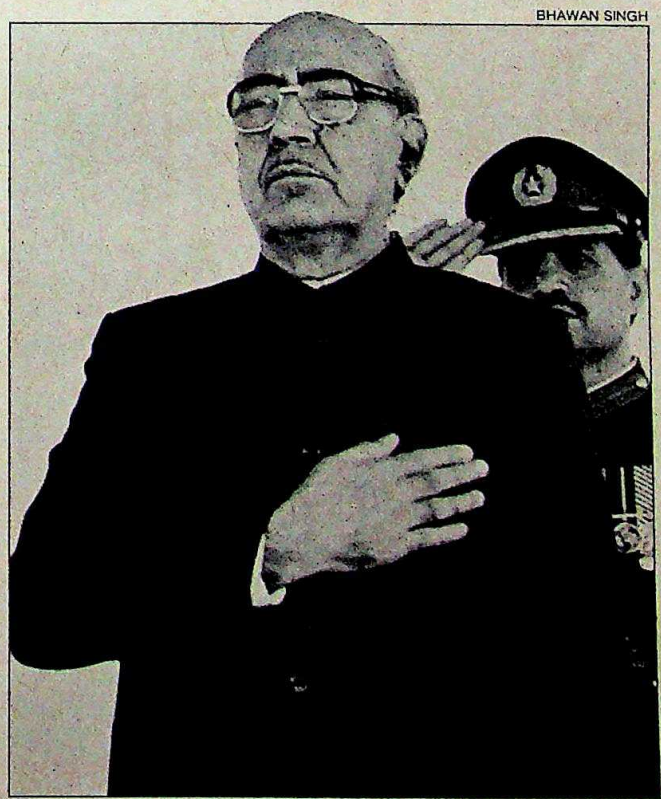
steps that many criticise now. The most controversial has been her effort to tame the bureaucracy by bringing in thousands of party sympathisers as lateral entrants. The old steel frame dominated by the Civil Service of Pakistan is up in arms. She has packed the higher echelons of her government with party faithfuls designated as advisers. And finally, many bureaucrats of suspect loyalty have been relegated as officers on special duty with no real responsibilities. More than 70 of them roam the secretariat corridors, many without an office. The latest among her victims was foreign secretary and former ambassador to India, Humayun Khan, who was banished from office last fortnight without any apparent reason other than his disinclination to carry out the Government's orders on appointments and transfers.

After barely managing to survive the combined opposition's no-confidence motion a month ago, Benazir did admit to having erred. But she has still made no visible correction in her style which, if anything, has become more unpredictable. In the wake of the no-confidence motion she sought the resignation of her entire cabinet and the five advisers of cabinet rank. For more than six weeks now, she has neither accepted the resignations nor sent them back, keeping everyone on tenterhooks. "You have seen parliaments in suspended animation. Here the Mohtarma gives you a cabinet in suspended animation," chuckles Shujaat Hussain, leader of the Islamic Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) in the National Assembly. Meanwhile, his party and Benazir's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) are engaged in furious horse-trading to prepare for yet another showdown in the National Assembly. If current rumours on the Islamabad grape-vine are to be believed, the going rate for a National Assembly member is Rs 2 crore.

Even as Benazir has

In a hurry to set things right, Benazir has taken on the IJI Government in Punjab, President Ishaq Khan and the drug mafia.

BHAWAN SINGH



IJI leaders (top) and Ishaq Khan

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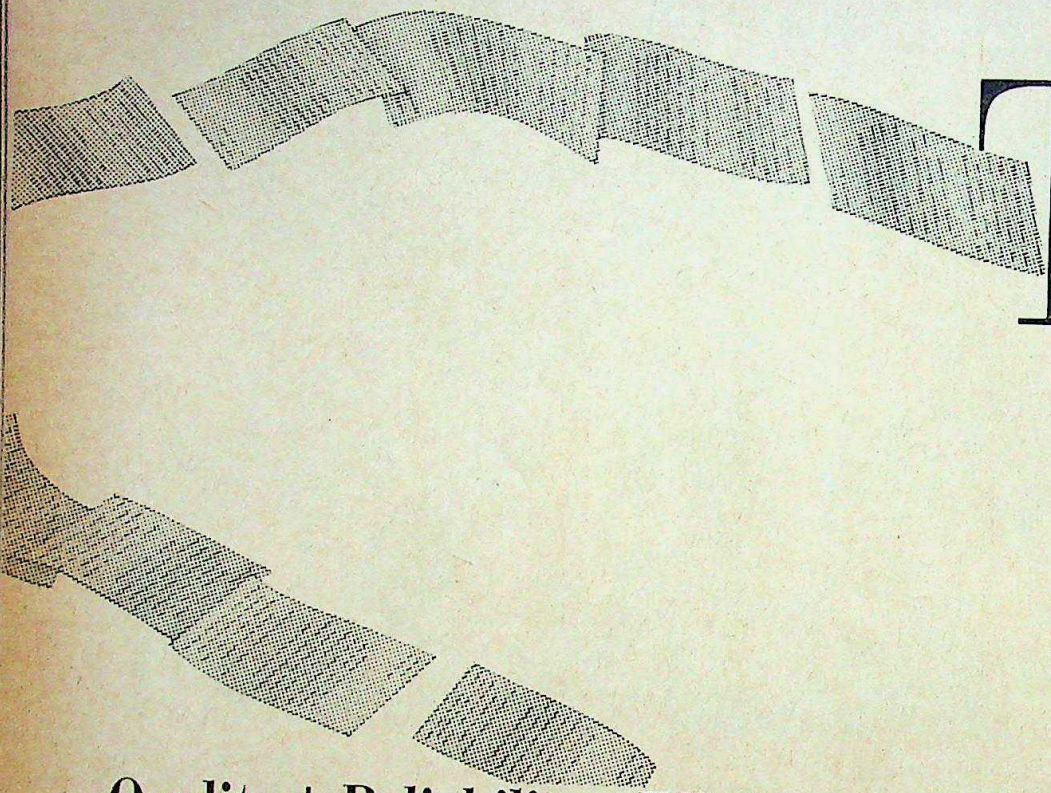

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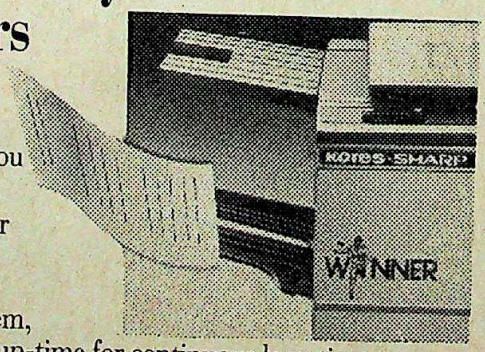

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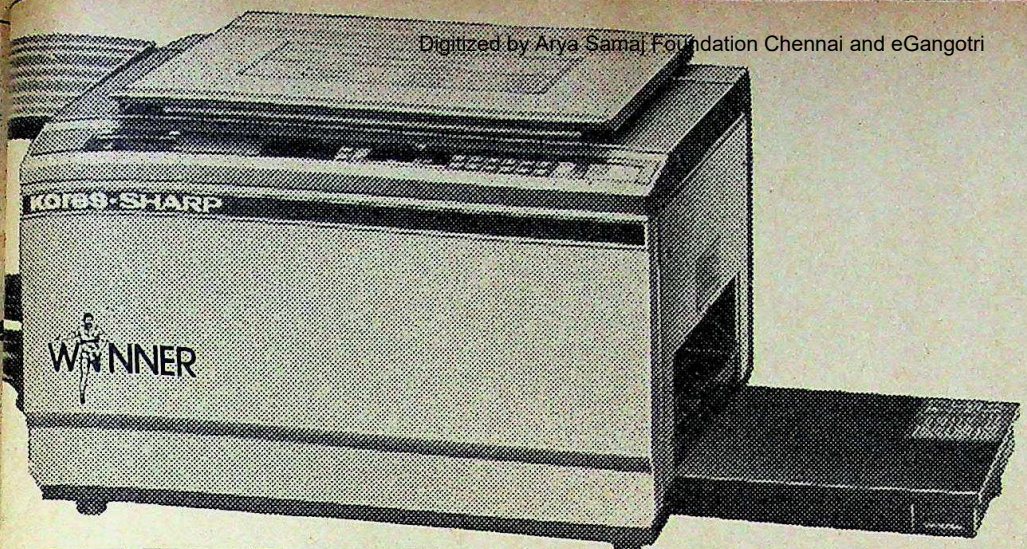

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enjoyed adulation abroad, she has been on the defensive at home. In a hurry to set things right, she has opened too many fronts all at one time. She began by taking on the IJI Government in Punjab, giving her own partymen the gloves-off signal to bring it down. She followed that up by taking on the IJI Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and then the drug mafia. In fact, many of her followers say that fighting the drug mafia so early on was a mistake; it immediately brought in big money for the Opposition. "Like Colombia, the logic was that the drug barons should rule. Ms Bhutto and her weak coalition was the aberration that defied this logic," says Khaled Ahmed, joint editor of *The Frontier Post*. Her critics don't give her the benefit of doubt.

With her husband Zardari

Her government faces several allegations of corruption. Many are directed specifically against her husband and his family.

"Overall it's been a year of disaster," says Hussain Haqqani, key adviser to Punjab Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif. He compares Benazir's "failure" to that of Rajiv. "They are both non-native leaders. Under Benazir in Pakistan as well, the theme is the same: My heart beats for Italy," he says and cites the official enthusiasm for things like the Pierre Cardin show while ignoring bread-and-butter issues.

So while the prime minister has been earning praise abroad like Rajiv, her critics say, she has ignored domestic politics. Her initial coalition partners, the Mohajir Qaumi Mahaz of Karachi and Khan Wali Khan's Awami National Party now sit in the Opposition which is more united than before. Worse, her government is faced with allegations of corruption directed particularly against her husband Asif Zardari and his family. Last fortnight, the combined opposition leader, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, accused Zardari's family of having taken nearly Rs 70 crore in commission on the purchase of Airbus aircraft for Pakistan International Airlines. "Bofors, because of which Rajiv had to leave, is nothing in comparison," he says.

Faced with a hung parliament and a federally split nation, Benazir has made the grave error of rushing headlong into a confrontation with Nawaz Sharif. Aided by clever advisers, Sharif has been able to turn it into a Centre-state row. "This is a ridiculous war," says Abida Hussain, independent National Assembly member and leader of the combined opposition parliamentary group. "She still thinks of Nawaz Sharif as a legatee of Zia. Zia is dead and gone. Today, this confrontation has raised the hackles of a lot of Punjabis, including myself."

ALLOWING the IJI to turn a purely political row into a major Centre-state conflict has been a catastrophe for Benazir. This, indeed is her greatest failure, though it is by no means one-sided. Thanks to the political row between Benazir and Nawaz Sharif, a country already facing the challenge of Sindhi nationalism, Mohajir intransigence and having at the back of its mind the bloody memory of the Pakhtoon and the Baluch nationalist movements, now has to contend with what can at best be called a cold war between its Federal Government and the democratically elected government of its largest state. To understand how serious that is, one must remember that Punjab, besides constituting 60 per cent of Pakistan's population, also completely dominates its bureaucracy, army and other elite institutions.

"You may call it cold war if you want to be nice to us, but it has gone far beyond that stage," confessed a top bureaucrat in Islamabad. Consider the evidence: Nawaz Sharif's Punjab Government has already set up its own scheduled bank, the Bank of Punjab, alleging that Punjab entrepreneurs were not being treated fairly by the federally run banks. But the bank, floated in the joint sector by the provincial government and some pro-IJI businessmen, has not been recognised by Islamabad. As a consequence, its cheques and letters of credit are not honoured by scheduled Pakistani banks. The bank does business in Pakistan through the Bank of Emirates and some other gulf banks.

The Punjab Government has informed the Centre that it is planning to set up its own television station. While the PPP is protesting, calling the action akin to secession, Nawaz Sharif says there is nothing in the Constitution against it. PPP supporters say that even in India, where federalism is much better established, a similar act of defiance by the DMK, N.T. Rama Rao or the Akalis would cause tremendous consternation. But the Nawaz Sharif Government is pressing on nevertheless.

Criminal cases have been filed by the Punjab Government against several PPP members—including 19 of the National Assembly and 27 of the Punjab Provincial Assembly. The most striking is the case of Federal Minister of State for Labour, Mukhtar Awan, against whom a murder case has been filed. For several weeks now, he has not been able to gather the courage to visit Punjab which includes Islamabad where his office is. Last fortnight, he managed to come in by taking the flight from Karachi to

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Peshawar and then taking a helicopter to Islamabad, bypassing Nawaz Sharif's territory and police.

The two governments are also involved in a vicious advertisement war on front-pages with Punjab accusing the Centre of choking fertiliser supplies to ruin the state and the Centre retaliating in kind. "What is the next logical step for Nawaz Sharif?" asks Benazir's key advisor Jam Sadiq Ali, and answers the question himself: "He should have his currency and his own flag."

Looking back, Benazir could perhaps have done things differently. She could have been patient with Nawaz Sharif. She could have made peace with the President until she could either dictate terms or change the eighth amendment to the Constitution through which Zia armed the President with wide-ranging powers. And certainly she could have avoided brutalising the bureaucracy. But moderation and patience are not a part of the Bhutto inheritance. Where she has gone beyond inherited style and values is in her commitment to democracy and free speech. Today, it is fashionable on the prospects of her government's survival. But speculation is confined to the next no-confidence motion and the talk of a military-Mullah coup is passe. For a one-year-old government cursed with a hung Parliament, that is something to write home about.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

REACTIONS

Mixed Feelings

HARDLY any Pakistani missed the coincidence: the Janata Dal Government was being sworn-in in India exactly when the Benazir Government was observing its first anniversary. Comparisons between Rajiv's first innings in power and Benazir's first year were being made instantly. There was also much debate on what the change in New Delhi would mean for Pakistan.

The interest in the Indian election had been tremendous—major newspapers brought out special supplements and Doordarshan's election specials drew vast audiences. Many came flocking to the Indian High Commission in Islamabad, where the election specials were being shown on a 40-inch television screen. And the results brought surprise loaded with worries.

The most widespread anxiety is about the performance of the BJP. Fundamentalist groups are worried about what it could mean for Indian Muslims and Indian policy towards Pakistan. The liberals feel the victory could be exploited by the Jamaat-e-Islami, which has already gathered some support for its agitation on the Ayodhya issue. Apprehends a senior member of the Benazir Cabinet: "The Jamaatis are not missing the point that a more fundamentalist posture has taken the BJP's tally from two to 88. They will take the cue."

In the foreign office Rajiv's exit has brought mixed reactions. Those in Benazir's policy-making coterie are disappointed. More conventional diplomats feel the change will correct the 'imbalances' that have crept into Indo-Pak relations. "It will help us move away from the your-father-and-my-mother-from-generation-to-generation kind of syndrome," hoped a senior official.

We have good memories of the Janata phase. The new Government should follow the same approach.

AGHA SHAHI
Former Pakistan foreign minister

The dignity of change in India is an example for all democracies and specially for us in Pakistan.

JAM SADIQ ALI
Senior PPP leader

We think the new Government will be more realistic in its perceptions of its neighbours.

SHUJAAT HUSSAIN
IJI leader

The appointment of I.K. Gujral as foreign minister has been welcomed. Many Pakistani officials and politicians have known him, and Gujral is well respected in the academic circuit. Others recall that it was under Atal Behari Vajpayee, a Jana Sangh foreign minister, that the first post-Bhutto opening took place in Indo-Pak relations. "Mr Vajpayee was very professional, very positive. We have good memories of that phase," says Agha Shahi, former foreign minister who heads the Islamabad Council of World Affairs, a reputed think-tank.

Most Pakistanis believe that the arrival of the Janata Dal might mean an end to the activist foreign policy initiated by Rajiv Gandhi. Islami Jamhoori Ittehad leader Shujaat Hussain even gave a statement to local newspapers saying that since the new Indian Government was weak and needed the support of Indian Muslims, it was in its interest to have friendly relations with Pakistan. V.P. Singh's first statement on India's nuclear policy too has been appreciated. An editorial headlined "V.P. Singh's Good Beginning" in *The Nation* said: "An acid test of his vision and sagacity will be how he extricates New Delhi from the fall-out of his predecessor's misguided adventures."

In the diplomatic circuit, it is a common joke that the domestic politics of Pakistan is India's internal affair and vice versa. So now, as Pakistan recovers from the excitement of India's ninth general elections, the overriding emotion is one of appreciation for the grace with which Rajiv has made his bow. In the words of a member of the Benazir Cabinet, it has reassured the Pakistani citizen that democracy could work, even in functioning anarchies.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Islamabad

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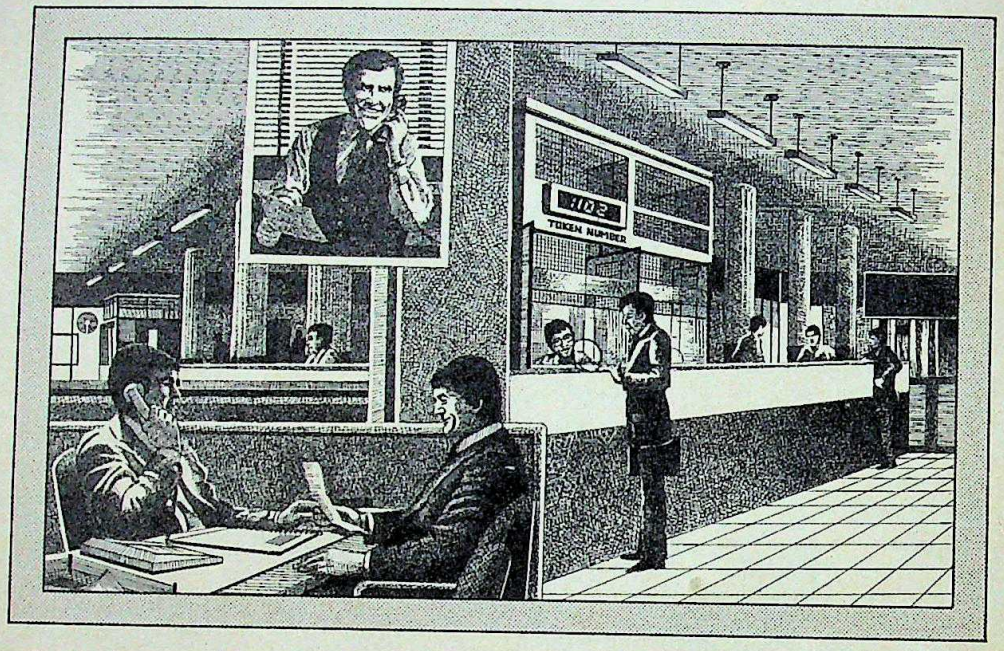

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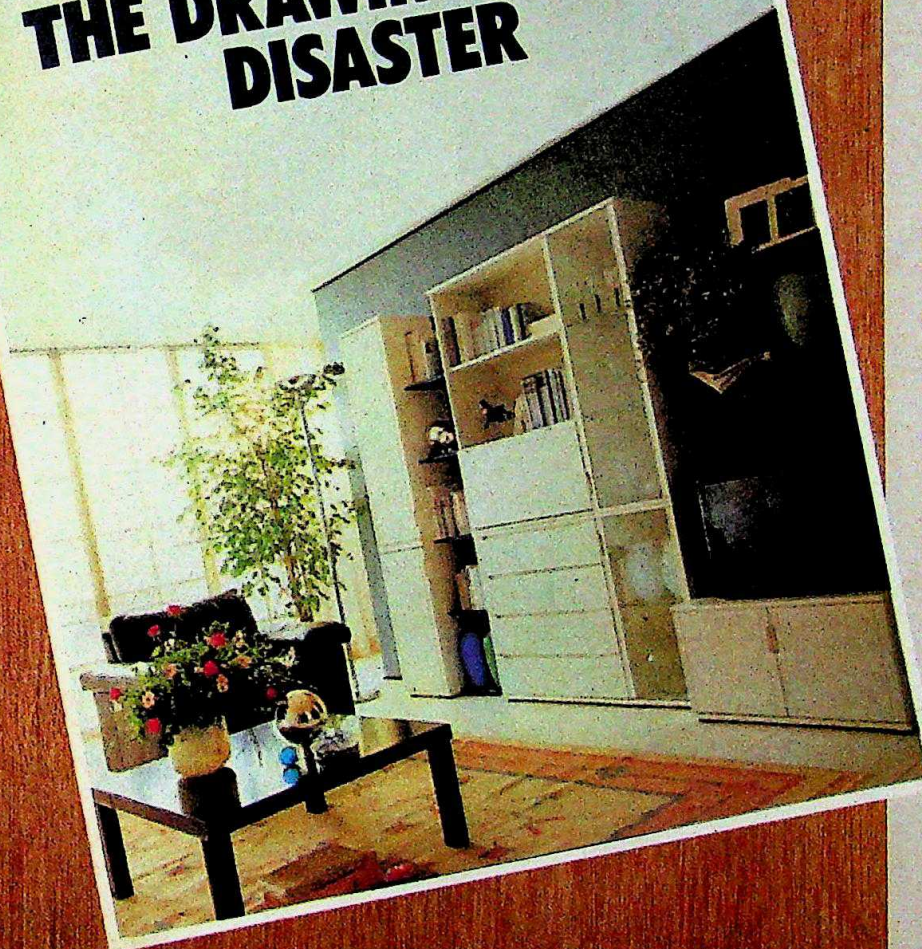

Saturday, 8th July, 7 p.m.

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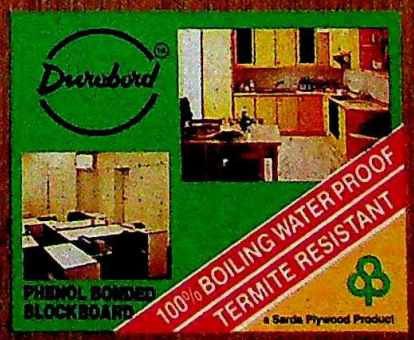

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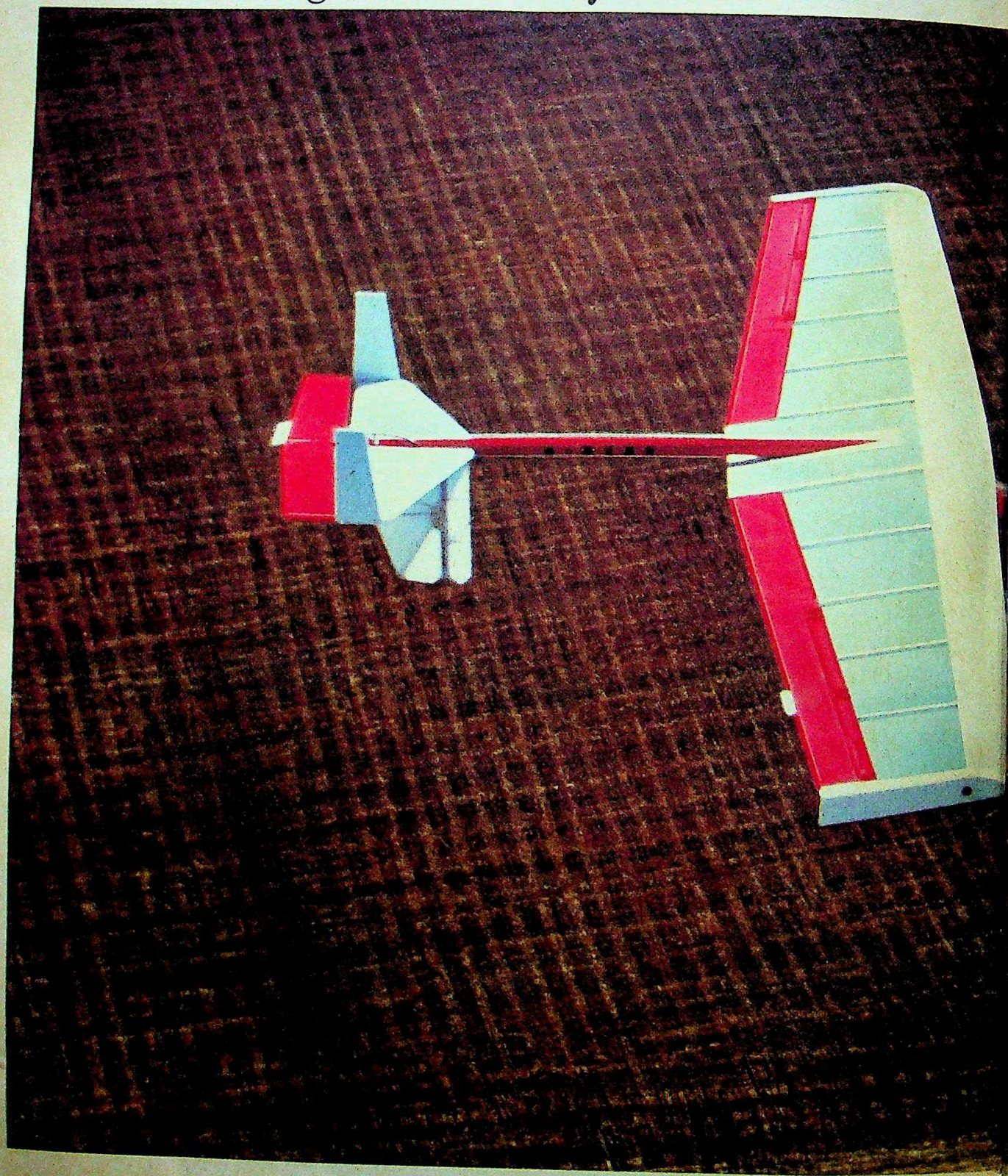

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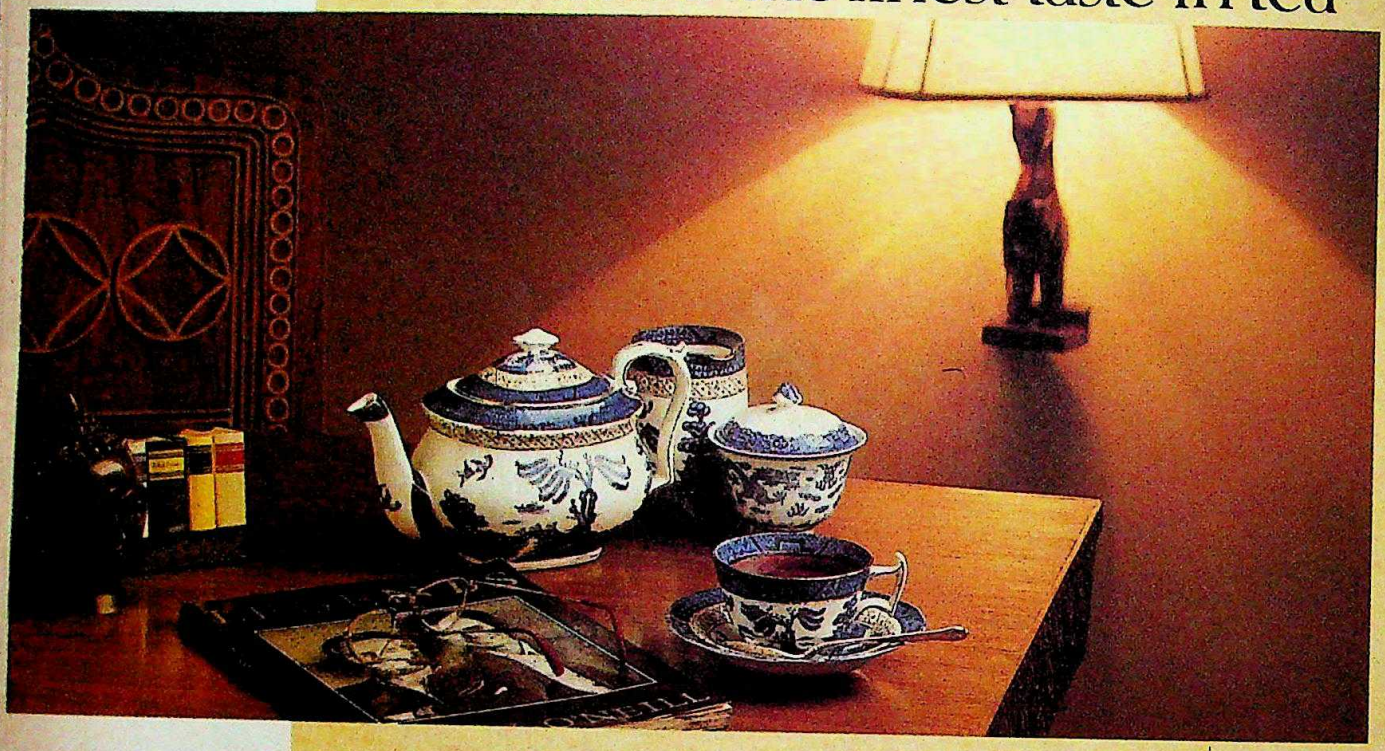
For some it is the finest taste in tea



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DOORDARSHAN

Breaking the Shackles

Ground rules for news change drastically

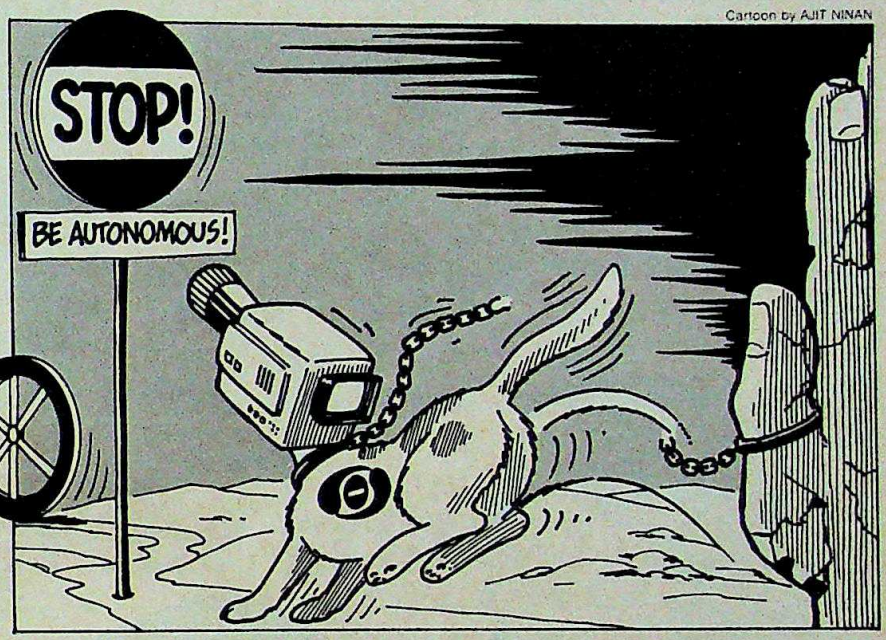
GLASNOST is back as a suddenly uncaged Doordarshan tentatively stretches its wings. The road to professionalism is still long but the new Government gave a firm thrust in that direction last fortnight. Suresh Mathur and Bhaskar Ghose, former directors general of AIR and Doordarshan, were put in charge of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Ghose was also tipped to get his former Doordarshan job in addition. The stage was being set for structural change—probably on the lines of the autonomous corporation the B.G. Verghese committee had recommended a decade ago.

Already, Doordarshan had shown a new face to its viewers. Among last fortnight's novelties: a report that the prime minister's unanimous election was "not without some hiccups", footage of Ram Jethmalani being roughed up and Chandra Shekhar haughtily proclaiming "I am not helpless", Rajmohan Gandhi denouncing rigging in Amethi, and a blow-by-blow account of booth capturing. Coming up: a programme on the criminalisation of politics.

The change began even in the run-up to the elections. But it didn't come easy. Having lashed this most powerful of news media into a propaganda dummy, the powers that were clung on like limpets. When Doordarshan taped Sanjay Singh talking to his wife at his hospital bed, a key Rajiv Gandhi aide asked a top AIR official if he didn't value his children's safety. Then, a couple of hours before the election results analysis by Prannoy Roy's team was to begin, a paranoid regime ordered that the programme be scrapped. New Delhi's phone lines crackled for an hour-and-a-half before former finance secretary Gopi Arora and Adviser (Information and Broadcasting) Suman Dubey—both close to Rajiv Gandhi—got the programme cleared in the nick of time.

The old guard didn't even give up after V.P. Singh had been sworn in as prime minister. When Doordarshan interviewed Rajmohan Gandhi, an apex bureaucrat—nicknamed 'Alsatian' in the newsroom—tried ferociously to stymie it. Senior Doordarshan officials refused to take his calls and he was reduced to threatening a relatively junior officer with "very serious trouble" if it was screened. It not only was, columnist Nalini Singh came on the next evening with devastating images of rigging. Incredulous viewers saw the stacatto stamping of whole sheaves of ballot papers and heard panchayat chiefs explain that it was the upper castes' right: "It has always been done."

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



Singh had contacted Doordarshan Director-General Shiv Sharma in early November about her plans for the documentary. He made no commitments then, but when she returned with the rough cuts on November 28, she says: "I saw the professional in him before me."

Doordarshan's bosses had in fact changed their sycophantic tune as soon as elections were announced and their 'Rajivdarshan' bulletins turned into 'vishvadarshan'. Sharma says that when the then government tabooed the word Bofors, he referred the poll broadcast scripts, with his objections, to the Election Commission. Sharma earned kudos for demanding Rajiv Gandhi's script for the Nehru memorial lecture. Five pages of it were deleted for broadcast and there were no language translations of the lecture, as demanded. And on poll-eve, Doordarshan refused to carry an item about the Indira Mahila Yojana.

Obviously, its chiefs were betting on a change of government. When the change came, they first tried to curry favour with the new regime. Viewers found themselves watching long clips of N.T. Rama Rao getting into his car on the news. Minister for Information and Broadcasting P. Upendra, who belongs to Rama Rao's Telugu Desam, angrily denounced Doordarshan for trying to spoil the new Government's image.

The rules for prime ministerial coverage were soon changed drastically. While two camera teams were *de rigueur* for Rajiv Gandhi's morning darshans, V.P. Singh is seen only occasionally on the box. Though Doordarshan had an hour-and-a-half of video footage on his Amritsar visit, the news made a dramatic impact with just a two-minute clip. "Overkill is out," as Director of News Harish Awasthi says.

How long that will last as the going gets tougher is anyone's guess. Already, the newsroom was back to seeking ministers' permission before broadcasting items concerning them. Asked if his daughter's kidnapping should be announced, Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed firmly told a newsroom man: "Please ask your minister."

Not every new minister behaved so well, though. Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal's men demanded why son Om Prakash Chautala's investiture as Haryana chief minister was not shown in the 7.30 p.m. bulletin. Obviously, then, this tenuous 'glasnost' is not enough. What is required is structural transformation with effective safeguards for professionals to be able to work without needing to look over their shoulders—or, for that matter, be patted on the back.

—DAVID DEVADAS

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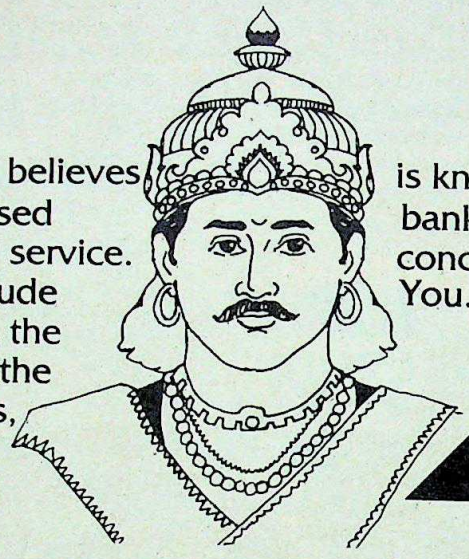

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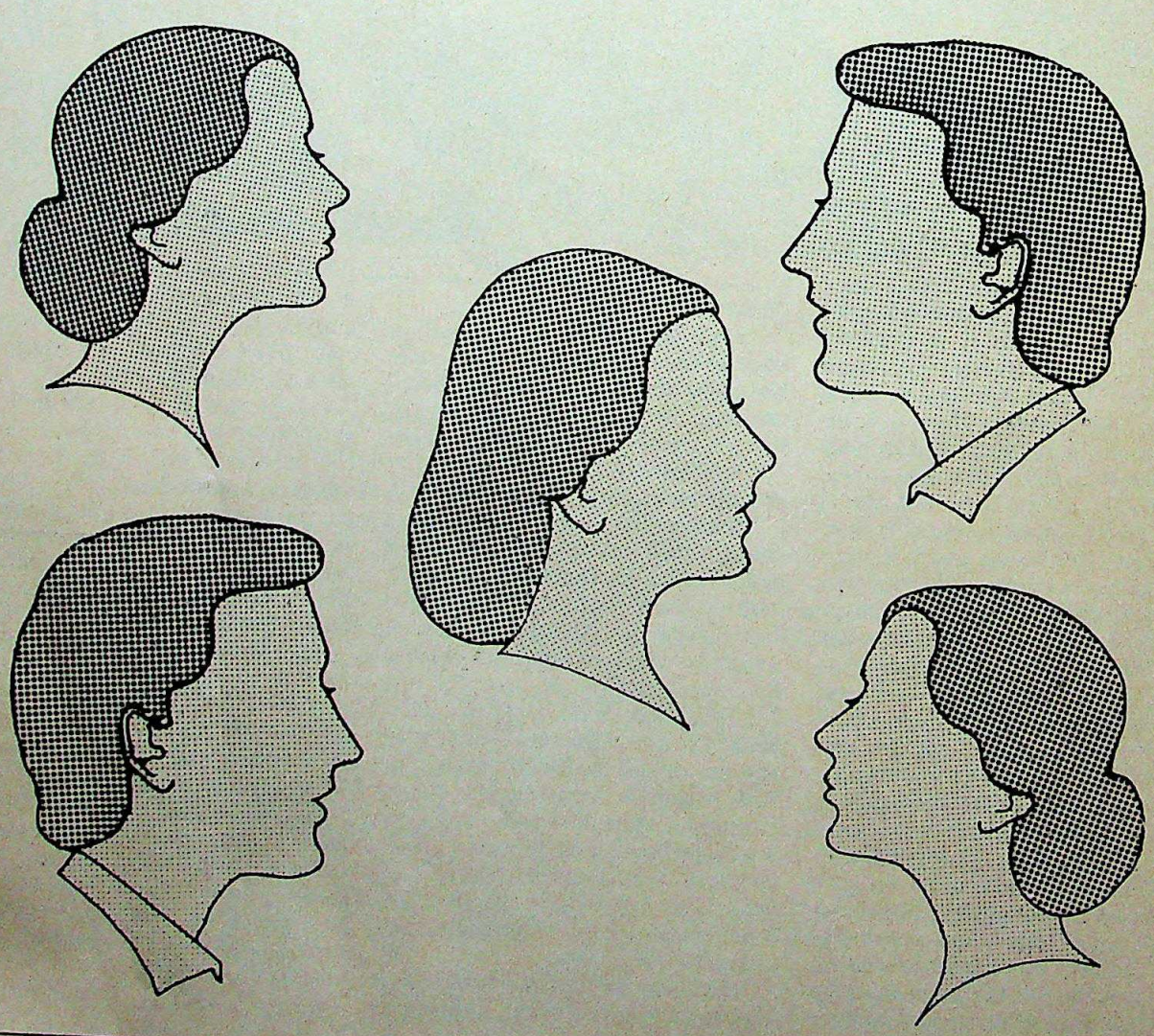

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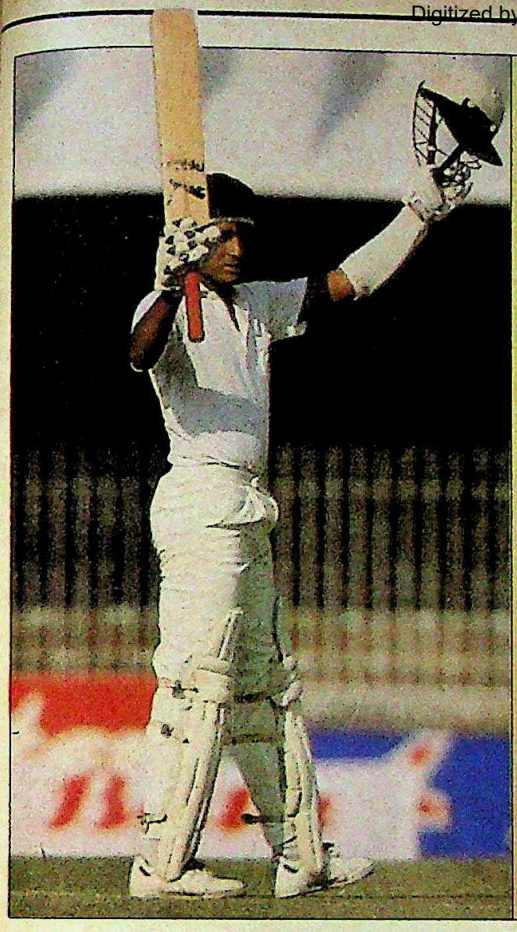
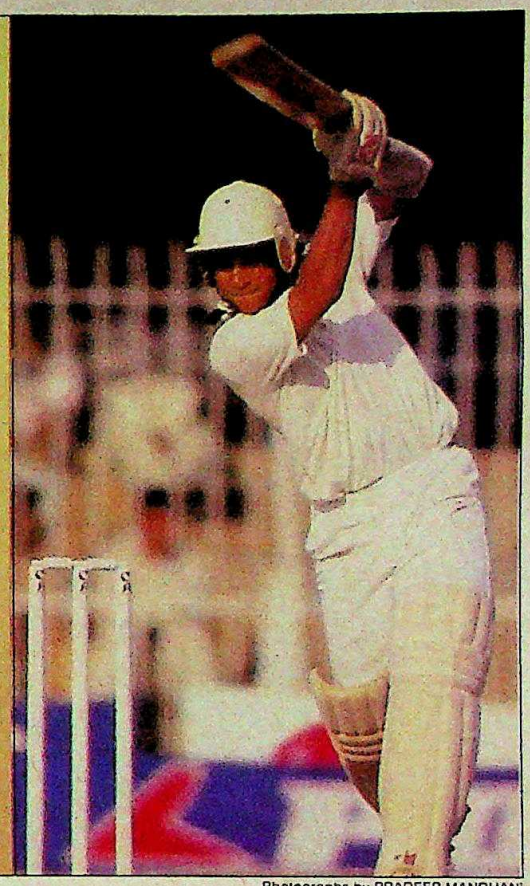


Manjrekar, 24, emerged as the new batting superstar and should occupy the coveted one-drop slot for many years.

◆

Tendulkar, just 16, displayed a temperament to match his talent. A little experience and he could be world class.



Photographs by PRADEEP MANDHANI

INDIAN CRICKET

Back on the Front Foot

A spunky team proves the critics wrong

NOT since Ajit Wadekar's men left for the West Indies in 1970 had a touring Indian team been written off so unanimously even before it departed. With an average age of just over 24, it was one of the youngest and most inexperienced Indian sides. And the prospect it faced was a full series in Pakistan—something no Indian team, not even the one blessed with an in-form Sunil Gavaskar and the spin quartet could survive. The most critics were prepared to concede to the team was a draw or two.

Opinions are changing. Now it is being called one of the spunkiest, most talented Indian sides ever, one that could grow into a formidable combination. "This tour marks the rebuilding of the team. One more year, touchwood, and we will be a world-beating team again," says Captain Krishnamachari Srikkanth. Adds Manager Chandu Borde: "The series has helped Indian cricket to make a comeback. Our performance has been more than satisfactory particularly if you look at the way the youngsters have played."

What the Indian team lacked in experience and form, it made up by sheer fighting spirit. Aided, in no small measure, by neutral umpires. The team began predictably—with fragile and hesitant batting. Then began the recovery that has continued through the series with Sanjay Manjrekar, 24, being the symbol of the team's defiance.

And even as the batsmen came into their own, Manoj Prabhakar suddenly rediscovered the art of swinging the old ball, providing Kapil the foil he needed so badly. Mohammed Azharuddin, who might have lost his place in the first Test but for the injury that kept out Raman Lamba, hit out productively at number four. Navjot Sidhu defied the pace bravely even if he tended to lose his way while running between the wickets. Ravi Shastri defended dourly. And little Sachin Tendulkar, born two years after Imran Khan made his debut for Pakistan in 1971, showed his emerging class, undaunted by the bouncers flung at him in generous measure.

Manjrekar, with a Gavaskaresque aggregate and average (565 runs, average 113), not only emerged as the sheet anchor but also sheltered hesitant beginners by repeatedly keeping the strike against Wasim Akram, Pakistan's most lethal bowler. Not since Gavaskar has an Indian batsman shown the willingness—and ability—to draw the fire to shield team-mates.

Azharuddin ironed out his technical flaws with a little help from Pakistan's Zahir Abbas. "He came to me after the Karachi Test and said I was failing because my grip was faulty," he says. Abbas suggested a new grip. Almost overnight, Azharuddin was batting as of old: aggressively and adventurously. And piling up runs for his team.

What the tour did most of all was to give a new face to Indian cricket,

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especially the batting. Possibly the absence of two old stars—Mohinder Amarnath and Dilip Vengsarkar—helped. More sure of their place, the youngsters bloomed. "This Indian side has grown tremendously on this tour. They can't be underestimated," conceded Imran Khan, who had not long ago talked in terms of a Pakistani clean sweep. "Manjrekar and Tendulkar will be in your team for long," predicted former Pakistan wicket-keeper Wasim Bari.

The youngsters had the advantage of starting afresh, without being weighed down by the baggage of old failures against Imran. "Look at the way Tendulkar is playing! Normally you wouldn't expect a boy his age to even hit the ball past the square in Test cricket. He has so much talent," said Vice-Captain Ravi Shastri.

But problems remain. And at the heart of some is Shastri himself, who at 27, is the most experienced player in the team after Kapil Dev. Throughout, his bowling has been suspect even as he has struggled with the bat to play some useful innings. Worse, he has kept rather aloof from the rest of the team, though he is not alone to blame.

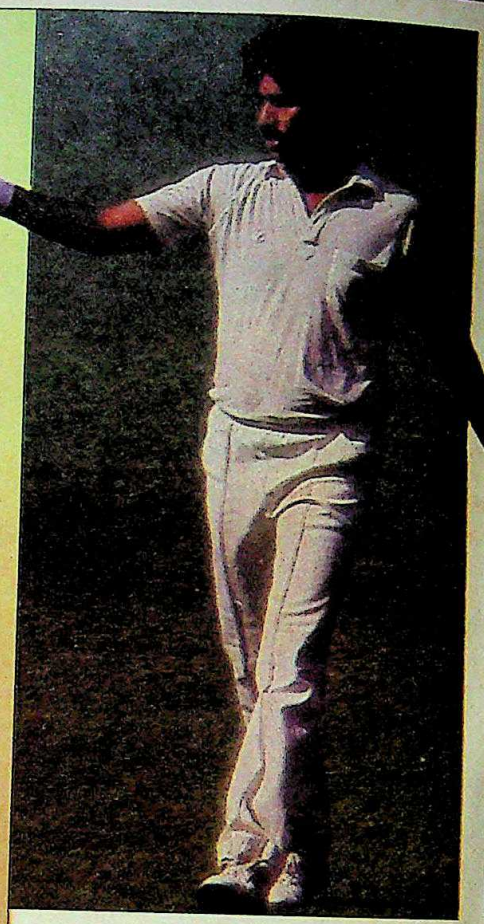
It is well known that senior players are resentful because they feel the board is grooming him for captaincy. Many question the rationale in retaining him, and that too as vice-captain, when Mohinder Amarnath has been dropped despite better performances. Shastri himself makes no effort to hide his bitterness. Says he: "People in the media, who are more interested in my off-the-field activities than in my cricketing performances, have tried to write me off. But I'm no quitter. I am going to be around for eight or 10 years."

What Shastri needs to do is to open out again to the team. "He must understand that he will probably inherit this team from Srikkanth one day. He cannot afford to remain aloof, whatever the extent of his bitterness," says one team member. Shastri ascribes his poor form to an overdose of cricket. He is looking forward to the one-day games to regain form and then a few weeks of rest before flying to New Zealand.

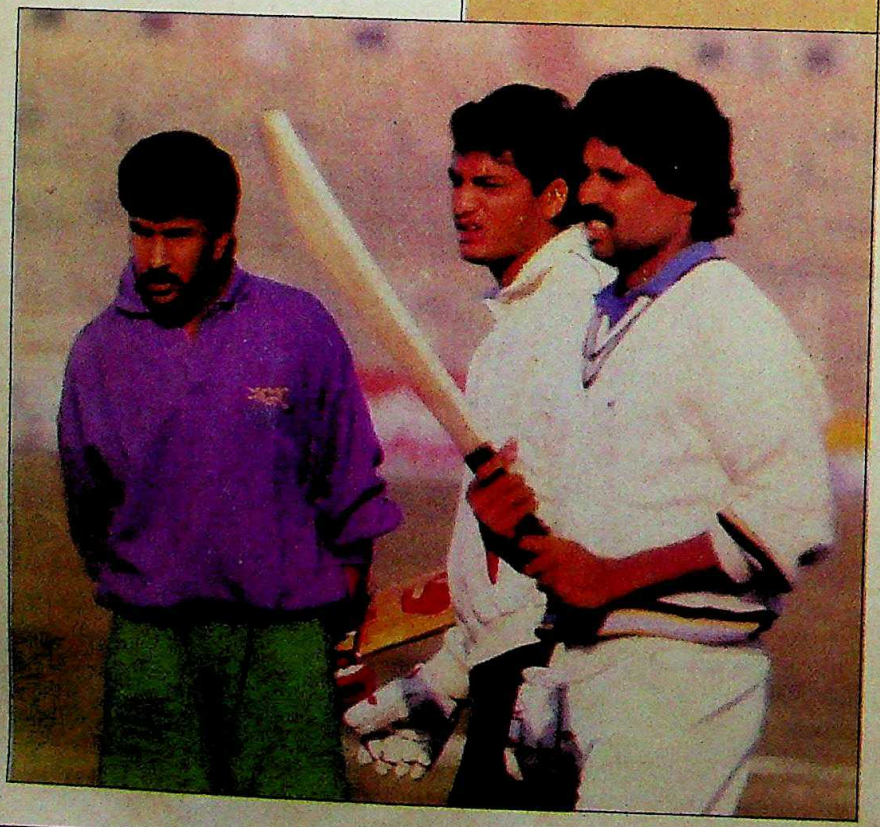
On the evidence of the Pakistan series, it seems sensible to retain Srikkanth as captain despite his poor personal performance. He has perceptibly contributed to rebuilding the team with his positive and affable manner. "Perhaps the team spirit would have been a little more robust under Kapil," says a team member. "But Kapil would also have cracked under the pressure to perform personally."

Srikkanth has shown resilience. His team-mates point out that in any case he was never consistent. He is basically the kind whose average stays under 30, but

The belated but timely flowering of Manoj Prabhakar as an attacking, penetrative seamer gave a new edge to the Indian attack which had looked ragged for years.



Kapil Dev and Azharuddin were the two seasoned campaigners who came good after an indifferent season. They proved to be excellent team-men, nurturing youngsters and backing Srikkanth.



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We'd like to thank everyone who participated in the *INDIA TODAY* 'Your Verdict, Election Special Contest'. There were 61694 entries received. Of these 52716 came in before the closing date and were evaluated for participation in the contest. It was this enthusiastic response that made the contest so special and worthwhile.

All winners including 1010 consolation prize winners will be notified by post shortly.

INDIA TODAY
Keeps you ahead

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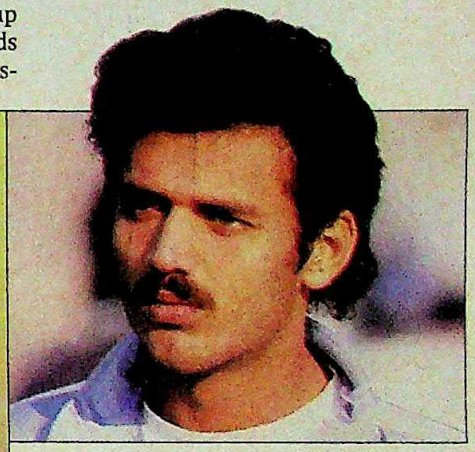
whom the bowlers always fear for his ability to turn the game around once he gets going. It is unrealistic to expect him to suddenly become Mr Consistent just because he is the captain. If anything, captaincy is inhibiting him from playing his natural game.

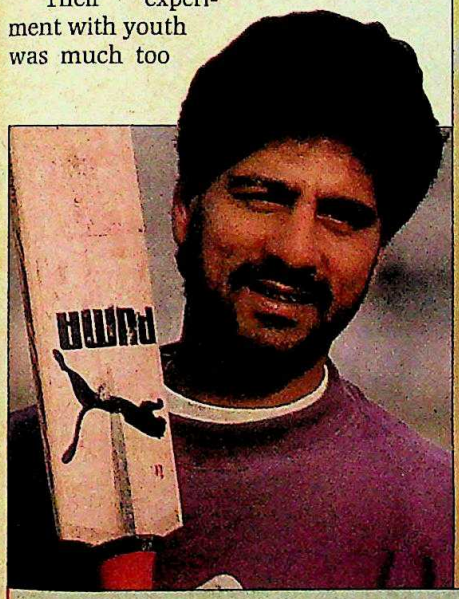
Now, as the selectors and the board look ahead, some problems remain. The team that will play two series—against New Zealand and England—and a one-day tournament in Sharjah in the next six months still does not look complete. The batting has looked good. So good that it will be difficult to fit Dilip Vengsarkar, who should be selected if available, back into the order. However, the bowling, despite the arrival of Manoj Prabhakar, is still too thin. Srikkanth repeatedly stressed the need for more bowlers with wicket-taking ability. But where will the selectors get them from?

Their experiment with youth was much too adventurous as far as bowling was concerned. It was unfair to pitchfork Salil Ankola and Vivek Razdan, with almost no first-class experience, into a needle series of this variety. Razdan came good on a seamer's wicket in Sialkot. But to bowl effectively on run-of-the-mill wickets, he needs to mature a great deal. A more sensible approach would have been to bring in an experienced third seamer and just one youngster to pick up the ropes. Having made up their minds on the basis of—by their own admission—non-cricketing considerations, selectors persisted in the blunder. They ignored Srikkanth's requests for reinforcement with an experienced third seamer who could have made all the difference at Sialkot.

There is some cheer in the news that leg spinner Narendra Hirwani has recovered from his knee operation and



Under the ever watchful eye of Kapil Dev and Srikkanth, Vivek Razdan, 19, bowled a lethal line beating Pakistani batsmen with sheer pace.



"The tour marked the rebuilding of the Indian team. At this rate, within a year we should have a world-beating side again."

KRISHNAMACHARI SRIKKANTH

"We came to fight it out"

FOR any Indian captain, a tour of Pakistan is a nightmare. Not surprisingly, Krishnamachari Srikkanth, 30, was given no chance when his inexperienced side left for Pakistan last month.

But despite his own failure with the bat, he is one captain who might come back with his head held high. Ever the firm believer in fate, Srikkanth takes his own form philosophically, and reflects on his team's performance and Indian cricket in an interview with Features Editor SHEKHAR GUPTA. *Excerpts:*

Q. *How do you assess your team's overall performance?*

A. We came here with an open mind and to fight it out. People said our team would be thrashed, destroyed. Nobody expected us to do as well as we have done.

Q. *Does this tour mark the rebuilding of the Indian cricket team?*

A. Definitely. We started as one of most inexperienced Indian teams to go abroad. Today everybody is coming good except, of course, myself. Look at the way Manjrekar and Azhar are playing. Tendulkar is also growing with every match. At this rate, within a year we'll again have a world-beating side. Touchwood.

Q. *Has the team performed better because new players don't have a complex about playing Pakistan?*

A. It's not a question of complexes. Ultimately, cricket is a confidence game. Take Azhar. All he needed to be told was go out and play your shots and nobody will drop you. We have to persist with players. Give Tendulkar a full season and see. See how the Pakistani persistence with Salim Malik has paid off.

Q. *What about your own failure against Akram?*

A. Maybe I am curbing myself a bit. There is a feeling that let me see him off. But no excuses.

Q. *What is lacking in your team?*

A. The wicket-taking capacity. If we had one or two more wicket-taking bowlers, we could have put Pakistan on the defensive.

Q. *Has the board been unfair in turning down your request for an extra seamer?*

A. An additional seamer would have made the Pakistanis think twice before preparing a green top for Sialkot. Don't forget Imran Khan got spinner Iqbal Qasim and batsman Younis Ahmed midway through the 1987 series and they won it for Pakistan. The captain should have that kind of power.

Q. *Are you complaining?*

A. No. My philosophy is do your best and leave the rest to God.

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is likely to be available for selection. He may not be as lethal as he was on a minefield of a wicket in Madras against the West Indies in 1988. Yet India needs an attacking bowler like him. Besides, the bowlers' shelf in the selectors' cupboard is woefully empty and they have to make do with what they have. Borde points out that Venkatapathy Raju of South Zone is a promising left-arm spinner, but there aren't many more.

Why has Indian cricket stopped producing even good spinners? Mohinder Amarnath blames it on the state of Indian wickets. "The wickets are loaded with runs and you see how many teams score five to six hundred plus in the domestic season. The bowlers have no incentive," he says and points out that it is this problem that the board should be addressing itself to. Kapil is still around, but the way he is being bowled into the ground, he may not last more than three or four more years at best. And unless the board grooms new bowlers now, Indian cricket will be in trouble. It may be fashionable to call cricket a batsman's game, but batsmen are also only as good as the bowlers make them appear to be.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Pakistan

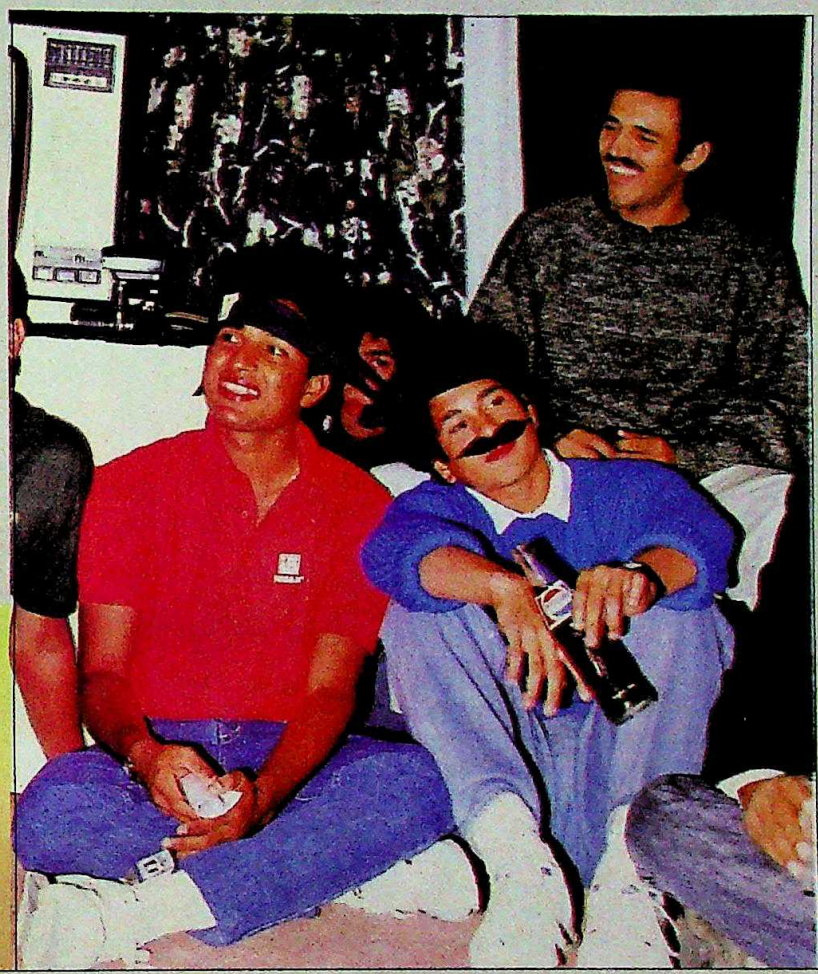
High Jinks

FOR touring cricket teams, the most debilitating psychological factor in Pakistan is neither the reputations of Imran Khan and Abdul Qadir, nor the notorious local umpiring. It is plain boredom.

The solutions have been varied and inventive. The English held wild underwear parties. The Australians put fire-crackers under toilet seats and fired rockets from beer bottles. The West Indians drank themselves silly.

Last fortnight the Indian team and the equally bored Indian press corps came up with another—Sunday Club, a conclave of players and scribes to be held every Sunday or on rest day. The rules: ties to be worn on the head, lipstick smeared liberally, false moustaches and beards. Those not dressed "properly" would be fined by the one-man board—Dicky Rutnagar.

Successive Indian teams have complained about boredom in Pakistan. This one tried to use some imagination to fight it.



Manjrekar, Tendulkar and Razdan

There were no defaults. Srikkanth came in a white beard, Kapil in a salt-and-pepper one and Kiran More in black wig and lipstick. He walked coquettishly across the room to the sound of catcalls. Others made a beeline to kiss the lipstick-smeared Sanjay Manjrekar. And fittingly, Sachin Tendulkar, too young to need a shave, wore an imposing moustache.

The spirit of the team was back. One participant recited a hilarious conversation between Javed Miandad and Madan Lal. Kiran More did a demonstration of Srikkanth walking into the wrong dressing-room. Another recounted an unprintable exchange between Imran and Akram Raza who let a flick go through his legs. Kapil talked of those whose "English is worse than even mine".

The finale was fitting: pure calypso. Everyone sang Calcutta-based cricket writer Mudar Patherya's lyrics to the tune of Lord Relator's famous Caribbean tribute to Sunil Gavaskar and his team-mates in the 1971 series:

Manindar Singh and Razdan
Sidhu in a turban
Kapil Dev and Ravi Shastri
They helped to fight the series
Against these Pakistanis
India was in all kinds of trouble
Until Waqar Yunus pulled a muscle
Tendulkar got eight run out
We was in trouble without a doubt

And then the inevitable chorus:

But it was Manjrekar
The real master
Just like a wall
They couldn't out Manjrekar at all
Not at all
You know the Pakistanis couldn't out Manjrekar at all.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Lahore

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SONDEEP SHANKAR/The Times of India

(Clockwise from left) YSL show; scene from *Indiade*; from *Mahabharata*; French mela; painting from art exhibition

FESTIVAL OF FRANCE

A Palatable Pastiche

One year of hi-tech and culture nears to a close

WILL we get to see the Can Can?" asked the journalist. There was an embarrassed silence. This was the kick-off press conference for the Festival of France in India, which began in February this year. The French had been trying hard to shed the clinging image of Bardot, cheese, wine, little men with berets and Maurice Chevalier voices and, of course, Can Can—courtesy Hollywood.

Diplomacy saved the hour. "Yes, why not. We'll try to get something. Perhaps a film," said a festival official, with little enthusiasm. Eventually, the high kicks did come to India: setting off whoopees of delight during the French *melas* in Delhi and Bombay last month.

But the Festival of France in India, which ends early February, did not make the impact it could have. To begin with, coming in the wake of the gargantuan Soviet festival which impressed with its sheer exuberance, the French festival was too amorphous, too dispersed.

In their effort to slough off the cheese-and-wine image, the French initially concentrated on technology, putting culture on the back burner. The inaugural splash on Marine Drive which siphoned off well over half their total budget, was a blitzkrieg of French achievements on giant video screens placed on either side of a strange spaceship from which robotic dancers emerged.

Then somewhere along the year, the accent of the French festival shifted to culture. The Janus-headed approach: half high tech, half culture, took some of the thrust out of the festival. The first half had seminars on subjects like leather, emergency medical care, railways, water and gas technology, mining, pharmaceuticals. Then came the switch to culture. The last big show of which is a concert next month by 160 singers and musicians of the Orchestra of Paris in the ruins of Sher Shah Darwaza—which came dazzlingly alive during the Yves Saint Laurent Fashion show in November. (Nothing went amiss down the catwalk, but a few egos were wounded when none of the entries sent by Indian fashion designers qualified for a prize.) And the festival will bow out with a series of seminars and events revolving round the writer-philosopher Romain Rolland, friend of Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi.

Controversy has been absent from the festival except for faint whiffs from Peter Brook's marathon *Mahabharata*—whittled down from a theatrical masterpiece of nine hours to a five-and-a-half hour film. Though the film is spellbinding, it is only a pale reflection of the original. It is scandalous that the play which was hailed worldwide as the theatrical event of the decade ultimately could not be staged in the country of its origin.

One of the reasons was money: the travel costs of 40 people and their fees proved too much. The other was timing: Brook could have brought it only before November last year before his team dispersed. But there are other reasons too. The festival was to begin only a few months later, and some in the French hierarchy were initially not keen on staging the play here. As for the Indians, not all agreed with Brook's rather eccentric casting of about 20 nationalities. Moreover, the aging, wily and thin Krishna didn't quite fit the prevailing cuddly Casanova image of this god which some of the officials have.

The film, however, went down well with the Delhi audience—barring a few titterings over the special effects used to illustrate the immaculate conceptions of the Pandavas: the gods coming down like burning saucers should have, instead, landed on the sets of Star Trek. Some things are better left to the imagination, as they were in the play where the genius lay

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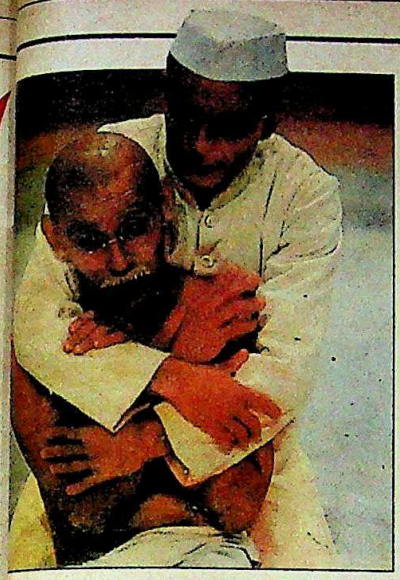

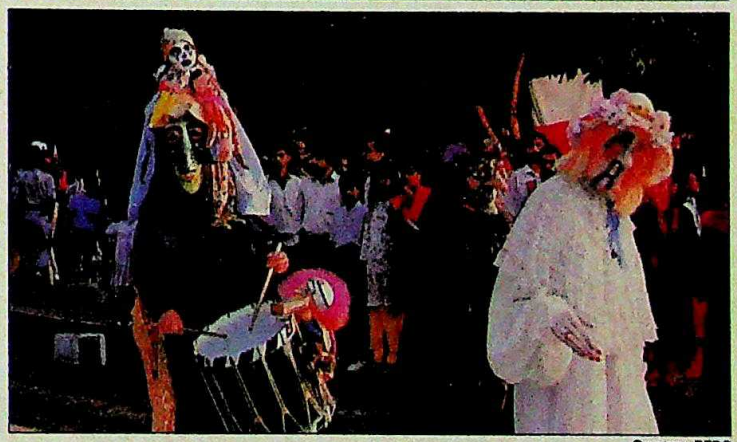

Courtsey: DTDC

the simplicity, not in its gimmickry. Screenplay writer Jean Claude Carriere has brilliantly pared the epic down to its essence. Shorn of its trimmings and more localised attributes, the film is universal and Shakespearean in its intensity. Indian actress Mallika Sarabhai looks stunning as Draupadi, and is better in the film than she was in the play. Kunti, played by a black American actress gives a powerful performance, as does Karan—his eyes seem lit by an incandescent 1,000 watt bulb.

Another play—a powerful one about the partition of India—which was initially included in the festival, is *Indiade*. Directed by one of France's best-known directors, Ariane Mnouchkine, it will not be brought here. Apparently, Indian bureaucrats thought the Gandhi of the play was much of a comic goof, the long-lashed Nehru too neurotic and the subject itself a bit too close to the truths of the day.

A touch of genius in this play is a bear which often follows Gandhi and is as innocent as, well, Winnie the Pooh, until it tastes blood, after which it becomes uncontrollably violent—in other words the beast in man.

There has been enough to make it a festival to remember. Earlier, there was the important exhibition of modern art, the irreplaceable maestro of mime, Marcel Marceau (who says he has been influenced by Bharatnatyam and Kathakali: "I am familiar with your cosmic history"), the outstanding show by the Philippe Genty Company which used puppets, men and the most imaginative props and black humour. The French, if anything, are delightfully idiosyncratic.

STILL to come are the textile exhibition, which amongst a lot else includes painter Raoul Duffy's original textile designs; an exhibition of their eight Grand Urban projects (which includes the jazzed up Louvre with its new pyramid, the new Bastille Opera, the new Arc); and exhibitions on mud architecture and social habitats.

The *grande geste*, the one-off flamboyant gesture is a French speciality. But the French have also confected those small gestures which go on silently creating little ripples, even after the show is over. When the budget for the small things ran out, the French Embassy didn't throw in the towel, but the imagination. One such was the locally generated idea of putting astrophysicists, poets and film makers together to address the skies from Jantar Mantar. This was just the flag-off to a week-long sojourn in Pipari village in the Chambal valley, the site of tremendous degradation of the soil, an ideal place to discuss conservation. The result of this unusual trip which included Jean Audoze, President Mitterrand's scientific adviser, and Dr Jayant Narlikar will be several scientific films co-produced by the two countries.

Other little ripples include the theatre workshops to be conducted by Brook and Carriere, French director, Lavaudant's production of Phaedra with the Bharat Bhavan Repertory, and an exhibition of contemporary French art next year.

But, after the festival caravan has rolled on, what will be left behind? More enduring perhaps will be the proposed studies of Indo-French history, which after the Battle of Plassey were relegated to the background. In addition to the shared history, there is the entire area of the French Company school of painting which will now be studied.

And this festival, which began with a bang this year, will be ending with a whiff: literally. L'Oreal has been allowed to sell 15,000 bottles of perfume, without taxes, to coincide with the exhibition of perfume.

—MADHU JAIN

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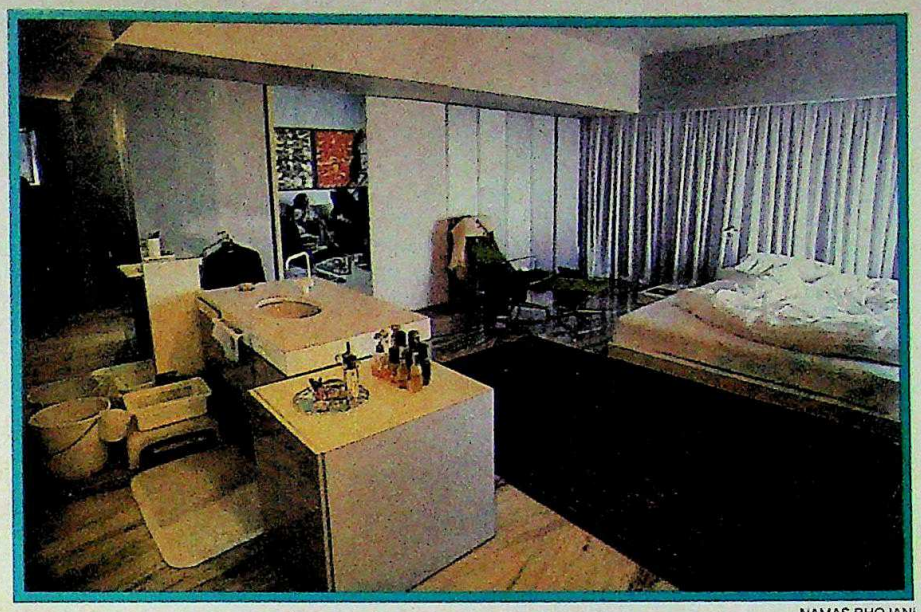

NAMAS BHOJANI

DESIGN

Closet Fantasies

The bathroom attains showpiece stature

COGNAC-TINTED paintings line the wall. Jewels spilling out of antique wooden chests mirror their warm Rembrandt hues. More carved chests sit heavily on the thick, camel-coloured carpet. Artificial flowers sprout in abundance from exotic vases. A rich man's living-room? A backdrop for a cognac commercial or a brand of coffee targeted at the super rich? Neither.

It's a bathroom in Delhi. But just about, as a visitor, who had gone to "powder her nose", discovered to her embarrassment. She could not find the water closet: it was inside one of the elegant cupboards. Like the Louis XIV commode, it had to be brought out, used and then returned to its elegant home. The only difference that centuries have made: silent plumbing is now increasingly doing what perfume took care of earlier.

This gallery-bathroom might be an eccentric oddity. But fantasy, it seems, is going back to the closet—the water closet. A revolution—revo-loo-tion, if you will—is taking place. The lowly bathroom, like the kitchen before it, has been brought in from out of the cold and upgraded. The Indian bathroom was confined to dusty corners—and left behind in the roller-coaster race on which the consumer boom was taking the urban middle class.

While this rapidly growing middle class is in pursuit of more cheerful bathrooms, the affluent are looking for newer ways to be different. Which is why designers have begun to raid the bathroom.

And some of the inspiration seems to have come from the cinema—both Hollywood and Bombay. Consider the huge, circular bathroom of a Bombay industrialist. While half of it almost seems to hang out over the Arabian sea below—the sea view like an animated seascape—the other half has caves, fountains and waterfalls.

Bathrooms are actually the best place for closet delusions of grandeur. A Delhi businessman has a bathroom in which marble pillars form arches because it makes him feel he is "entering a Grecian meeting place and not just a bathroom". Yet another has a waterfall cascading down a wall. Plants have had a place in the bathroom for long, but today people seem to want a whole garden. Some bathrooms have wide glass doors which give the illusion of bringing all that green into the room.

The more avant-garde have gone further and brought the bathroom into their boudoir. An industrialist's wife has knocked down the walls of her bedroom in her Bombay flat, bringing the bathroom almost up to the edge of the bed. Explains she: "I wanted an air-conditioned bathroom. Also I can carry on a conversation with my husband while I bathe."

If those at the top end of the money ladder have put their money where their fantasy is, not everybody can or wants to be a Cecil B. De Mille of the bathroom. But they do want to be bathroom-proud. The change of attitude towards the bathroom has come during the last five or six years. Previously, nobody paid much attention to the bathroom: mentally, it was still an outhouse. "The concept of bathrooms has changed," explains Sondeep Somani of Hindustan Sanitaryware, one of the largest producers of bathroom fittings. He adds: "The customer has become more demanding. He wants more aesthetic, spacious and

New range of sanitaryware

CLARION D 341

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coordinated bathrooms."

An indicator of the coming of age of the Indian bathroom is the birth of the bathroom boutique. Recently, Bed 'n Bath Shop, a boutique for designer baths, opened in Delhi's rural chic Hauz Khas village. The bathroom on display is coordinated—the crucial word in designer parlance today—from the shower curtain down to the soap dish and toothbrush glass.

And suddenly, showrooms displaying complete bathrooms have materialised in cities like Delhi, Bombay and Bangalore. In fact, on the outskirts of Delhi, a mammoth, three-storied building which advertises itself as a "one stop" shopping place for bathrooms was opened about eight months ago. From saunas (imported from Finland: Rs 1,80,000) to jacuzzis (Rs 1,60,000 to 1,80,000); matching cisterns, sinks and bidets; with ducks and swans swimming in pale green lakes to birds in flight; from imitation Lalique mirrors and *objets d'art* to the humble soap dishes and towels, this shop has it all.

The new showrooms have begun to sell bathrooms in their entirety—from sanitaryware, shower fittings and glass cupboards to tiles and accessories. A few, like the Design Shop outside Delhi, even help customers plan their bathrooms from as early as the blueprint stage. The price ranges from Rs 80,000 to over Rs 3 lakh if a jacuzzi is thrown in. The gold taps made popular by the sheikhs and Hollywood come for extra.

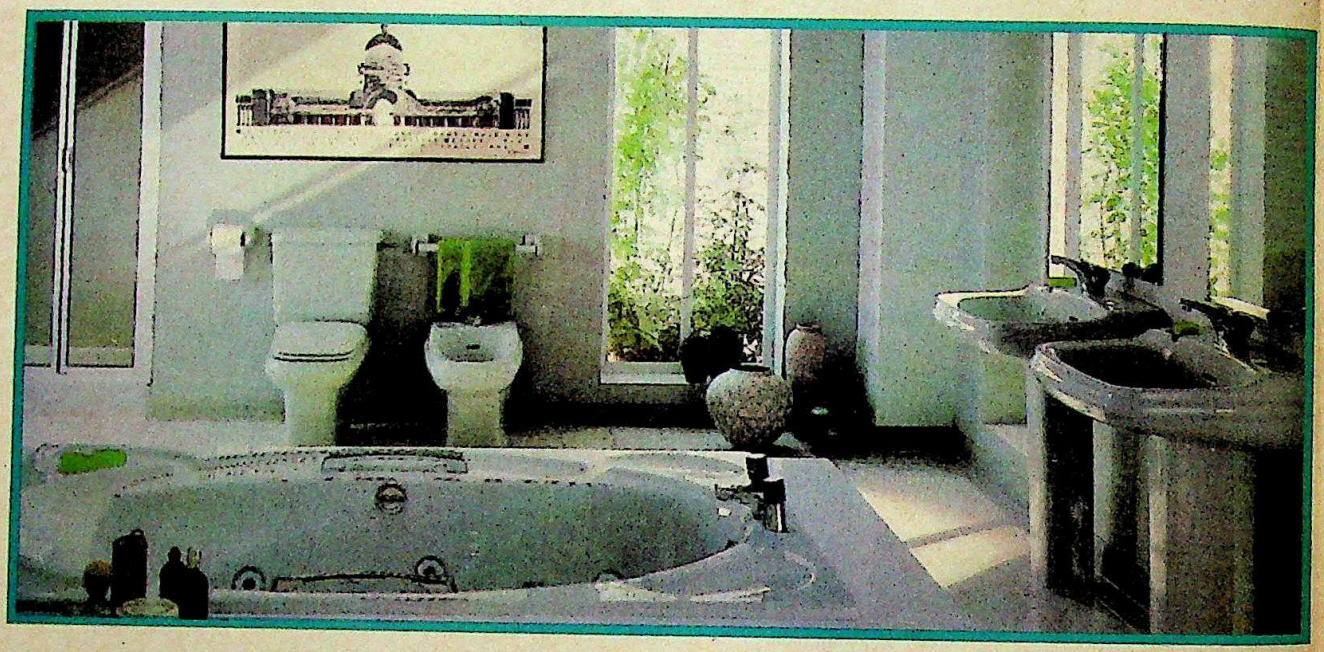
Why has the bathroom moved centrestage? "People have more disposable incomes and the spending concept has changed with the spiralling prices of property," explains Mr Hari Shankar Jalan, chairman of Indodan Group of Industries, who is in the food business but is poised to enter the upmarket sanitaryware business. He adds: "If someone were paying Rs 300 per sq ft for a flat a few years ago, he is now spending at least Rs 3,000 for the same square foot. Naturally, he will proportionately spend more on his bathrooms."

JALAN believes that the bathroom boom really began with the advent of Rajiv Gandhi, who tried to close the Grand Canyonesque technological gap between the East and the West by ushering in the import of technology in such fields. Jalan is now collaborating with an Italian firm to set up a Rs 50-crore project outside Delhi to produce synthetic granite tiles and custom-made three piece bathroom sets for the ultra-chic. These include ceramic water closets with sophisticated water systems, wash basins and bidets with designs from French palaces, and lyrical landscapes.

Designers have begun to raid the bathroom. And some of the inspiration seems to have to come from the cinema—both Hollywood and Bombay.

There has also been an explosion of colours, some decidedly edible. In fact, the colour list for water closets sounds like a cross between an advertisement for ice creams and travel agencies: champagne, burgundy, oasis green, mint green, Bahama brown and even Bali brown.

The ode to the new-look bathroom is also being underwritten by tiles because they allow people to unleash their imagination. They can transform their bathroom walls into a gentle-hued English countryside with ferns and pale blue clouds. Or even create the most baroque of patterns with their palette of beautifully finished tiles.



A designer bathroom: luxury trip

The much-maligned and still mysterious bidet, though not quite the rage yet, has begun to catch on. Many companies are pushing this new concept—the French answer to the indigenous *lota*. Hindustan Sanitaryware has even brought out a booklet illustrating the use of this curious invention which has been the butt of many a movie joke. The booklet was necessary, according to Somani, because after they advertised it in women's magazines, women inquiring about bidets from their retail outlets could only get an embarrassed look from the salesman. Explains he: "Now we ask our salesmen to just hand over the booklet when anybody asks them about bidets." The dilemma of to bidet or not to bidet may not be resolved for quite some time. But the Indian bathroom will never be the same again.

—MADHU JAIN

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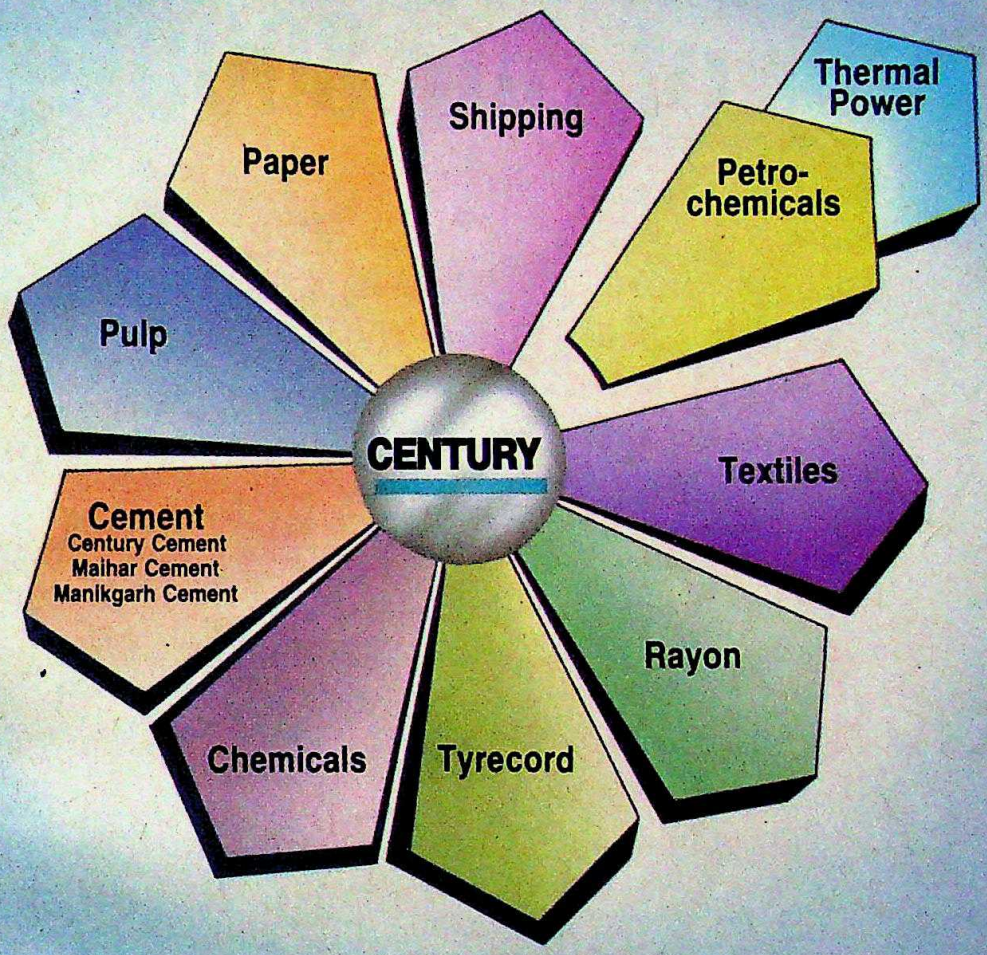

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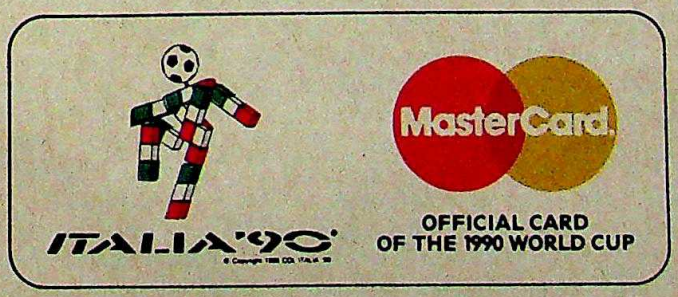

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Photographs by FATEH SINGH RATHORE

A Trail of Discovery

Journey into the tiger's mysterious family life

TIGERS
THE SECRET LIFE
by VALMIK THAPAR
Photographs by FATEH SINGH RATHORE
Elm Tree Books, London
Price: Rs 334; Pages: 160

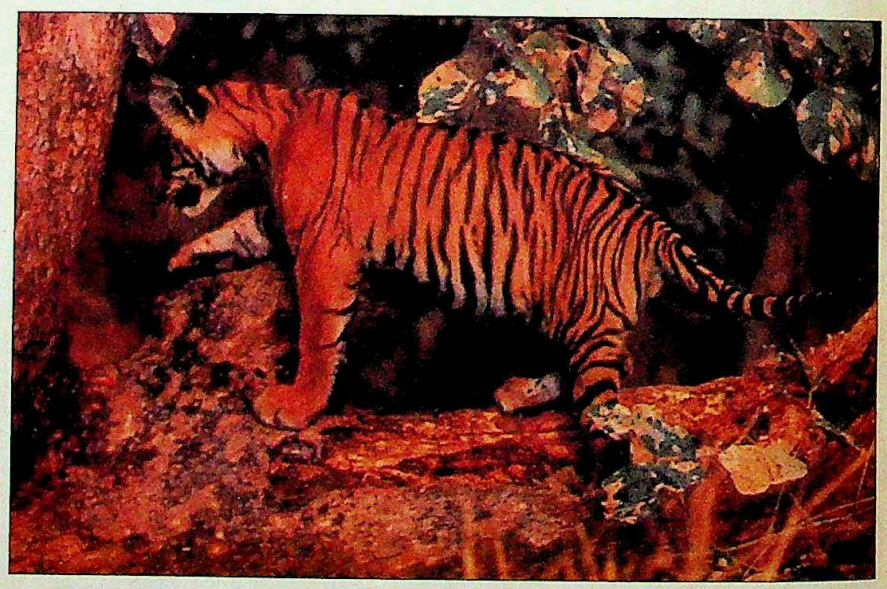
FOR 20 days, Valmik Thapar roamed the forests of Ranthambhore in Rajasthan hoping to catch a glimpse of the tiger. He did see its pug marks and fresh droppings. But it was only the night before he was leaving that he finally spotted the beast striding majestically down a forest track.

For Thapar, that sighting in 1976 was to begin what he describes as "an endless pursuit to observe and discover more about one of the world's most elusive, evasive and nocturnal predators". It is a quest that has produced two books in the past.

The title of his latest book, *Tigers: The Secret Life*, is appropriate. Though this great cat has fascinated humans for centuries, there is a surprising lack of accurate information about how it behaves in the wild. Myths and conjectures abound. One example: adult male tigers are said to be hostile to their own cubs and even kill them.

Along with Fateh Singh Rathore, his 'tiger guru' and a former field director of Ranthambhore National Park, Thapar succeeds in penetrating the aura of mystery that shrouds the tiger. Using their familiarity with the terrain, they home in on three tigresses, whom they name Noon, Nalghati and Laxmi.

The years of waiting pay off. In 1986, after four years of keeping track of Laxmi, they discover excitedly that she has littered three cubs. They follow her stealthily, Thapar with notebook and Rathore with camera, recording how she coddles her cubs, brings them food and finally teaches them how to kill and become independent.



Rare shots of a family of tigers in a pool; and a cub on a tree.

It is a documentation that is both moving and enlightening. And their experience is brought vividly to life by some outstanding photographs of tigresses and their cubs in the wild. If Thapar's narration is almost childlike in its wondrous tone, he is hardly to blame. For, they are privy to some of the rarest scenes in the wild. And words do fail him.

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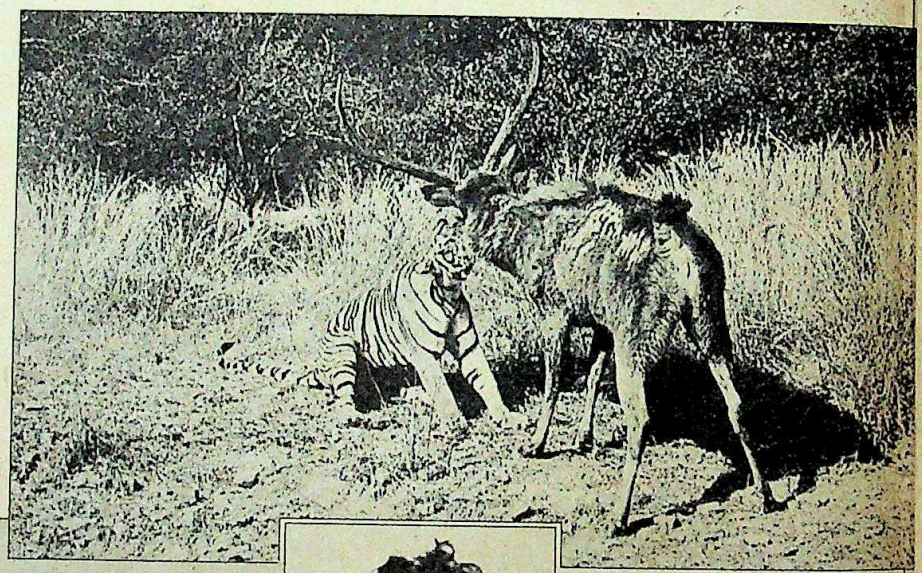
When he witnesses Laxmi coddling her cubs for the first time, all he can say is: "I have never seen such a display of love and warmth, such evidence of a strong bond between a tigress and her cubs."

Some of Rathore's pictures too lack in technical excellence. For instance, a rare shot of 20-day-old cubs in a thick grove, taken at great risk to his life, is barely discernible. However, these are compensated by some inspired photographs of Laxmi and her three cubs resting on a ledge, Noon strolling with her cubs through a forest glade, and a shot of tigers battling, to name just a few.

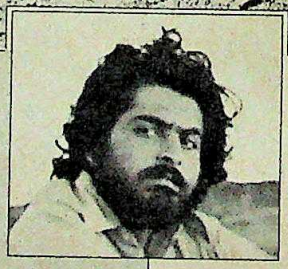
THE book transports one into a world where nature is at her pristine best. Where the jarring cacophony of modern living hasn't intruded and the tiger is still king of the jungle. Describing the atmosphere after a brief storm, Thapar writes: "The quality of light was special, the fragrance in the air magical. The leaves dripped with water and the forest glistened. Torrents of water cascaded down the hillside and waterfalls sprouted from steep cliff faces." In this ethereal world they spot Noon ambling off towards a ravine and then disappearing into the profusion of green.



Equally stirring is their encounter with Nalghati and her two cubs with Kublai, her mate. What begins as panic when they believe that Kublai had strayed into Nalghati's territory soon gives way to relief and wonder. For, Kublai shows no signs of the expected aggression towards his cubs. Instead, he deals with them paternally, partaking regally in their meals, nuzzling them occasionally and even frolicking with them in a tiny water hole. It is, as Thapar rightly puts it, discovering one of the most closely guarded secrets of a tiger's life.

There are vital observations too of how the young gain independence. Initially, Laxmi's three cubs begin to stray from their hide-out exploring new sights and even attacking the occasional bird. Soon, they assist their mother in hunting by surrounding a prey and pushing it towards her path. Already a hierarchy is established with the male cub asserting himself by feeding first on the kill. And as they grow older, the two female cubs begin to snarl at each other, at first playfully, and then keep apart. Meanwhile, the male cub makes his first kill.

Noon's cub; tiger and sambar locked together; Thapar and (bottom) Rathore



If Thapar's narration is almost childlike in its wondrous tone, he is hardly to blame. For he is privy to some of the rarest scenes in the wild.

The book is appropriately sprinkled with notes and pictures about the habitat of the tigers. And it does give an occasional glimpse of the threats they face: the pressure of population, the lack of buffer zones and the intrusion of tourists. But its prime value is its revealing journey into the so far mysterious family life of the tiger.

It would, however, be fruitful for both of them and ecologists to pursue these observations. For instance, details of the way tigresses bring up their young and of how male tigers interact with their cubs need to be substantiated by more recordings of such behaviour, preferably in another national park. These findings can then take their rightful place in the growing body of scientific knowledge about how Indian tigers breed and live in the wild.

The Secret Life leaves one with mixed feelings. There is a warm glow in one's heart for the tigers. There is admiration tinged with envy for Thapar and Rathore for their experiences. And there is also a sense of remorse that humankind devoted so many years exterminating such a magnificent animal without truly understanding how tender and gentle tigers can really be.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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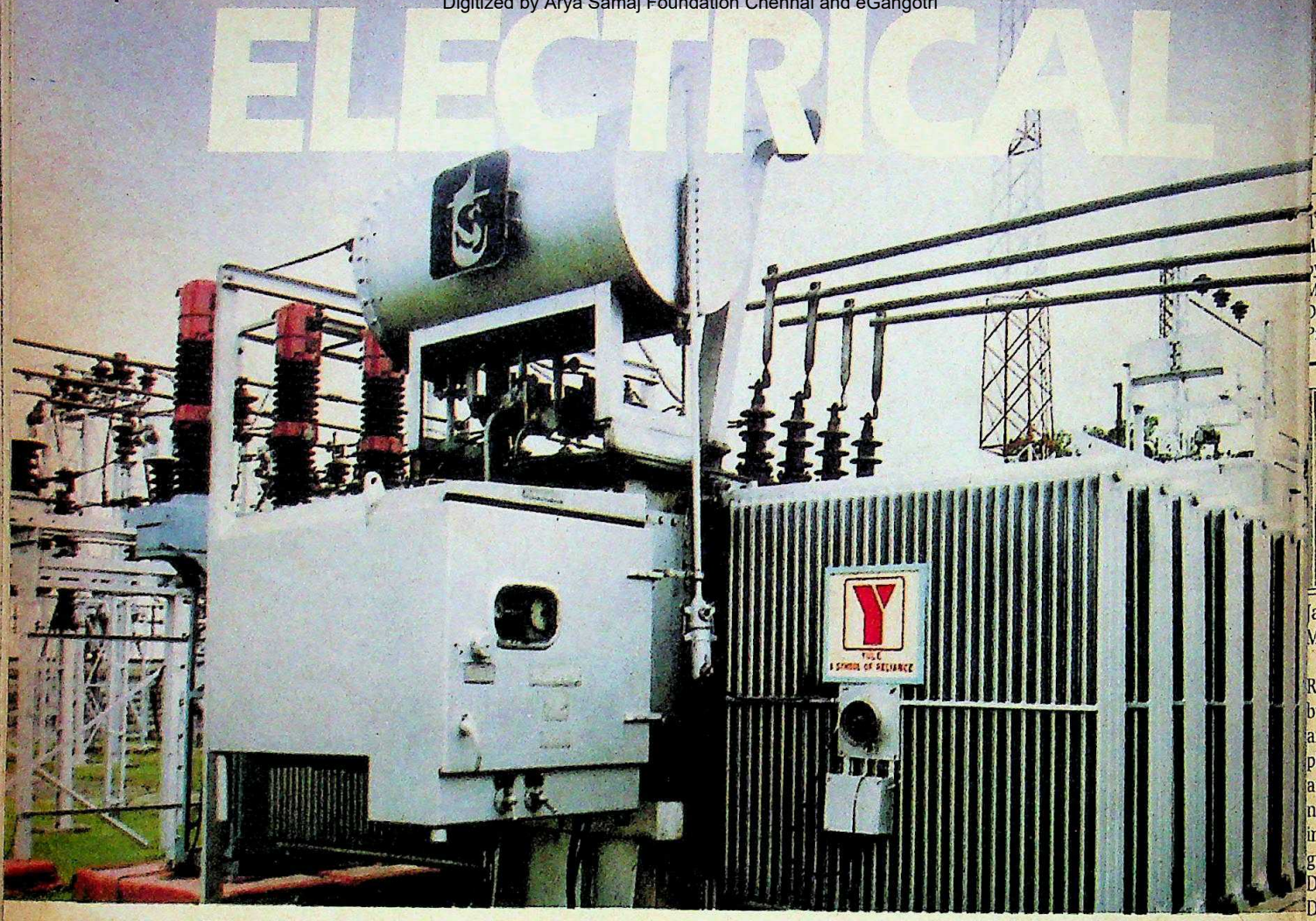

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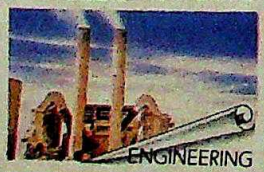

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Director cribs and quibbles

THE DISCOVERY OF NEHRU
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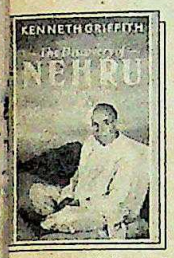
Distributed by Rupa & Co
Price: Rs 262; Pages: 216



REVENGE, however sweet, doesn't justify trite outpourings of poutish anger in print. Kenneth Griffith, the chameleon-like Welsh actor-director, spent two and a half years filming a biography of Jawaharlal Nehru for Doordarshan—Mrs Gandhi had asked him to do so.

The film cost the Indian exchequer Rs 1.40 crore—three times the initial budget. The Nehru centenary has come and gone. The film, in which Griffith plays 25 roles, was completed last February, but is still in the cans. Griffith has now come out with a fight-and-tell book in which, in often intemperate language, he describes his tryst with Doordarshan as a journey through Dante's inferno. "It was a long period as close to hell as anything I have ever experienced... Perhaps the difference between an Indian ministry today and a Moghul court is not very different."

Trysts with Doordarshan are known to be Kafkaesque; the monolith can be soul-destroying. But Griffith's book seldom rises above peevishness. Examples: having to film in 47 degrees heat in Allahabad, compressed air not arriving, payments not being made in time, his car and driver suddenly removed. And far from earth-shaking quibblings over the text: Motilal Nehru, changed from "hard-bitten" to "hard-headed" lawyer, his wife, Swaroop Rani from "traditional Hindu woman" to just "traditional Indian woman" and so on.

Behind the bitter sparring detailed in the book is a basic difference of attitude. The self-styled anti-imperialist Welshman, who had to come to India to have his heart go aflutter at the sight of a Union Jack, believes that India is wrong in its attitude towards South Africa. "India is ever lecturing the Afrikaners in the most strident language ...India does not like to be reminded that its own domestic cultural conflicts are... far more irrational than South Africa's."

Also likely to offend most Indians is the author's evident empathy for General Dyer, "a tragic figure" according to him, who was, like Rowlatt, "simply carrying out (his) duties".

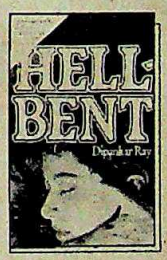
But there are some nuggets amongst the author's idiosyncratic ramblings. Especially on Subhas Chandra Bose, "an Indian hero with rather stupid Fascist tendencies". Many of the objections to Griffith's script, through the intermediary of the historian, B.R. Nanda, took place over Bose. Among the cuts was the leader's assessment of Gandhi: "He is an old, useless piece of furniture."

This could have been an interesting journey through the big machine that is Doordarshan and a perceptive assessment of what happens to recent history as it passes through official machinery. Instead, this meandering book is a cross between a primer of Indian history and a wide-eyed, quickie guide through India: a man with caste marks on his forehead is described as a "deep Hindu", whatever that may mean. —MADHU JAIN

Sloppy Fare

'Best seller' is a damp squib

HELL-BENT
by DIPANKAR RAY
Goldnib Books
Distributed by Jaico
Price: not stated; Pages: 399



AT last, cheap Indian pulp fiction is here. *Hell-Bent* doesn't aspire to be taken seriously by anybody; it is meant to sizzle and titillate. An alluring blood-red jacket with the ensnaring photograph of a sensuous woman promises to provide "India's answer to all those international best-sellers from the West". The accompanying publicity blitz—including hiring Bombay's most expensive billboard at Marine Drive and press ads—and hype were meant to arouse expectations of a steamy, yummy sizzler. It had the elan of a great ad campaign, which is not surprising, since Dipankar Ray works at Advertising Avenues, the agency of "neighbour's envy, owner's pride" fame. But *Hell-Bent* is neither a publisher's envy, nor an author's pride.

The sizzler has turned out to be a damp, cliche-ridden, soggy ghoulash put together from the left-overs of several cuisines. So you have an evil-intentioned NRI doctor, Avinash Rudra, seeking a cure for immunitis, which is affecting millions before you can finish saying AIDS; you have a sultry "untouchable", Mohna, spurned by Rudra but raised by a benevolent Brahmin astrologer; a sexy CIA agent Lydia, who doubles as Rudra's "research assistant" when not encircling her thighs around his legs in a cool swimming pool; a widow with a cute son who chances upon Mohna at the Pushkar fair, only to alert Jay Tyler, a hot-shot journalist pursuing the machinations of Rudra; and just in case the conspiracy is not diabolical enough, you have the CIA wanting to make sure that "Soviet Russia" doesn't get hold of the findings of Rudra. Clearly, in the age of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, this novel is like a shell-shocked Rip Van Winkle who has emerged in the wrong decade.

The novel leaves the reader with the sort of indigestion that such a heavy dose of plots and subplots and counterplots inevitably brings about. The coincidences are as unexpected as in a Hindi film (like the Pushkar fair rendezvous) and the Americans speak as if they've graduated from an Indian campus ("A nation can't be run on that kind of gas").

Which is a pity, because India does provide an exciting backdrop for a thriller: but must there be mendicants and melas, tantric rituals and ayurved? As John Le Carre argued in a recent essay, the end of the cold war doesn't signify the end of the spy novel. There are enough landscapes waiting to be portrayed as the right backdrop. But it needs hard work. While the real Indian quickie best seller pulp fiction is not yet written, one must hand it to Dipankar Ray's chutzpah for getting the concept right. But the product is wrong. And great advertising never sold a bad product.

—SALIL TRIPATHI

EXCERPT

The climax came with a note of thunder. Her entire body arched along its axis making Jay ride on a rainbow. She released him of the embrace. All her strength seemed to converge on the upthrust that lifted both their pulsating bodies inches above the floor along their seat of contact. Fountains were released inside their brains as their bodies shivered together and their moans mingled in spontaneous music.

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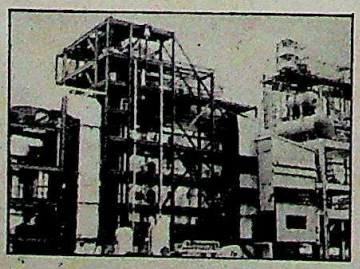

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BY K. NATWAR SINGH

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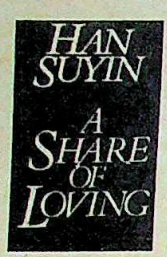
A Many Splendoured Thing



DURING the December 1984 Lok Sabha elections, I read Tolstoy, even when I returned very late at night after campaigning. For this election I had Han Suyin as my literary companion.

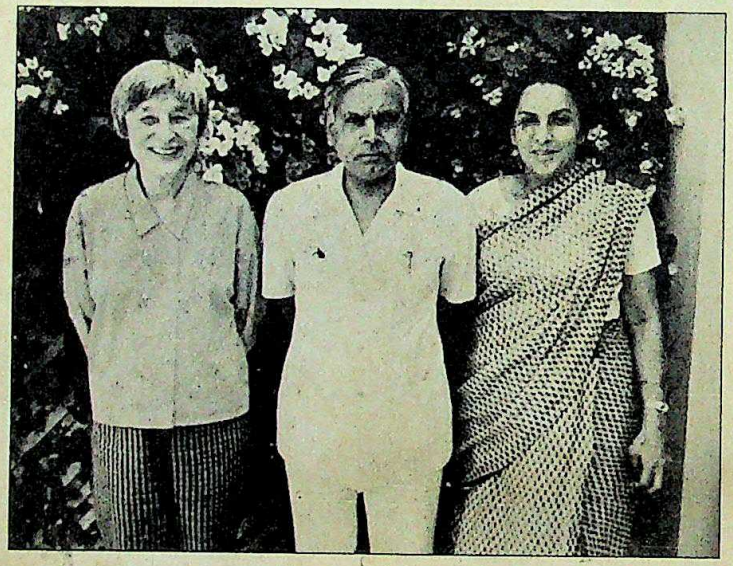
I have known Han Suyin for over 33 years. We first met in Beijing in July 1956 under comic circumstances. I was staying at Hsin Chiao Hotel, that austere refuge of foreigners where one met the most extraordinary people from the most extraordinary places.

On the very first day I encountered the formidable language barrier when I sat down for breakfast. The menu was in Chinese and 'comrade waiter' spoke no English. My Chinese was more determined than fluent. Just as I was about to throw up my hands, in walked a lady of dazzling beauty. I could not take my eyes off her. She sat, three tables away from me. Every few seconds I kept looking at her, thinking where had I seen her. Could she be... no, of course not, what would she be doing in China. Yet she looked so familiar. Yes, she must be. I said to myself, "nothing ventured, nothing have", and scribbled her a note on the back of the menu. The note said: "I am starving and cannot get my breakfast. Are you Han Suyin? I have read your book, *A Many Splendoured Thing*. The cover had your photo. Can you help me order my breakfast?"

I waited for her answer. My pulse quickened. Her answer demolished all barriers. "Yes, I am Han Suyin and I shall order your breakfast for you. Come and join me." Thus began a many splendoured friendship that has survived all the ups and downs of Sino-Indian relations. In 1979, I dedicated the Indian edition of *E.M. Forster—A Tribute* to Suyin. She has returned the compliment by making warm and generous references to me in her autobiography, *My House has Two Doors*.

Now to her latest book, *A Share of Loving*. It is a profoundly moving work. It is about the near fatal illness of Peter Rathnaswamy, her stepson. Suyin married Peter's father, Col Vincent Rathnaswamy, nearly 20 years ago. Vincent is a silent, strong, serene, devoted husband. Without him the turbulence, turmoil and passions that have filled Suyin's life would perhaps have landed her on the rocks and not on the safe shores of the Marina in Madras. They met in Nepal in 1956. It was love at first sight.

I said earlier that the book is about Peter's illness. It is also about Vincent and Suyin and Vincent's remarkable father, R. Rathnaswamy, who was for many years a member of the Rajya Sabha. He was educated both at Cambridge and Oxford. Suyin had many conversations with the old man. He died in his 91st year. She has written: "In our first meeting, he asked me about Mao; about China, the Communes, the Chinese Revolution. He had read my book on Malaya, and nodded slowly. 'You gave me a new understanding of the region....' But the man who really mattered in the Rathnaswamy household was her husband, Vincent. The Rathnaswamys, a Roman Catholic family, have lived in Madras for many decades. Vincent is the eldest son. It took sometime for him to obtain a divorce and marry Han Suyin, but that is another story and need not detain us here.



Han Suyin with the Singhs: close ties

Han Suyin and Vincent live in Lausanne, but travel a great deal. On August 4, 1977, the bottom fell out of their lives. Peter, who was working in Teheran, suddenly fell ill. He collapsed at work and no one seemed to know what was wrong. Exhaustion? Malaria? Sinus? All wrongly diagnosed. Peter went into a coma. He was suffering from tuberculosis meningitis. He did recover, but only partially. He is retarded and obsessive. He is today 45 years old. Fate has been unkind. Against fate there is no armour.

Han Suyin is endowed with a rare capacity for understanding human nature, with a remarkable and original sense of language and the music of language. This searing domestic calamity is depicted in poetic language, with delicate candour. The pressures on Vincent and Suyin are stupendous. Neither gives up hope. Both are caring individuals and Vincent's commitment to Peter is total. This inevitably led to tension, if not conflict of loyalties.

Suyin writes about their predicament as only an artist could: "Sometimes I revolt against the whole set-up; I feel frustrated. For he (Peter) is robbing me of Vincent, robbing me of time with Vincent, taking him away so much from me, from *us*, from the couple we are." She continues: "But there is the family. And I too belong to the family. I have to accept this other dimension, this other world, revolving round Peter—I have to accept or, at least that part of myself which loves Vincent must accept Peter, as the family has accepted me." What a wonderful, beautiful, touching way to describe a family's near-impossible situation. She handles a melancholic theme with unfailing artistry and understated power. Compassion and humanism, love and caring and sharing, enrich and uplift the reader.

Let me end by quoting the last paragraph of *A Share of Loving*.

"And with this share of love I am blessed; for Vincent would not be the man he is, did he not leave me, at times, many times, for his son, who needs him. And I would not be the woman I am, did I not also, for all the love he gives me, accept to be, at times, very lonely."

This is how great books should end.

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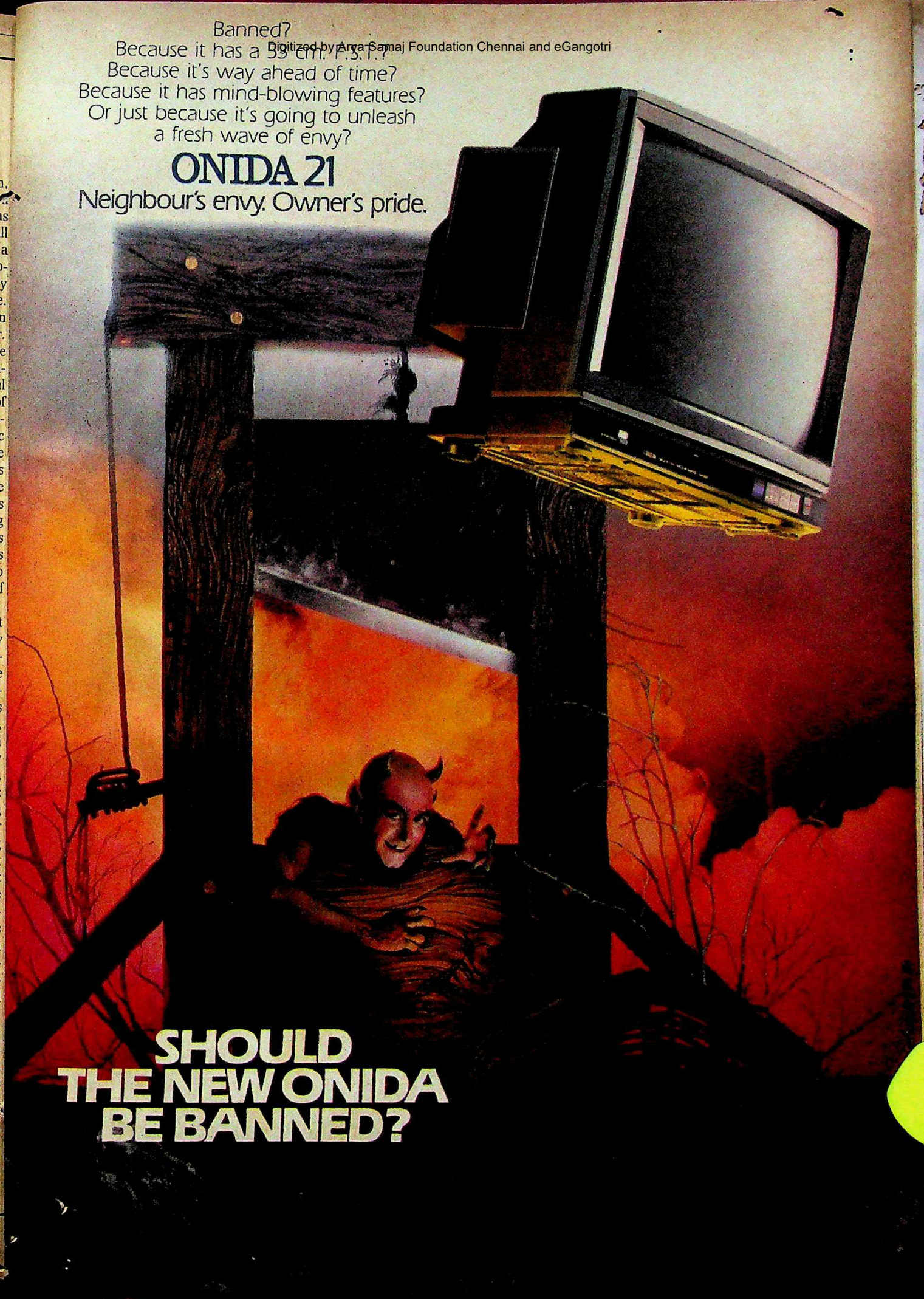

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SNAKE-CHARMERS

Losing their Charm

A traditional art form faces extinction

FOR centuries it has been the most enduring symbol of India: the lean, loin-clothed figure squatting before a venomous-looking cobra emerging from a basket. But now, it is an image that survives only in the minds of ill-informed tourists. Unobtrusively but surely, India's snake-charmers, a profession that once employed thousands, is swaying on the edge of extinction.

The signs are everywhere. Shyam Lal, the *mukhiya* of Tilpat village in Faridabad—which houses 40 families of snake-charmers—now finds it impossible to support his five-member family. Economic necessity has forced him to play the *been*—the traditional instrument used to woo snakes—for a wedding band; and sell milk to supplement his income.

Many like Lal are increasingly leaving the traditional profession for newer pastures, yielding to the logic of survival. The days when children scrambled to watch the show under the patronising adult eye, happily mystified by the somewhat frightening reptile's rythmic swaying to the mesmerising tune of the *been* are clearly in the past. The western tourist, long fed on films on India's snake-charmers, too has begun to tire even as India itself tries to fight its traditional image in the western media.

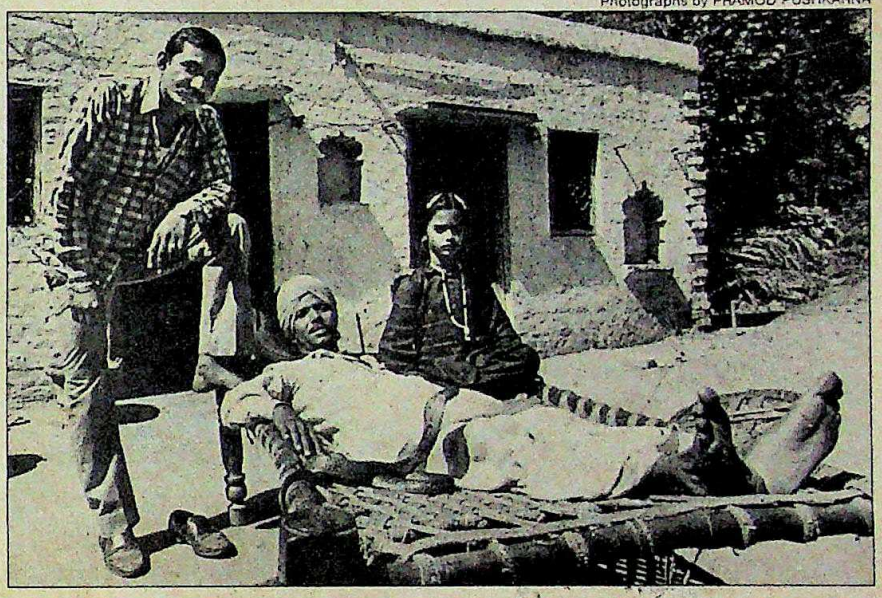
An anguished Lal explains: "Snake-charming is a difficult and rare art and ought to be preserved. But do we have any options? Besides financial problems, the profession has to brave a complete lack of respectability." Often, they are treated as beggars. After a tiring show, some in the crowd contemptuously fling a few coins—most just walk away.

Presenting snake-charming *majmas* (shows) at roadsides or tourist spots is becoming a humiliating business. Besides facing crowds reluctant to pay, snake-charmers have to deal with a hostile police which treats them as anti-social elements. Sometimes, the snake-charmers are chased away even when a show is in progress.

What is worse is the attitude of the people. A common experience for a snake-charmer nowadays is: he sits down to play his *been*, brings the snakes out of the baskets, an initially curious crowd gathers—but soon withers away. Phoolnath, 30, laments: "Often, I am left alone with my snakes. It's then that I am nearly tearful, not so much for the lack of income but the disrespect shown to my art and person."

In the community, the most dramatic sign is the generational change in attitudes. The new generation is turning its back on tradition and looking for more dignified—and certainly more remunerative—areas of employment. Mahendra Nath, 36, is today happily working for the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC), earning Rs 1,400 per month. Ambition drove Khoob Ram, 40, out of the family profession to set up a wedding band—which he calls Nagin Disco Band.

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Turning his back on tradition, Mahendra Nath, son of a snake-charmer, has chosen to work with the DTC.

Ambition drove Khoob Ram out of the family profession to set up a wedding band playing the *been*.

Both Nath and Ram are obviously happy with the shift. Says Nath: "My elders, who had admonished me earlier, are now happy." Ram's house, though *kuccha* is one of the best in the village, even boasting of a television set. Says he: "Today, I am in a position to provide employment for my community members. I have experienced the misery of being a snake-charmer and have dared to come out of the quagmire."

But the quagmire continues to be a living reality for many of his brethren. The very process of catching snakes is tough, time-consuming and highly risky. Many are questioning

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whether it's worth it. Points out Phoolnath: "In the last five years, three of our people have died of snake bites while trying to catch a snake. Is it worth risking our lives?"

Apparently not. In fact, the current cost of maintaining snakes suggests that the trade is counter-productive. A single *majma* earns around Rs 10. Considering that it is only the very lucky who manage to have more than two or three *majmas* per week, the monthly income would rarely cross Rs 200. Snakes are costly: they feed on meat, eggs and milk. To provide variety at shows, snake-charmers have to sometimes maintain a stock of three to four snakes. This may mean an expenditure of up to Rs 600. The economics is clearly turning topsy-turvy today. Lal's comment is poignant: "Our children never get to drink milk, but our snakes are luckier."

Often, after a hard day's work, the snake-charmers themselves come home to a mere bowl of flour. That's because the tradition in many villages is still to pay snake-charmers in terms of flour. And in any case, even when money is paid, it's too little to buy anything more. Chander, 16—Phoolnath's younger brother—who turned away from the family profession to open a small cycle repair shop, says: "Tell me, do we just eat rotis? Don't we require vegetables or lentils?" The desire to desert the sinking ship is catching on. Take the case of Rohtas Kumar, 33, a constable with the Delhi Police and son of snake-charmer Khoob Nath, who says: "I didn't want to lead a nomad's life, full of penury and shame."

Like many, the snake-charmer is paying the price of development. His crisis is common to many other traditional Indian arts—like the rope trick, bear and monkey shows and folk handicrafts—and is mostly attributable to the changing attitude of Indians. The frenetic pace of the new urban life-style offers few pauses for people to stop and watch a snake show. Even children—one of the primary patron groups earlier—have shifted interest to the quick excitement of video games, cartoon films, comics and Rubik cubes. Most reject the snake-charmer and his art as 'old-fashioned and archaic'—not something that you can go back to school the next morning and boast about.

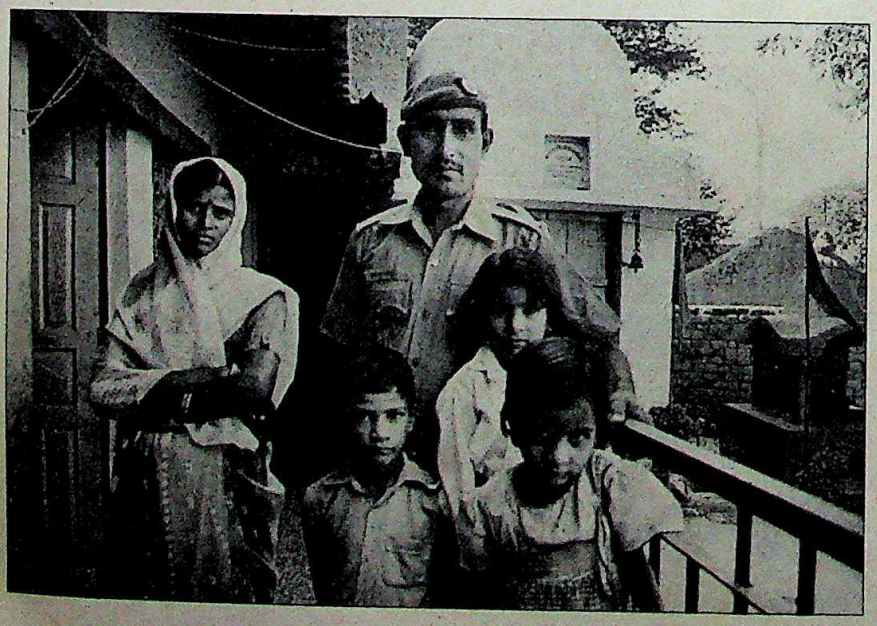
In the process of decline, films stand accused as a major culprit. Omi Narayan, 23, who joined the Border Security Force as a constable last year after working for three years as a snake-charmer, complains: "Television and films have robbed the art of its novelty. They show almost all that we have to offer in a much more glamorised form." In fact, some Hindi feature films have shown detailed fights between snakes and mongooses in close-up, complete with background music and trick photography. In a situation where they can't beat the film threat, it's only the rare snake-charmer like Bansi Lal who has successfully managed to join them. Says he: "For three months' work in Bombay's film world, I got nearly Rs 8,000."

While the exodus has begun and is likely to continue, at least some are displaying commendable staying power. One such person is the doddering Chhotu Nath, who says grittily: "I love my art, I love my snakes and I will never give them up. If everyone shuns it, will it not die completely?" But even the Chhotu Naths are fast disappearing. With no state support forthcoming, one of India's most colourful arts has clearly lost its fangs.

—SHARMILA CHANDRA

The logic of survival has forced Chander, the brother of a snake-charmer, to open a small cycle repair shop.

Rohtas Kumar, a constable with the Delhi Police, has sought a more dignified and remunerative area of employment.



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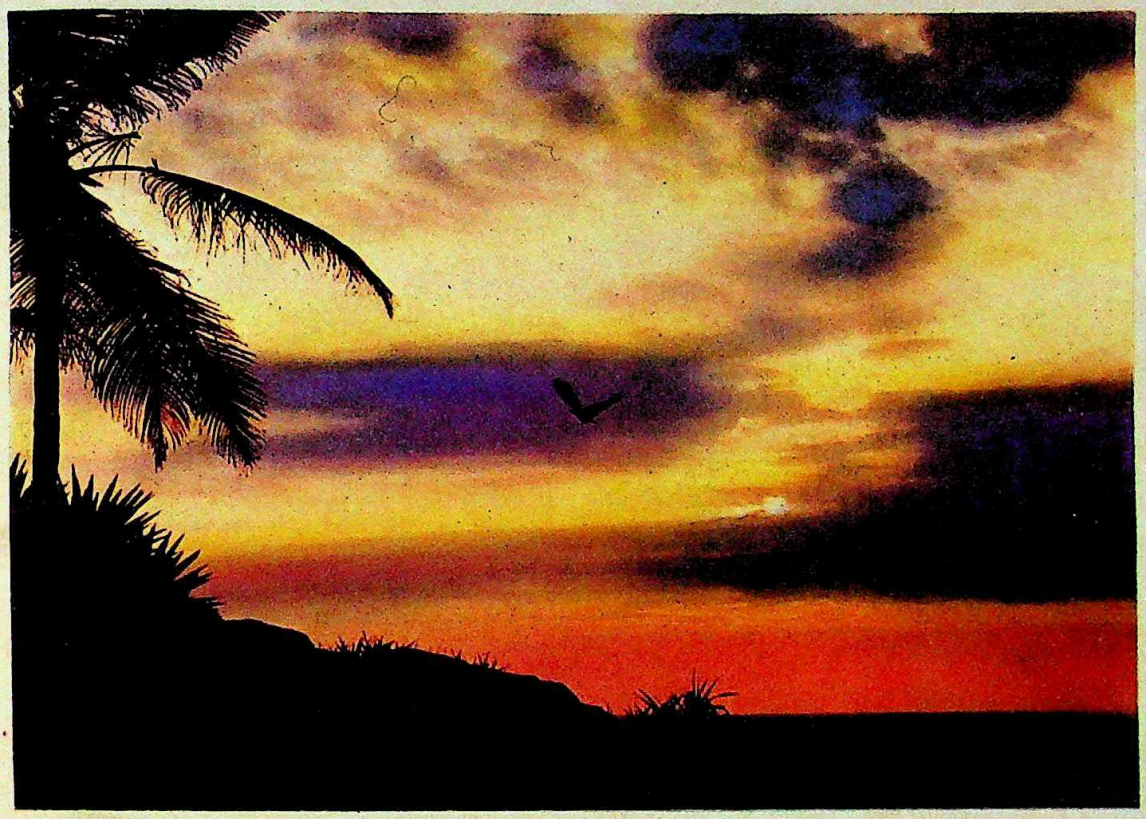
In Search of New Pastures



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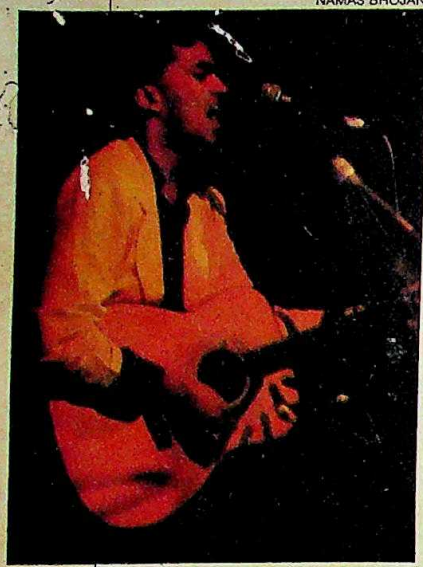
NAMAS BHOJANI



Remo: popping mad

◆ No one was more surprised to see **Remo Fernandes** belting out the pop stuff on prime time one Sunday evening than Remo Fernandes himself. Doordarshan had apparently appropriated the young man for *Pop Time* without even a by-your-leave. And in true unimaginative tradition, it had slapped together old studio shots of his in the most prosaic way possible. Most upset, the country's top pop singer said: "The programme was terrible for my reputation. Doordarshan's been unethical." Now Remo, that's strumming a boring number.

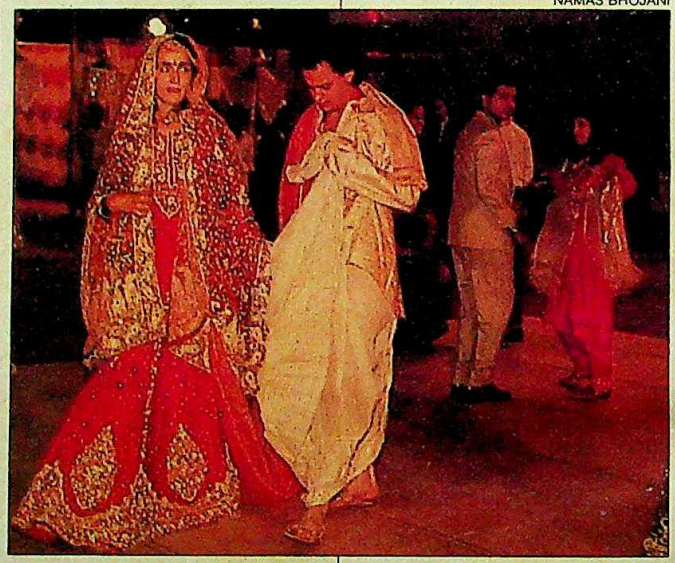
◆ To Rajiv's George, V.P. Singh has his Sharma. And the prime minister's private secretary is cut from the same cloth as his boss. **Har Prashad Sharma**, 50, prefers to be neither seen nor heard, unlike Georgie who ran his writ over the mighty. An IAS officer from the Uttar Pradesh cadre, he has spent 15 of his 25 years of service with V.P. Singh. A topper in MA history, he taught in Allahabad University for four years. But more than his knowledge of who invaded India how many times, what's going to matter are the attributes he's known for: a soft-spoken articulateness, and a mild mien. Let's see how long it lasts. Power has a way of making maneaters of pussycats.

Sharma: VP's George

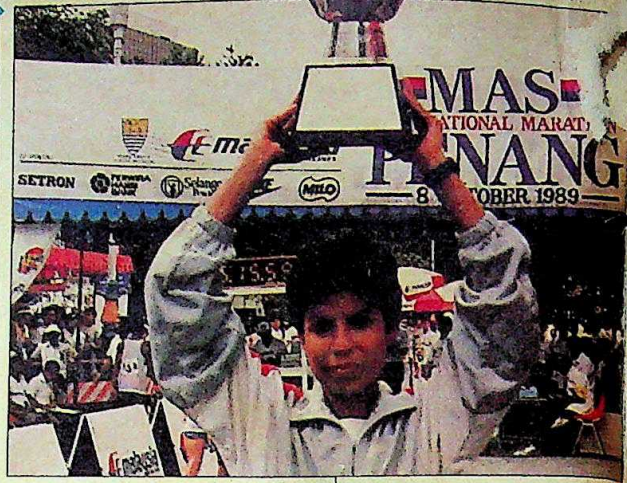
SHARAD SAXENA

◆ Raj would have found it a trifle low-key: it wasn't quite the usual opulent 'Kapoor happening'. But once **Sanjana Kapoor**, 22, and **Aditya Bhattacharya**, 26, had done with their dignified nuptials and gastronomic rites, they along with the other grandchildren of Prithviraj Kapoor rendered the wedding an affair to remember. The original jivers, papa Shashi and uncle Shammi, watched from the sidelines as the young Kapoors danced away the night. Said Aditya: "We met in Prithvi theatre six years ago and it's nice that we got married here." In any case, it must rate as Prithvi's biggest sell-out show ever.

NAMAS BHOJANI



Sanjana, Aditya: jiving rites

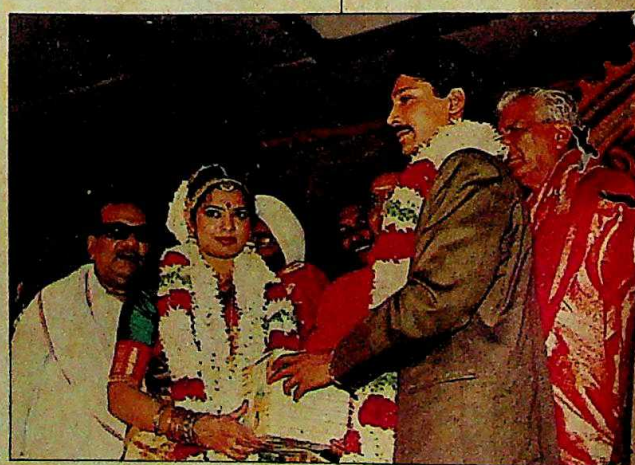


Gadora: winning run

◆ She's had a long run. And now it's paying off—in gold and silver. Last fortnight, **Sunita Gadora**, 30, pipped 5,000 athletes from 23 countries to win the silver medal in the Mobil International Marathon in Singapore. Coming on the heels of a silver medal in Thailand and a gold in Malaysia in international ma thons, that's a great end glorious run. Says Sun "It's been a very exciting s son. It is wonderful to win these medals in a row."

◆ He's been keeping hi busy forging alliances. T time on the domes not on the national fr M. Karunanidhi married his daughter **Kanimozhi**, to millionaire **Adipan B** 25, last fortnight. The gro fittingly, is heir-apparent match kingdom, while bride pens poetry, say "No, absolutely not", to tics. But her marriage incandescent with poli stars—Zail Singh, Devi N.T. Rama Rao. Who peri came to condole the failu the DMK chief's political ance, even as they celebr the success of the domest

Kanimozhi, Bose: Papa's ma



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